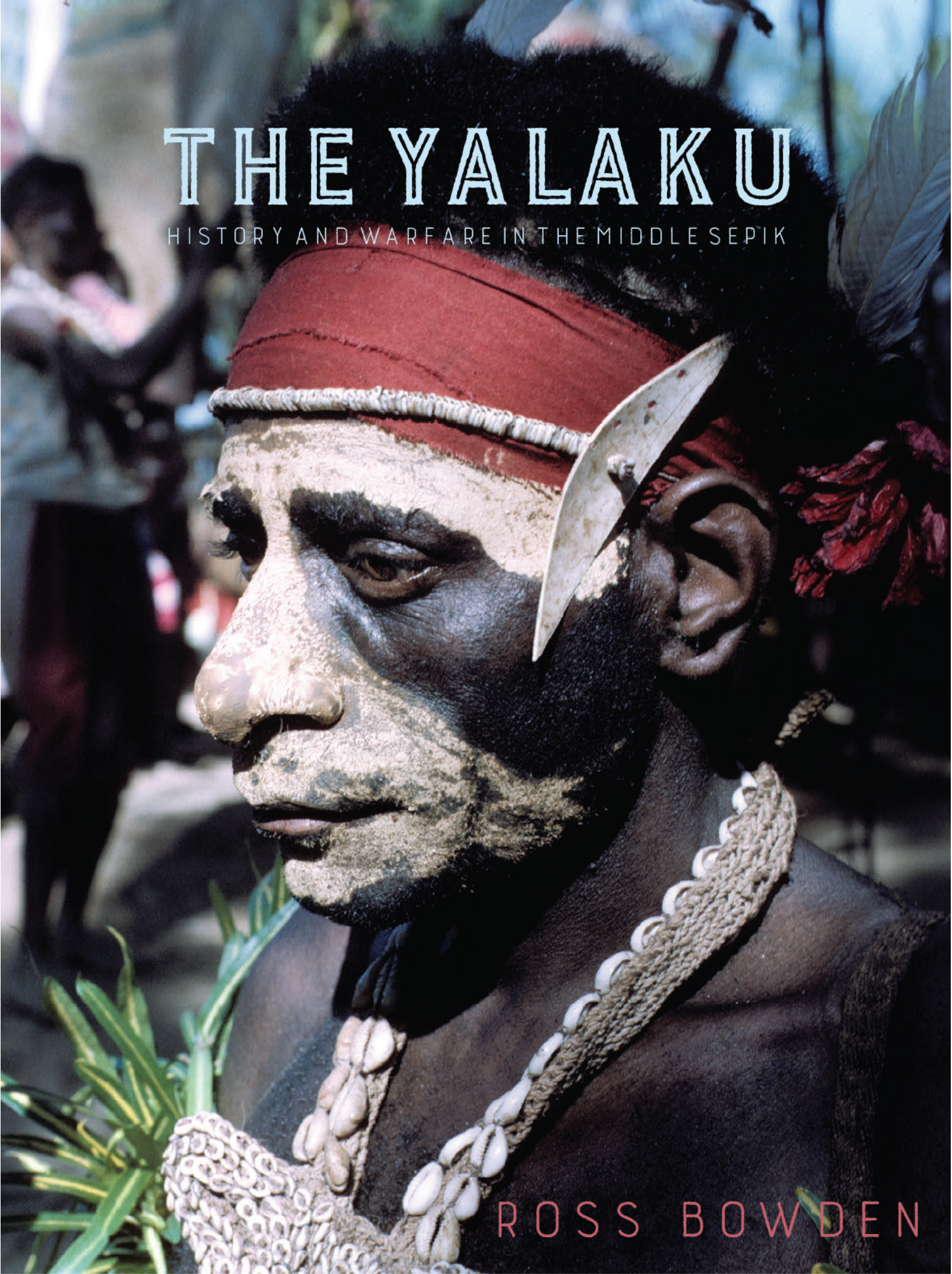

THE YALAKU
HISTORY AND WARFARE IN THE MIDDLE SEPIK
ROSS BOWDEN

The Yalaku

First published in 2023 by
Sean Kingston Publishing
www.seankingston.co.uk
Canon Pyon

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Ebook ISBN 978-1-912385-67-6

DOI 10.26581/B.BOWD01

The Yalaku

History and Warfare in the Middle Sepik

Ross Bowden

Sean Kingston Publishing
www.seankingston.co.uk
Canon Pyon

This book is dedicated to Ayam (c.1930–90) of Yelogu village

He was an anthropologist's ideal field assistant: astonishingly knowledgeable, infinitely patient and a genuine friend.

Contents

Figures

Part I

Background and social organization

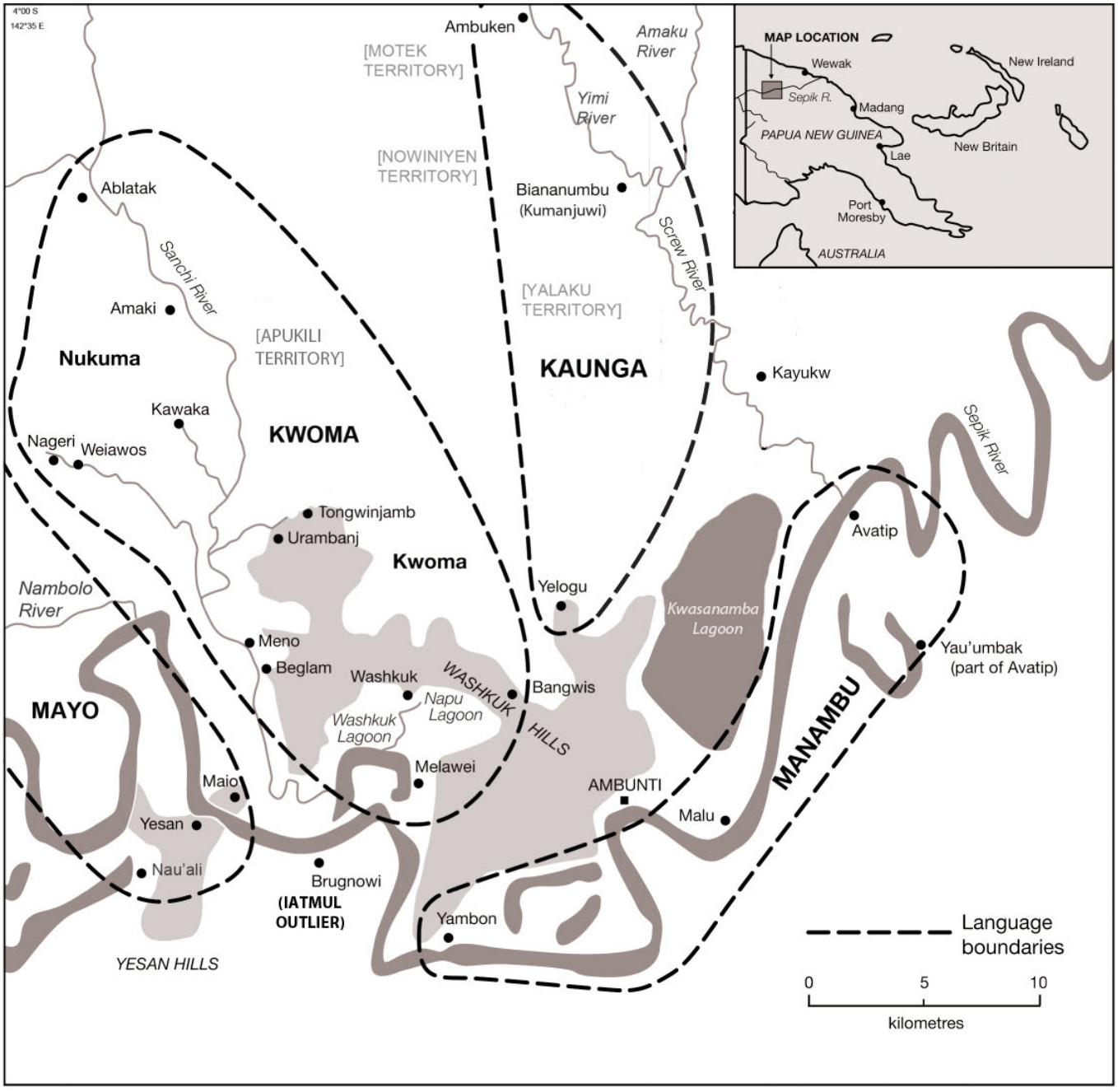


Figure 1.1 Map of language groups in the Ambunti region of the middle Sepik and village locations in 1973.

1

The Yalaku

The people

This book is a combined ethnography and history of the Yalaku, one of three traditionally independent communities that make up the Kaunga language group in the middle Sepik region of northern Papua New Guinea. The Yalaku currently have their main settlement at Yelogu village on the eastern edge of the Washkuk Hills. 'Yelogu' is the government spelling of 'Yalaku'. The two other Kaunga groups are the Nowiniyen and the Motek. Their main settlements are at Biananumbu (= Kumanjuwi) and Ambuken villages, both about twenty kilometres to the north of Yelogu on the western side of the Yimi River. The Yimi is the main western branch of the Screw River, a northern tributary of the Sepik (see Figures 1.1 and 1.7).

The book is divided into three parts. The first focuses on Yalaku social organization, including the layout of their village, clan structure and marriage rules and practices. The second presents a history of the community as a whole. The third gives a selection of myths.

To date the only published ethnographic data on this society are several reports by two linguists: Donald Laycock (1965, 1973:24–8) and Sasha Aikhenvald (e.g. 2008b, 2018, 2020). Laycock's information derives from interviews he conducted at Ambunti, the local administrative centre. Aikhenvald did her research at Yelogu. The Kaunga otherwise are a previously undocumented culture.

Kaunga is one of the several Sepik languages that make up Laycock's 'Ndu' family (Laycock 1965, 1973:24–8; Laycock and Z'graggen 1975). In these languages 'ndu' (or 'tu') is the term for human, person and male (as distinct from female). Others include the Iatmul – made famous by Gregory Bateson in his book *Naven* – Abelam, Manambu and Boiken.[1]

Following an established practice in Melanesian studies I refer to the Yalaku and the two other Kaunga groups as distinct 'tribes' (Allen 1967:30; Godelier 2011:34,132; Merlan 2016; Strathern A. and M. 1971:14; Whitehead 1986:86). I also refer to them as 'politically independent groups' and 'communities'. These are the groups between which warfare periodically took place, but within which fighting with lethal weapons was strictly prohibited. As with other peoples in this region, the Yalaku took the view that if open warfare broke out within a tribe this would destroy its unity politically, fragment it residentially and potentially fatally weaken it militarily vis-à-vis other, more powerful, communities.

Up until the first quarter of the twentieth century, all three Kaunga tribes were much larger and more politically powerful than they are today. For instance, each of the different settlements that the Yalaku occupied at different times before moving permanently to their present site in the 1940s was composed of several large multi-clan hamlets. These hamlets were spread over an area of two or more square kilometres. However, as the result of warfare, and probably also introduced diseases, all three Kaunga tribes declined rapidly in population during the first half of the twentieth century. By 1973, when I began the fieldwork on which this book is based, the Yalaku had been reduced to only 77 persons (see Appendix A).

In 1973 the two other Kaunga communities were similar in size. Government census data give the Motek (Ambuken) population in 1973 as 144, and the Nowiniyen (Biananumbu) as 83.[2] This meant that at the beginning of the 1970s the total Kaunga population was around three hundred. This made it one of the smaller, but by no means the smallest, of the more than 200 language groups in the two Sepik provinces (Dye, Townsend and Townsend 1968; Laycock 1973:54). Aikhenvald (pers. comm., 2020) indicates that in the forty-five years since then the population has begun to recover. Today the Yalaku number around 150.

1 See among others (for the Iatmul) Bateson 1932a, 1932b, 1958; Silverman 1996, 2001; Wassmann 1991, 2001; (for the Abelam) Forge 1966, 1971; Hauser-Schäublin 1989, 2015; (for the Manambu) Aikhenvald 2008a; Harrison 1990, 1993; (for the Boiken) Roscoe 1994, 2011.

2 I am grateful to Professor Jim Roscoe for providing the census data on the Motek and Nowiniyen. This derives from unpublished patrol reports and censuses. His data also show that the Yalaku population in 1959 was 58. The total Kaunga population in that year was 226. In 1956 it was 209.

Figure 1.2 The men's house named Wayipanal at Bangwis village (Kwoma language group) in 1973.

In addition to being an independent group politically, the Yalaku, like all other tribes in this region, was also an independent unit ritually. In fact, for all of the Sepik peoples among whom I have done fieldwork, the ritual unity of a tribe was one of its defining features. This entailed that all qualified members of a tribe were entitled to participate in every ceremony its different clans sponsored. To enable them to do so, clans timed their rituals so that they did not overlap. No such co-operation in ritual matters existed between tribes.

Conditions of fieldwork

The ethnographic data in this book was collected in the course of a much longer and more detailed field project I conducted among the neighbouring Kwoma. This began in October 1972 and extended over a thirty-five-year period to February 2008 (see Bowden 1977, 1983a, 1997, 2006). A total of two years was spent in the field. The Sepik River region of northern New Guinea is the source of some of the world's most distinctive and powerful visual art, and I went to this region to do research for a doctorate in anthropology in a community where the art was still actively being made for ritual and other local purposes. In the course of an earlier reconnaissance of the middle Sepik, in July 1969, I visited Bangwis village and there discovered one of the region's most lavishly decorated ceremonial men's houses (Figures 1.2, 1.3 and 14.3; see also Bowden 2006). In 1972 I returned to Bangwis to begin my first and longest period in the field – from October 1972 to January 1974. Seven more field trips were subsequently undertaken, each lasting about a month.

Figure 1.3 The front left corner of the men's house named Wayipanal at Bangwis village (Kwoma language group), 1973.

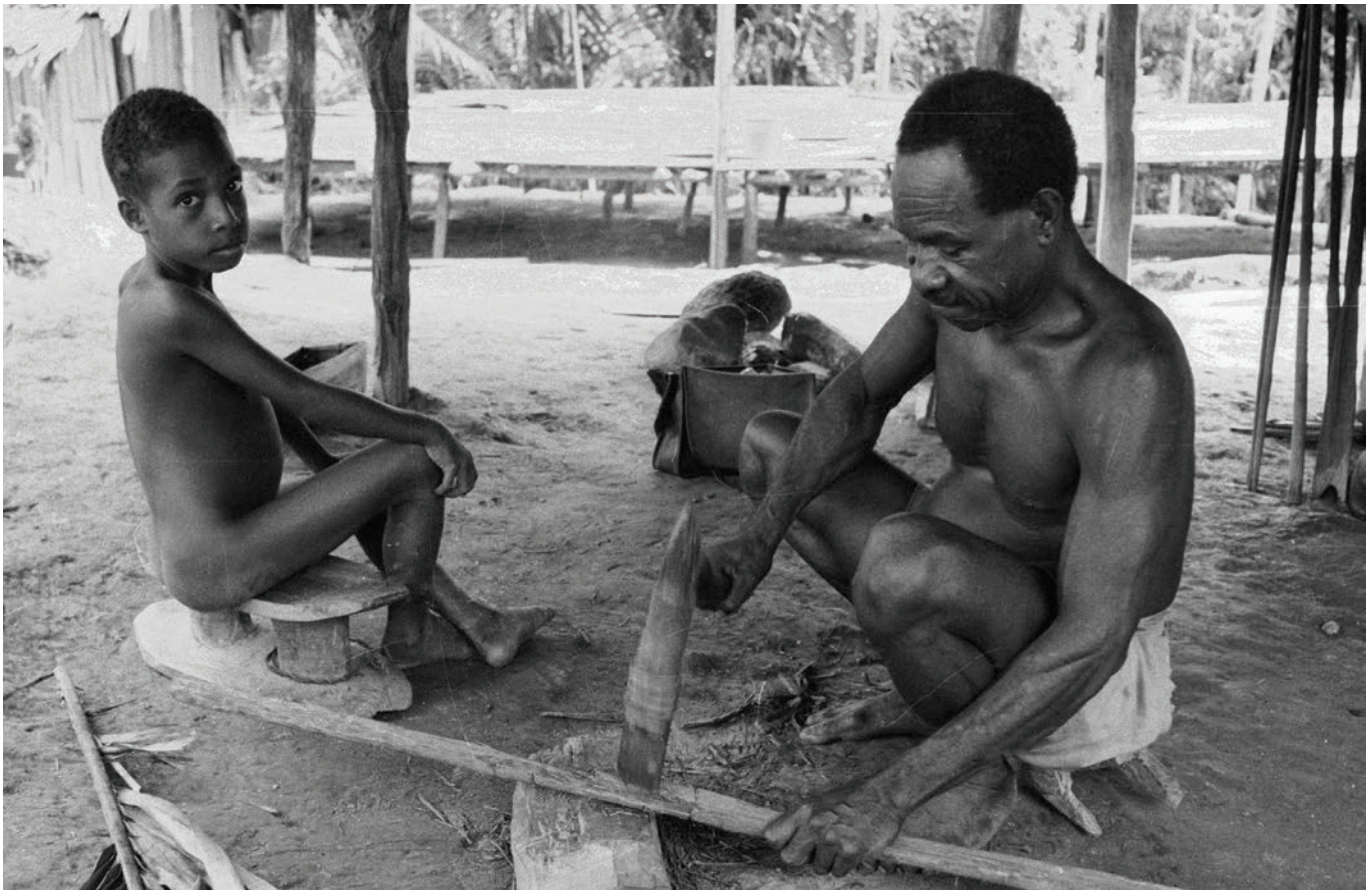


Figure 1.4 Manenggey of Bangwis village carving a design on the handle of a new spear, 1973. His son Kenny is watching.

Almost as soon as I began fieldwork at Bangwis my interests began to expand from the visual art that has always remained the focus of my research to the community's complex history and equally rich myths and other oral traditions. When the Bangwis people learned that I was interested in history and myth as well as art, they suggested I might like to pay a visit to the neighbouring Kaunga-speaking village of Yelogu. That village, they informed me, had little left in the way of visual art and had long given up its traditional rituals, but there were still two men there who had an outstanding knowledge of their community's traditional history and myths. They felt sure that they would be interested in talking to me. The two men were Ayam (36) of Rama clan and Kiriyas (130) of YN2 clan (Figures 1.5 and 3.1).[3] I immediately began making plans to visit Yelogu and sent word to this effect via people from the village who periodically visited Bangwis to participate in community events or stay with relatives.

A Bangwis man named Manenggey (Figure 1.4) offered to take me. Manenggey had worked as a policeman for twenty years in the 1950s and 60s and during that period had lived with his family in other parts of New Guinea. But he had retained a keen interest in the history of both his community and neighbouring groups, and when he learned that I was planning to visit the Yalaku he said he would be interested in going with me and hearing what Ayam and Kiriyas had to say. Manenggey also had two nephews, sister's sons, at Yelogu who he said he wanted to visit. A Kwoma man, like a Kaunga, has an obligation actively to 'look after' his sister's sons by visiting them periodically, to make sure they have everything they need and to take them gifts of food. This would be a good opportunity, he said, to visit two nephews he had not seen for some time. Manenggey's nephews were the sons of a much older sister who had married a Yalaku man in the 1930s. His sister was still alive but long ago had left Yelogu and returned to Bangwis, where she was married to a member of that village. His sister had left Yelogu during the Second World War after a war-party from the Manambu-speaking village

3 The numbers following people's names refer to both the genealogical charts in Appendix A and the index to those charts in Appendix B. The key to the abbreviations of clan names, such as 'YN2', is given in Chapter 2. 'Ayam' is short for 'Ayamu'. His name, like many others the Yalaku use, is possibly of Kwoma origin, as in that language it literally means 'the source (*mu*) of a human or animal call (*aya*)'. Ayam said that it had no translatable meaning in his language.

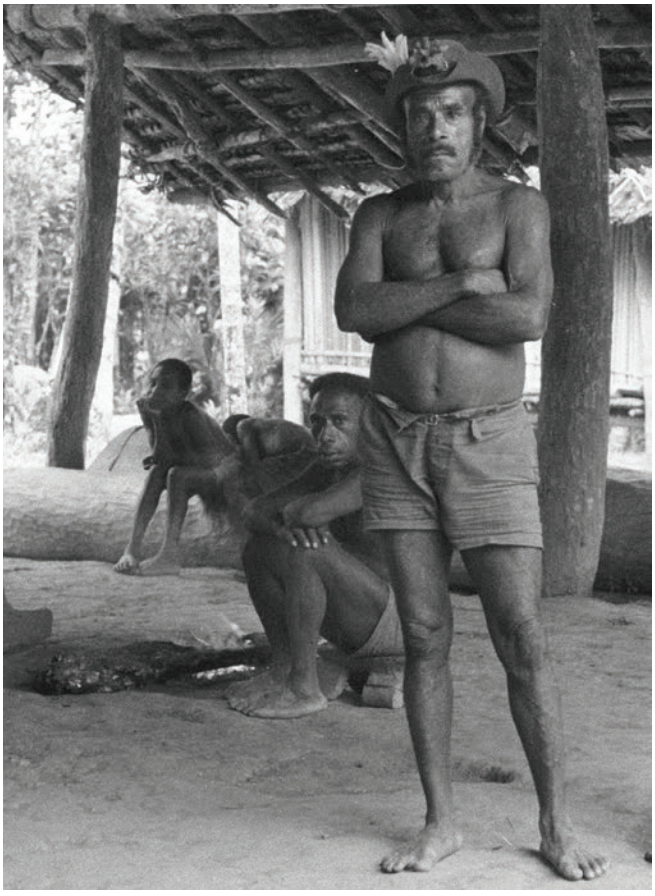


Figure 1.5 Kiriyas (standing) and Ayam (seated behind him) in the Yelogu men's house, Nyinggindu, 1973.

of Avatip, the largest and most powerful of their neighbours on the Sepik, launched a raid against the Yalaku and killed her husband. In the customary manner for river people, they decapitated her husband alive, in front of his wife as it happened, and took his head back to their village to display as a trophy of war. Manenggey was visiting his sister at the time and was caught up in the fighting. But the Avatip warriors were careful not to harm him or his sister, as their community has long been allied politically to the largest of the clans at Bangwis, of which Manenggey and his sister were members, and at least within living memory had never fought with them.

When we arrived at Yelogu, Manenggey introduced me to both Ayam and Kiriyas, as well as his two sister's sons. Our hosts then directed us to the empty house that all Sepik villages at that time maintained for the use of visiting patrol officers – in Tok Pisin, the *haus kiap* ('patrol officer's house').[4] When government officials did not require these buildings, anthropologists and other travellers were free to make use of them. After unpacking our bags and setting up our mosquito nets, Ayam and Kiriyas ushered us into the Yelogu men's house (Figure 1.5). There we found that almost everyone in the village had assembled to greet us.

Like many other Kwoma, Manenggey was fluent in Kaunga, and both he and I (in Tok Pisin) explained the purpose of our visit. Ayam then promptly informed us that when the Yelogu people had heard I was planning a visit, and was interested in hearing about their history, he and the other men had held a meeting in their men's house to discuss the best way to proceed. He said they had agreed to set aside three days to tell the history of their community. This would begin, Ayam said, with different men narrating the histories of their individual clans. These histories would include the genealogies that linked the current members of each group to its founding ancestor. With the assistance of Kiriyas and the other men he would then narrate the history of their tribe as a whole.

Ayam explained that Kiriyas knew the history of their community as well as he did, but although he could understand Tok Pisin he was not comfortable speaking it in public. His role, therefore, would be to sit near him and jog his memory when necessary and suggest topics that might be included as the narrative proceeded. The other men would assist as well as they could.

Needless to say, I was delighted to find that the Yalaku were keen to talk about their history, and Ayam's plan was in fact the one we adopted. Given that I knew nothing about their community I decided that my role would be to let people talk and only intervene from time to time to ask questions. Everyone agreed that the discussions should be recorded on audiotape, as they wanted to make a record of their history that would later be available to their community. They also agreed that the recordings should be made in the men's house. This would enable anyone who was interested to enter the building, a public space in contrast to dwelling houses, and listen to what was being said. As it turned out, this included a number of women. From time to time the wives of the men participating in the recording sessions would quietly enter the building and, either individually or in small groups, sit with the young children in their care and listen intently to what was being said. A men's house, unlike a domestic dwelling, also has the advantage of being relatively quiet. All of my recordings are nevertheless rich with the background sounds ubiquitous in villages, such as children shouting, forest birds singing, dogs yelping and roosters crowing. That first visit lasted a week. When not recording in the men's house I carried out a census of the village.

Women play a prominent part in the account I give of this society, including as intermediaries between the clans they link when they marry, and as targets in warfare. It would have been of great interest, therefore, to talk to women independently of men about their life experiences.

4 Both Tok Pisin and other vernacular words are italicized. Unless the context clearly identifies them, Tok Pisin words are followed by the abbreviation 'TP'.

However, in this society, as in the five other language groups in which I did research, the convention is that a man, indigenous or foreigner, has no right to be alone in private, other than fleetingly, with a woman who is not a member of his immediately family, such as his wife, sister or mother. This meant that as a male anthropologist I never had the opportunity to talk at length with women in private about the topics that are the focus of this book in the way I did with men, both individually and in groups.

The second visit to Yelogu

After returning to Bangwis village I carefully went through the recordings I had made, and later the same year returned to Yelogu for another week to clarify matters that were not clear. During that second visit Ayam and Kiriyas also translated the historical songs that they and the other men had collectively performed, either in Kaunga or Kwoma, in the course of the original narrative.

The Kaunga songs (*howi*) mainly took the form of laments, a genre of oral poetry of which Kiriyas was the acknowledged master, and the only man in the village who knew them in detail. Laments commemorate the deaths of valued members of a community, typically people killed in intertribal fighting. In this society, as among neighbouring groups, only men composed the choral songs performed both during rituals and on other public occasions, but the texts of laments in many cases were said to follow closely the words that women had spontaneously used when keening for the death of a loved one. As with neighbouring groups, the Yalaku place no cultural value on preserving the names of the men who composed their songs, and the great majority are, in this sense, 'anonymous'. But the names of the women whose keening inspired many laments are remembered. These songs, therefore, effectively constitute a form of women's poetry, even though it was men who turned their keening into verse.

The Kwoma songs derived from one or other of the thirty or so historical cycles that all Kwoma-speaking tribes once performed. These were performed in rituals and during other large-scale communal activities, such as the roofing of a new domestic dwelling. One is named 'The Song of the Kaunga' (in Kwoma, *Kawoga Hokwa*). The several hundred separate songs in this cycle recall events of note in the history of all three Kaunga-speaking tribes, principally in the context of warfare in which different Kwoma groups were also involved. For well over a century, during times of peace, the Yalaku and other Kaunga have participated in the rituals performed by their Kwoma neighbours, just as Kwoma participated in theirs, and over time they came to know these songs as well as the Kwoma themselves. Ayam and other Yalaku men made it clear that they regarded the Kwoma-language songs that related to their community as forming just as much a part of their cultural heritage as those composed in their own language. Kwoma, furthermore, placed no restrictions on neighbouring peoples performing these songs while narrating their own histories, provided they acknowledged their source. They took the view that once a song had been composed and 'released', so that other Kwoma-speaking communities could incorporate it into their cycles, anyone could listen to it and learn it. Unlike rituals, these historical songs were not 'owned' exclusively by any one clan or tribe. Regrettably, the number of men and women who knew these songs during the final years of my fieldwork had rapidly declined from what it was in the early 1970s. The reason was that by the late 1990s all of the different Kwoma tribes had given up the ceremonies that were the principal occasions on which these songs were performed. This was not because Christian missions or the government had prohibited them, but simply because there were too few men left who had the knowledge required to stage them. Now, sadly, this vast body of oral poetry has been almost completely lost. Needless to say, this is also the case for every one of the other two hundred language groups in the Sepik.[5]

Songs are by far the most difficult texts that any fieldworker can try to translate. Like the best verse in any society, Yalaku songs are rich in allusions to many aspects of the wider culture that are inevitably lost on an outsider with only a limited knowledge of the language. Ayam and the other Yalaku men were well aware that they could convey in another language only a fragment of the richness of their songs. They were nevertheless keen to include at least some in their history of their community.

The material collected during those two trips to Yelogu in 1973 form the basis of the first two parts of this book. The third section, on myth, is based on material recorded during subsequent field trips, principally in 1978 and 1982. The myths were recorded not only at Yelogu but also at one or other of the three Kwoma villages that presently make

5 The linguist Renée Lambert-Brétière, who conducted several weeks of fieldwork among the Kwoma, based at Tongwinjamb village, in 2006 and 2008, rightly deplores the loss of knowledge of these historical song cycles and discusses its implications for language change (2018:81–2). But she is incorrect when she states that the songs were exclusively performed in secret, and were known only to a small number of initiated Kwoma men. In particular, she is mistaken when she states that Kwoma prohibited members of other language groups (such as the Yalaku) from hearing and learning them.

Figure 1.6 Ayam dressed for a performance of the Kwoma Minja ceremony held at Bangwis village in December 1973. He wears the insignia of a Yalaku (and Kwoma) warrior of the highest status. Like other men who grew up after warfare had come to an end, he donned the ornaments 'for purely decorative effect' (bilas nating, TP).

up the Honggwama tribe: Bangwis, Washkuk and Melawei. Ayam and other Yalaku men regularly visited these villages to participate in ceremonies and stay with relatives, and when they had time I took the opportunity to record these myths. Ayam, again, was the principal narrator.

Those recorded in Kwoma villages were narrated in public, outside one or other of the dwelling houses in which the Yalaku men were staying. On these occasions many Kwoma men, and some women, also sat in on the recordings. In striking contrast to other Ndu language groups, such as the Iatmul and Manambu (e.g. Harrison 1990, 1993; Wassmann 1991), Yalaku myths are not secret and anyone may listen to them. They share this feature with Kwoma myths. The majority of Yalaku myths, furthermore, have close Kwoma counterparts, and the Kwoma who sat in on the recording sessions told me they were interested to discover how similar or different the Yalaku myths were to their own. In private, men say that versions of myths that differ significantly from their own are 'wrong', or even 'crazy'. But in public they are polite and will listen to what is being narrated without comment.

Of the three Kaunga communities, I only ever visited the Yalaku. My reason for not visiting the other two was simply their difficulty of access. Until very recently there were no roads to speak of in this part of the Sepik and the only ways of reaching the two other Kaunga communities were by means of motorized canoe or other small watercraft along the shallow, debris-strewn and often impassable Screw River, or by a day or more of hard walking along forest tracks. Although I never visited the two other Kaunga communities, they nevertheless figure prominently in the second part of this book, as the Yalaku regularly fought with them. It needs to be kept in mind, therefore, that all of the information about these two other communities derives from outsiders: either the Yalaku or from Kwoma speakers in the neighbouring Washkuk Hills.

Even Yelogu village itself is difficult enough of access. From Ambunti there are only two ways of reaching it. One is by a demanding two- to three-hour walk along frequently steep and slippery forest tracks around the eastern side of the Washkuk Hills. The other is by a circuitous trip by motorized canoe or other small boat through the Kwasanamba Lagoon, a huge wetland to the east of the Washkuk range (Figures 1.1, 2.1 and 2.3). A narrow channel, frequently blocked by islands of floating grass, runs through these wetlands from close to Avatip village on the Sepik and terminates at a market site on the extreme eastern edge of the Washkuk Hills close to Yelogu village (Figure 2.3). From there the village can be reached on foot or by canoe. My visits to Yelogu were always made on foot along the forest track that connects it to Bangwis village in the Washkuk Hills (Figure 1.1).

Ayam and Kiriyas

In 1973 Ayam was aged about forty and Kiriyas roughly five to ten years older. They were two of the oldest men at Yelogu, though there were a number of older women. Kiriyas died in the late 1970s and Ayam in the early 1990s. With their deaths the Yalaku lost the last two masters of their oral traditions.

Tok Pisin as a research tool

The research on which this book is based was conducted primarily in Tok Pisin (New Guinea Pidgin). No Yalaku at the time spoke English. The use of Tok Pisin (TP) is unavoidable in a region of great linguistic diversity, where the anthropologist commonly finds that the community in which he or she is based is surrounded by villages belonging to two, three or even four other language groups. In my case the villages closest to my field base at Bangwis to the east, south and west spoke a total of four other languages: Kaunga (at Yelogu), Manambu (at Avatip, Yambon and Malu), Iatmul (at Brugnowi) and Mayo (at Nau'ali, Yesan and Maio).[6] I supplemented my use of Tok Pisin with as much of the local language as I could learn in the time available. At Yelogu I also made extensive use of Kwoma, of which I had a substantially greater knowledge and which most Yalaku could speak.

TP is a sophisticated language and one that takes many months of complete immersion to learn to speak fluently. Once learnt, it is a joy to use. The greatest compliment any villager can pay the anthropologist is to say, 'You speak TP like us, not like a white man.'

There are aspects of TP, however, of which the fieldworker needs to be acutely aware, as they must with any language. One is the existence of regional and age-based dialects. For example, in the 1970s older men and women throughout the Sepik tended to use the terms *brata* and *susa*, from English 'brother' and 'sister', for same- and opposite-sex siblings respectively, not male and female siblings, which is the way younger speakers used them. Thus, for an older woman her *brata* was a sister, and her *susa* a brother. Failure to realize this led the anthropologists Whiting and Reed to define incorrectly many Kwoma kinship terms (see Bowden 1977:221–7 and Whiting and Reed 1938–9:200–2). By the 1980s this age-based difference in the way relationship terms were used had largely disappeared, the usage of the older generation having given way to that of the younger.

The principal drawback of TP as a fieldwork language is the relative paucity of its vocabulary. For instance, the Yalaku make a distinction between mother's brother (*waw*) and a male speaker's sister's son (*rawa*). In TP they conflate

6 The spellings of village names vary greatly in different sources. 'Yesan' is also spelt 'Yessan', 'Yasyin' and 'Yasiyan' (e.g. Laycock 1973:125).

Figure 1.7 The mouth of the Screw River opposite the Manambu-speaking village of Avatip on the Sepik, 2006. The Screw enters the Sepik from the north.

them and refer to both as *kandere* (from English 'kindred', Mihalic 1971:105). This entails that when reference is made to someone's *kandere*, it will not necessarily be clear whether a mother's brother or a sister's son is being referred to – or some other relative the Yalaku also refer to by the same term, such as a mother's brother's son and (for a male speaker) a father's sister's son. This means that the listener has no option but to ask for clarification. This can be done either by seeking the equivalent indigenous term or, in TP, by means of a descriptive circumlocution, such as 'the mother's brother' (*brata man bilong mama*), or 'the sister's son' (*pikinini man bilong susa*).

TP also lacks the rich vocabulary of the indigenous languages for different types of plants, animals and other natural entities. The only way these can be specified more precisely is by asking for the indigenous terms. I also found it helpful to ask for the Kwoma equivalents of Yalaku terms for animals and other natural entities, the referents of which in many cases I understood. Ayam and other Yalaku men quickly learned to provide me with this additional information without being asked. Occasionally, they only gave me the Kwoma terms, sometimes without pointing out what they were doing.

By seeking the Kwoma equivalents of Yalaku terms, where they existed, it soon became apparent that although these two languages belong to different families according to Laycock's classification (Laycock 1973), they share the same, or similar, words for many things. For instance, the Yalaku refer to the type of hardwood tree known in TP as *garamut* (of which there are several named subtypes) as

nyaba (or *nya'aba*); Kwoma refer to it as *nyeebi*. Again, the Yalaku refer to a men's house as *horobo*; Kwoma as *korobo*. (See also the examples in Aikhenvald 2020.)

My research at Yelogu also very quickly demonstrated that there are many parallels between Yalaku and Kwoma social organization, as in the structure of marriage rules and relationship terms (see Chapter 4 and Bowden 1983b). These parallels might well be a consequence of long interaction between the two language groups. For several generations at least, all three Kaunga communities have intermarried with the Kwoma. These marriages entailed that when women, Kwoma or Kaunga, moved to their husbands' communities – as they always did – they took their languages with them, languages their husbands, brothers and sons would have had little option but to learn, so that they could interact with their affines and fulfil the many obligations to them that the marriages entailed (see Chapter 4).[7]

Yalaku origins

The Yalaku trace their ultimate origin to the low-lying and densely forested region that runs in a band across the northern end of the Washkuk Hills to the Yimi River in the east (see Figure 1.1). There the spirits in human form from which they believe they are descended emerged from a pre-human world, either from the underworld through a hole in the ground or from a tree (see Chapter 3).

In all probability the Kaunga as a whole migrated into this region, during a period now lost to cultural memory, down the Amaku River from the southern foothills of the coastal mountain chain, in the area where the Abelam and speakers of other Ndu languages are located today. Support for this conjecture is provided by the fact that the Yalaku say that of all the neighbouring languages, Abelam is closest to theirs. Before warfare in this region came to an end in the 1950s, the Yalaku had little if any direct contact with Abelam speakers. However, when warfare came to an end and travel well outside the boundaries of their own language group became possible for the first time in their history, Yalaku men began travelling by road from the trading post at Pagwi on the Sepik to the township of Wewak on the north coast. This took them through Abelam villages. There they discovered, to their astonishment, that the people spoke a language similar to theirs, some of which they could understand. They say that the Manambu and Iatmul languages, in contrast, are quite different from their own.

The Yalaku have evidently been strongly influenced culturally by peoples speaking unrelated languages located on the southern slopes of the same coastal range, but further to the west in the region in which the headwaters of the Yimi River are located. The Yalaku themselves discovered this in the 1960s when they and other Kaunga began travelling on foot into this region to purchase cowries and other marine shells to make the valuables they required for bride wealth and other obligatory inter-clan payments. The two main towns in this area are Dreikikir and Nuku. While staying overnight in villages on the way, they found that the myths of many of the peoples in this region were the 'same' as theirs. The names of the protagonists in the stories, they said, were different, but the events described were broadly the 'same'. Even more surprisingly, they learned that some of the places referred to in their own versions of these myths were actually located in this region. On the basis of these discoveries, they concluded that this must be the region in which the events described in at least some of their myths had taken place, and that the stories over time had been passed from village to village from the coastal mountains down the Yimi River, or by parallel routes, into the region their forebears occupied.

Before they began making this month-long round trip into the coastal mountains, the Yalaku had obtained marine shells through trade with neighbouring Sepik River peoples, principally Manambu speakers at Avatip. These river peoples, however, have been in contact with Europeans for a much longer period than the Kaunga, and by the 1960s they were beginning to replace shells to make their bride-wealth and other inter-clan payments with cash. They acquired the shells from groups closer to the mouth of the Sepik. For the Yalaku, therefore, by the 1960s their traditional source of shells was beginning to dry up.

Kaunga dialects

According to the Yalaku, their language is composed of two dialects. One is spoken by them and the Nowiniyen, and the other by the Motek. The linguist Aikhenvald (pers. comm.) reports that there are also minor dialect differences between the language as spoken by the Yalaku and the Nowiniyen.

People attributed the fact that they and the Nowiniyen speak the same dialect to the descent of the majority of their clans from a set of anthropomorphic spirits who emerged together from the same forest tree (see Chapter 3). The Yalaku, however, offered no information about the origin of the Motek, who seem to have had a significantly different cultural history. This has potentially included much closer contact over several generations with different Kwoma-speaking tribes located to the north of the Washkuk Hills. Unlike the Yalaku and Nowiniyen, for instance, the Motek possessed versions of the three rituals named Yena, Minja and Nokwi that all Kwoma-speaking tribes performed up to the end of the 1990s (see Figure 1.6; Bowden 1983a). All Kwoma agree that these rituals were not indigenous to

7 For another example, though in a very different ethnographic context, of two peoples with different languages intermarrying and possessing kinship systems that are very similar in structure, see Trautmann 2012:43.

them, but derived from the Apukili, a once powerful but now defunct tribal group formerly located immediately to the north of the Washkuk Hills, and whose presence in this region predated the emergence of their own ancestors from the underworld through a hole in the ground close to Amaki village (see Figure 1.1). Kwoma report that they purchased the right to perform these rituals from the Apukili with shell valuables, substantial quantities of smoked pork, and young women given as wives. The Motek have also had a long association with the Apukili, and it is possible that they acquired the right to perform the same three rituals from them, or one of their Kwoma-speaking neighbours.

The few Apukili who survive today all speak Kwoma, but originally spoke another language. This language has not yet been definitely identified, but it was almost certainly Kwanga. Kwanga is spoken by a substantial population, much larger than that of either the Yalaku or Kwoma, located on the southern foothills of the coastal mountains directly to the north of the Washkuk Hills (Laycock 1973:24). Kwanga is the language most closely related to Kwoma.

According to the Yalaku, the Kwoma-speaking group to which the Motek had the closest ties was the Apalatak, the most northerly of the five Nukuma-dialect tribes (Bowden 1997). Today the Apalatak have their main settlement at Ablatak village.[8] However, for a time it seems they lived much further to the east, closer to the Yimi River, and possibly even shared a settlement with the Motek. The relationship between these two groups was so close that Ayam and other Yalaku men even described the Motek as an 'offshoot' of this Kwoma-speaking community. Laycock actually classifies the Motek, under their village name 'Ambuken', as Kwoma speakers (1973:24). According to my information the Motek did speak Kwoma, but by 1973 only as a second language.

Although the Apukili no longer exist as a separate political group, like the two other Kaunga tribes they occupy a prominent place in this book in the section on warfare, as the Yalaku frequently fought with them (see Chapters 7–11). During the first half of the twentieth century the Yalaku took an active part in the eventual destruction of this once powerful political group. The role they played is described in later chapters.

Tribal composition

In addition to differences in dialect and cultural history, there are also significant differences in the ethnic composition of the three Kaunga communities.

The different clans that made up the Yalaku community in 1973 were reportedly all native Kaunga speakers. In contrast, each of the other two tribes consisted of a core of Kaunga speakers plus other groups of diverse origins linguistically who had been incorporated into their communities in relatively recent times. These different groups all figure prominently in the history of the Yalaku in the second part of this book.

As noted above, the Yalaku say that the Nowiniyen tribe was founded by Kaunga speakers descended from spirits who emerged from the same tree, and at the same time, as the spirit ancestors of several of their clans. However, in the early part of the twentieth century the Nowiniyen took in a group of Kwoma-speaking refugees who had belonged to a once powerful and independent tribe named Awokapa Nggiley. In the late nineteenth century this group had its main settlement at a site named Awokapa at the northern end of the Washkuk Hills. Early in the twentieth century major fighting with the neighbouring Kwoma-speaking Tongwinjamb, and later with other groups, resulted in this tribe being reduced in size to the point where it could no longer maintain itself as an independent political unit. Its few remaining families scattered, the majority taking refuge with the Nowiniyen. The Yalaku were actively involved in the destruction of this community (see Chapter 10). I have no information about how many families of Awokapa origin still formed part of the Nowiniyen community in 1973, but there was at least one, as it provided the wife, in that year, of one of the younger Yalaku men (see Chapter 2, Household 10).

Around the same time, the Nowiniyen community also took in a sizable group deriving from another once powerful, but by then no longer independent, political group named the Mboliyombo. This is evidently the group that Laycock refers to as 'Bariamp' (Laycock 1973:28). According to the Yalaku, the Mboliyombo originally spoke Sawos, an Ndu-family language located immediately to their east (Laycock 1973:27–8, 98, 114), and lived in the region where Jama village is located today, directly to the north of the trading post at Pagwi on the Sepik. Warfare with other Sawos speakers drove them west into the area the Kaunga occupy. When they joined the Nowiniyen tribe they adopted Kaunga as their first language.

Up until the 1960s the Mboliyombo people occupied their own hamlet within the larger Nowiniyen settlement, at a site named Mbuwiyamanambu. This site, and the settlement formerly located at it, is the source of the name Australian government officials based at Ambunti gave the Nowiniyen settlement as a whole. This name is spelt 'Biamanumbu' in the *Village Directory* for 1960 (p. 103) and 'Biananumbu' in the 1968 edition (p. 75).[9]

In the 1960s the Mboliyombo people abandoned this site and established a new hamlet on an area of land named

8 'Ablatak' is the government spelling of 'Apalatak'.

9 Donald Layock mistakenly identifies the language spoken at this hamlet as different from Kaunga – unless he is referring to the Sawos language the people originally spoke, but by then used only as second language (Laycock 1973:28).

Holambor. This hamlet is separated by a short stretch of forest from the remainder of the Nowiniyen community, which is situated on a hill named Kumanjuwi. Today, the Yalaku use 'Kumanjuwi', rather than the government's 'Biananumbu', as the name for the Nowiniyen settlement as a whole.

In the late nineteenth century, or possibly early in the twentieth, the Nowiniyen also took in a substantial group of families that derived from another once powerful tribe that had declined drastically in size through warfare. Like the Awokapa and Mboliyombo, this group had reached the point where it could no longer function as an independent political community. This was the Ngala-speaking tribe named Tumbuma. The Yalaku also know the Tumbuma as 'Mowumowundu'.

The Tumbuma reportedly spoke the same language as the Ngala (= Nggala, Gala), the people who occupied the Washkuk Hills up until the middle of the nineteenth century, but were then violently expelled by the Kwoma when they entered the range from the north.[10] The few Ngala who survived the warfare migrated into the low-lying country to the east of the Washkuk Hills and eventually merged with the Tumbuma. The Yalaku report that the Ngala were an ancient offshoot of the Tumbuma. By taking refuge with them, the Ngala were therefore returning to their parent community. Like Kaunga, Ngala is an Ndu-family language, but today it is spoken only at Suagab, a village located on the south side of the Sepik roughly fifty kilometres upriver from Ambunti (Laycock 1973:28, 117). It has not yet been determined when the people at Suagab broke away from other Ngala speakers and moved to their present site.

In 1973 only one man of Tumbuma origin was said still to be living at Kumanjuwi. This was Kayindu, the community's elected local government councillor. Kayindu also acted as the councillor for the Motek, as these two communities were too small on their own to elect separate councillors. As elsewhere in this region, the duty of a councillor is to administer his village on behalf of the local government council based at Ambunti, with the assistance of two or more elected 'committee men' (*Komiti*). This involves holding community meetings periodically, so that people can raise matters of personal concern and, if possible, resolve minor village disputes. He also represents his village (or villages) at council meetings at Ambunti.

In 1973 the Motek tribe similarly consisted of a core of Kaunga speakers, but with the addition of members of several formerly independent groups of different linguistic origin. Their village name, 'Ambuken', derives from the site at which the community is located. The Yalaku pronounced this name 'Humbuken'. 'Ambuken' is the government spelling (see the *Village Directories* for 1960 and 1968, pp. 103 and 75 respectively). Here I use the government spelling. As noted earlier, Laycock (1973:24) classifies the people at Ambuken as Kwoma speakers.

In 1973 one subgroup at Ambuken consisted of a several families of Apukili origin. Like other once powerful but now defunct tribes in this region, the Apukili declined dramatically in numbers over the second half of the nineteenth century due to warfare with their neighbours. By the middle of the twentieth century they had been reduced to the point where they could no longer function as an independent political group. The bulk of the surviving families took refuge with the Tongwinjamb Kwoma, a community to which they had long been allied politically. Others took refuge with the Motek, another ally of long standing. The Yalaku took an active part in the final destruction of the Apukili as an independent group in the middle of the twentieth century. Their role is described in Chapter 12.

A second subgroup at Ambuken consisted of the few remaining members of another once powerful but by then defunct tribe that the Yalaku named Masakiina. The members of this group at Ambuken reportedly spoke both Kaunga and Kwoma. According to the Yalaku, the Masakiina people originated much further to the north – in the direction of the region occupied by Kwanga speakers – but at some point in the nineteenth century migrated south accompanied by members of another political group named Masalaka. The two groups reportedly first came into contact with speakers of the Nukuma dialect of Kwoma and adopted the Nukuma dialect as their first language. They also adopted major aspects of Kwoma (and Apukili) culture, such as the Yena, Minja and Nokwi ceremonies. Later the two groups declined markedly in size due to warfare and merged with the Motek, simultaneously adopting Kaunga as their first language. In 1973 the Masakiina families still living at Ambuken occupied a separate hamlet on an area of land named Sowaniimba. However, at some point in the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries the Masalaka moved elsewhere, but the people at Yelogu were unaware of their current whereabouts. Laycock's *Sepik Languages* lists a village named Masalaga (1973:105). This name is pronounced in the same way as the one here spelt 'Masalaka'.[11] Early maps show a village named Masalaga located on the western side of the Yimi River on the southern foothills of the Torricelli Mountains close to the township of Nuku. This is possibly the same political group

10 The Mayo-speaking peoples now located at Yesan and Maio villages (Figure 1.1) also took an active part in this expulsion of the Ngala. They also entered the Washkuk Hills from the north, and in the second half of the nineteenth century had their main settlements in the southern half of this range.

11 Elsewhere in his book (1973:24) Laycock spells this name 'Masalanga'. Laycock identifies the Masalanga as Kwanga speakers.

Figure 1.8 A carving attached to a side post in the Bangwis village men's house named Wayipanal, 1982. The sculpture was made in the 1960s by Kwonggi of Melawei village as a contribution to the decorative artwork in this building. It consists of three Masakiina-style Yena ceremony 'heads.' Kwonggi made the carving, with their permission, following a visit he made to the Masakiina settlement at Ambuken village to receive a 'friendship' net bag. The third head, at the bottom of the post, is oriented upwards and is largely obscured by the slit-gong in front of it. This carving is the only evidence I was able to obtain of the Masakiina style of carving.

as the one the Yalaku know by the same name (see Allied Geographical Section 1943: map 2; see also Bragge n.d.:327).

Kaunga spoken as a second language

In 1973 Kaunga was spoken as a second language by many older Kwoma, such as my guide Manenggey. It was also spoken as a second language at Kayukw, a small village on the eastern side of the Screw River roughly midway between the confluence of its two main branches, the Yimi (western) and the Amaku (eastern), and the point where it meets the Sepik River directly opposite the Manambu-speaking village of Avatip (Figure 1.7). According to the Yalaku, the dialect of Kaunga spoken at Kayukw is the same as theirs. This village reportedly was originally Sawos-speaking but migrated to its present site, from the east, in the area in which the two Sawos-speaking villages of Jama and Sengo are presently located. Many Kayukw reportedly also speak Manambu, the language of Avatip, their nearest neighbour on the Sepik (Laycock, 1973:100; Harrison 1993:72).

Group names

In common with most if not all other Sepik peoples, the Yalaku have no name for their language group as a whole. This can be correlated with the fact that the speakers of this language never acted as a group in any context.[12] The linguist Aikhenvald names it 'Yalaku' after the community in which she, like me, did fieldwork. This name has the distinct advantage of being indigenous, but I prefer 'Kaunga' which is now established among linguists and anthropologists (e.g. Harrison 1993; Laycock and Z'graggen 1975:750; Ross, in press). Using 'Kaunga' also enables me readily to distinguish the language group as a whole from the people at Yelogu village. It also enables me to avoid potentially offending the Nowiniyen and Motek by naming their language after just some of its speakers. The Yalaku refer to themselves variously as 'Yalaku', 'Yela' (or 'Yala') and 'Yela Hambura'.

The name 'Kaunga' actually derives from the neighbouring Kwoma. Kwoma use this name primarily for the Yalaku, and name the Nowiniyen and Motek as 'Kambor' and 'Machek' respectively. But they also use 'Kaunga' by extension for the language group as a whole. They do so principally in the context of the historical songs (Kwoma: *magwil hokwa*) that make up the cycle named 'The Song of the Kaunga'. In a number of these songs 'Kaunga' is used for all three Kaunga-speaking tribes. For instance, one song refers to both the Motek and Nowiniyen as 'upstream Kaunga' (in Kwoma: *nuku Kawoga*), on the basis of their relative location on the Yimi River. The Yalaku, in contrast, who historically have lived further down the Yimi, are described as 'downstream Kaunga' (Kwoma: *tobo Kawoga*). As already noted, the Yalaku and other Kaunga have participated for well over a century in the Kwoma rituals in which cycles such as 'The Song of the Kaunga' were performed – until the Kwoma stopped holding them in the late 1990s. Although composed in Kwoma, the Yalaku know these songs and therefore recognize 'Kaunga' as a name for their language group as a whole.

Note on orthography

In this book all italicized Kaunga (and other) vernacular words are spelt according to the orthography used in my dictionary of Kwoma (Bowden 1997). This enables comparisons and contrasts to be drawn quickly between the two languages. The orthography was devised for Kwoma by the missionary linguists Orneal and Martha Kooyers (Kooyers 1974; Kooyers, Kooyers and Bee 1971). I adopted it on the recommendation of the late Donald Laycock, in his day the doyen of Sepik linguists.

In this orthography the letters '*b*', '*d*', '*g*' and '*j*' stand for prenasalized phonemes and are equivalent in sound to 'mb', 'nd', 'ngg' and 'nj', respectively. Thus '*g*' is pronounced in the same way as 'ng' in *finger* – normally represented in the ethnographic literature by 'ngg'. Similarly, '*j*' is equivalent in sound to 'nj' as in *banjo*. The letters 'ii' correspond to the schwa and are pronounced similarly to 'e' in 'hunted'.[13]

Vernacular proper names are mainly spelt without italics. The phonemes that would be represented *in italics* by the letters '*b*', '*d*', '*g*' and '*j*' are therefore replaced with 'mb', 'nd', 'ngg' and 'nj' respectively. The only exception is where they form part of vernacular texts, as in songs; there they are italicized.

Some vernacular proper names have acquired established spellings in the ethnographic literature. To avoid confusion, I follow the established spellings here. 'Kaunga' is a case in point. Spelt according to the convention adopted here for proper names this would be written 'Kawongga'. If italicized, it would be written '*Kawoga*'.

12 The same applies to neighbouring Kwoma speakers, who have no name for their language group as a whole. The people who live in the Washkuk Hills refer to themselves as 'Kwoma', a name that literally means 'hill people' (*kwow*, hill; *ma*, people) and only refers to the groups that occupy this range. They refer to Kwoma-speakers living in the low-lying country further to the north as 'Nukuma' or 'headwater people' (*nuku*, top, up-river). The Nukuma use these names in the same way. The linguist Lambert-Brétière (2018:75) incorrectly defines 'Nukuma' as 'Water people' ('*hommes de l'eau*'), having apparently misheard 'Nukuma' (*nuku*, top + *ma*, people) as 'Ukuma' (*uku*, water + *ma*).

13 Aikhenvald (2020, in press) spells some Yalaku words differently from me; e.g. 'tu' (man, human) as distinct from my 'ndu' (or 'du'). In all matters linguistic I am more than happy to defer to Aikhenvald, but I keep the spellings used in this book as a record of how I heard words pronounced when I was in the field, forty years before she began her research at Yelogu.

Photographs

Unless otherwise indicated, all of the photographs in this book derive from my own fieldwork and are dated. Given the very brief time I spent at Yelogu I did not have time to photograph everything I would have liked. Photographs taken at that village are therefore supplemented by a selection taken in other Sepik language groups; these are mostly of objects that are similar, if not identical, in form to those found at Yelogu. Their sources are all identified.

Figure 2.1 View of the south-eastern corner of the Washkuk Hills looking south towards the distant Sepik, 2006. The edge of Kwasanamba Lagoon is on the left.

2

Yelogu village

The location

Yelogu village is located at the end of one of the many spurs on the eastern side of the Washkuk Hills that terminate on the edge of several hundred square kilometres of low-lying and densely forested country. This low-lying country extends far to the north of the Washkuk range and east to the Yimi and Screw Rivers. The coordinates for the village are 4°09'36.95"S and 142°48'04.26"E. The northern side of this vast swathe of adjacent tropical forest is bounded by an area of massive grasslands (Figure 13.2). Scholars have surmised that these are human in origin and are the product of overuse of the forest during a period now lost to cultural memory (but see Roscoe 2011:33).

The forest provides an abundance of game animals, such as wild pigs, cassowaries, flying foxes, birds and plant foods. The many small rivers that flow through it, south towards the Sepik, as well as its many lagoons, abound in fish, crocodiles and other aquatic resources. The forest also contains many areas of land suitable for gardening. The lower-lying parts are the location of huge stands of sago palm, mostly natural, but some planted. These provide the Yalaku and other Kaunga with their staple food. The region is also dotted with small hills that the Yalaku and other Kaunga have used at different times in their history as sites for settlements.

The people report that they have traded from ancestral times with the neighbouring Kwoma in the Washkuk Hills to the west, exchanging commodities to which they have ready access, such as the black clay used throughout this region as a ground for painting on bark and wood, as well as pork and cassowary meat, for stone for adze blades. They have also traded from ancestral times with the neighbouring Manambu- and Iatmul-speaking peoples on the Sepik, exchanging the sago they have in abundance for dried fish, marine shells and other riverine products.

The site on which Yelogu village is located is actually owned by Nowil, one of the two largest and politically most powerful of the eighteen clans that make up the neighbouring Kwoma-speaking Honggwama tribe (Bowden 2006:13). The Honggwama are the most southerly of the four Kwoma political groups in the Washkuk Hills. Kwoma name the site Nggwoyimbi She Kwow, literally 'mounds [*kwow*] of excreted materials [*she*] thrown up by giant earthworms [*gwoyibi*]'. These giant worms are not eaten by people but they are a favourite food of wild pigs.

The Yalaku moved their main settlement to this site permanently around the 1940s, when they and the Honggwama entered into a formal political and military alliance. This was designed to ensure that warfare never took place between them. Nowil clan leaders allocated the site to the Yalaku to provide them with a safe place to live after they had been involved in a prolonged and debilitating period of warfare with the Tongwinjamb, formerly the Yalaku tribe's closest Kwoma political ally. By the 1940s the Yalaku had been reduced in numbers to the point where they could no longer defend themselves without the support of outsiders. Following the establishment of the alliance with the Honggwama, the Yalaku almost immediately called on them to help drive several families belonging to the Apukili tribe off land they owned much further to the north, something they could not do on their own. The Yalaku and Honggwama consolidated the alliance through several marriages (see Chapter 12). The alliance continues unbroken to this day.

Over the course of this alliance the Yalaku have been drawn increasingly into the Honggwama Kwoma cultural sphere. By the 1970s all adult Yalaku spoke Kwoma as a second language, and older Yalaku men and women actively participated in Honggwama ceremonies, something they continued to do until the Honggwama ceased performing their rituals in the late 1990s (Bowden 1983a, 2011). Today the Honggwama regard the Yalaku as part of their political group. In the national census Yelogu is counted as part of Bangwis village.

The Yalaku are not the first people to have built a settlement on their current village site. Around the middle of the nineteenth century, when this community was located much further to the north, the site was the location of a short-lived settlement owned by the once powerful but now defunct Ngala-speaking Tumbuma tribe (see Chapter 1). In 1973 a mango tree planted by the Tumbuma was still growing there. The native mango, like the *laulau*

Figure 2.2 View looking north-east from Bangwis village (Kwoma language group) across a swampy area abounding in sago palms to an eastern spur of the Washkuk Hills at the end of which Yelogu village is located, 1973.

(TP) or Malay Apple tree, is long lived and unlike coconut palms will flourish for decades after a village has been abandoned and the site reverted to forest. Mango and *laulau* trees scattered throughout the forests in this region mark old village sites.

The economy

The Yalaku still practise a largely subsistence economy. The major source of animal protein in the diet is fish, to which Yalaku have access in unlimited quantities. During the dry season women catch fish and other small aquatic creatures with hand nets while wading in shallow forest streams and lagoons. During the wet season (roughly October to March), when flood waters from the Sepik raise the levels of lagoons and streams, and make wading with hand nets more difficult, the Yalaku obtain much of the fish they consume on a daily basis through trade with neighbouring peoples on the Sepik. The river women continue their fishing activities unabated. Women are the principal traders on both sides (see Bowden 1991). The diet of fish is supplemented with forest game, such as wild pigs, birds and flying foxes. Today, men also fish year-round on lagoons, from canoes with commercial gill nets.

Sago-processing and gardening are undertaken by individual families working independently. A married couple and their older children will collectively fell a sago palm, lever off a section of the hard outer shell and take it in turn to pulverise the exposed pith with blunt-ended adzes. The edible starch is then leached out of the pulverised pith (Bowden 2006:26) in a trough formed from a section of the stem of a sago palm branch, which is U-shaped in cross section. Water is taken up with a long-handled ladle from

Figure 2.3 Houses owned by Bangwis village (Kwoma) and Yalaku people at the market site named Kwarananggambaw (location 'R' in Figure 6.1) on the eastern side of the Washkuk Hills on the edge of the Kwasanamba Lagoon, 2006. Avatip villagers reach the site by canoe through a channel (visible on the left) and trade there with both the Yalaku and Kwoma.

an adjacent water source. While 'washing' (leaching) sago, spent pith is thrown into a heap to one side. This provides a bed on which highly prized edible fungi later grow. The fungi are boiled and eaten with sago.

'Fried' sago (*praim*, TP) is made by baking a pancake of raw flour on a hot plate, traditionally a broken segment of a large clay pot. 'Boiled' sago (*bolim*, TP) is made by mixing flour in a pot with hot water, where it forms a jelly. Like the neighbouring Kwoma, Yalaku eat boiled sago on a daily basis. They eat fried sago only when they are in mourning as an act of self-abnegation. Sepik River peoples, in contrast, eat fried sago on a daily basis.

The Yalaku do not keep domesticated pigs in any number. The domestic animals are dogs, chickens and the occasional cassowary. Dogs sleep with their owners at night and are valued as guard animals, alerting the occupants of the house to the presence of people outside who might be searching for leavings to use in sorcery, or wandering ghosts looking for food. At night they also alert people to the presence of pythons in the tops of trees that have entered the village in search of roosting chickens. If a python is caught it is eaten. Dogs are also highly valued as hunters of small pigs and other forest game, which they chase down and capture. The indigenous dog is of the Asian or 'singing' variety. One will start howling and within a few seconds all of the other dogs within earshot will join in. Thirty seconds or so later the 'singing' will suddenly stop.

Yalaku men use a variety of techniques to hunt pigs. One, used more commonly in the past than today, is a communal pig drive in an area of open grassland. Young

Figure 2.4 The township of Ambunti at the southern end of the Washkuk Hills, 1979.

boys act as beaters and drive pigs along the tracks the animals use through the long grass, towards men waiting with spears. Another is undertaken by men individually at night, but formerly only when there was a full moon to give sufficient light to see. This involves building a screen of sago-palm branches in the forest next to a felled palm from which a section of the tough outer bark has been removed. The hunter then clears a track of twigs and other debris that might make a noise if stepped on leading from the blind to a spot where he can wait at night for pigs to approach. Several days after constructing the blind the hunter will inspect the site to see if pigs have been active. If they have, he will return at night and, waiting at the end of the track he has cleared, listen for the sound of pigs chewing the pith. He will then slowly approach the screen and, when close enough, throw one or more spears over it at an unsuspecting animal on the other side. Men say that hunting wild pigs requires the same range of skills as fighting in warfare: physical strength, courage, tenacity and skill with a spear. Like warfare, it is an exceptionally dangerous activity, as a wounded pig can turn on a hunter and kill him. Not surprisingly, when warfare was still practised the leading warriors were invariably also the most active and successful hunters of wild pigs.

Like other Sepik peoples the Yalaku also grow tobacco around their dwelling houses and in gardens. The traditional method of smoking was by rolling dried leaves in a rectangular sheet of dried banana leaf to make a long cigar. Both men and women smoke. Following European contact, the pipe became popular in the Sepik, but by the 1970s it had gone out of fashion and people had reverted to rolling tobacco, either in banana leaves or, if available, newspaper.

Like sweet potato and manioc, tobacco is an introduced crop, but unlike the other two it entered the Sepik long before European settlement in this region. The Yalaku think of it as an indigenous plant and believe that their name for it, *nyiigwin*, is the origin of the name Europeans give their country: 'New Guinea'. Like many other crops, tobacco is the subject of an origin myth, but a much shorter one than those that relate to the origin of yams and sago. This myth is given in Chapter 14.

Settlement patterns

In common with other politically independent groups in the middle Sepik, the Yalaku tribe is made up of a number of named, patrilineal and patrilocal exogamous clans (*tukuriisi*). Yalaku clans differ from those found in some neighbouring language groups only in their small

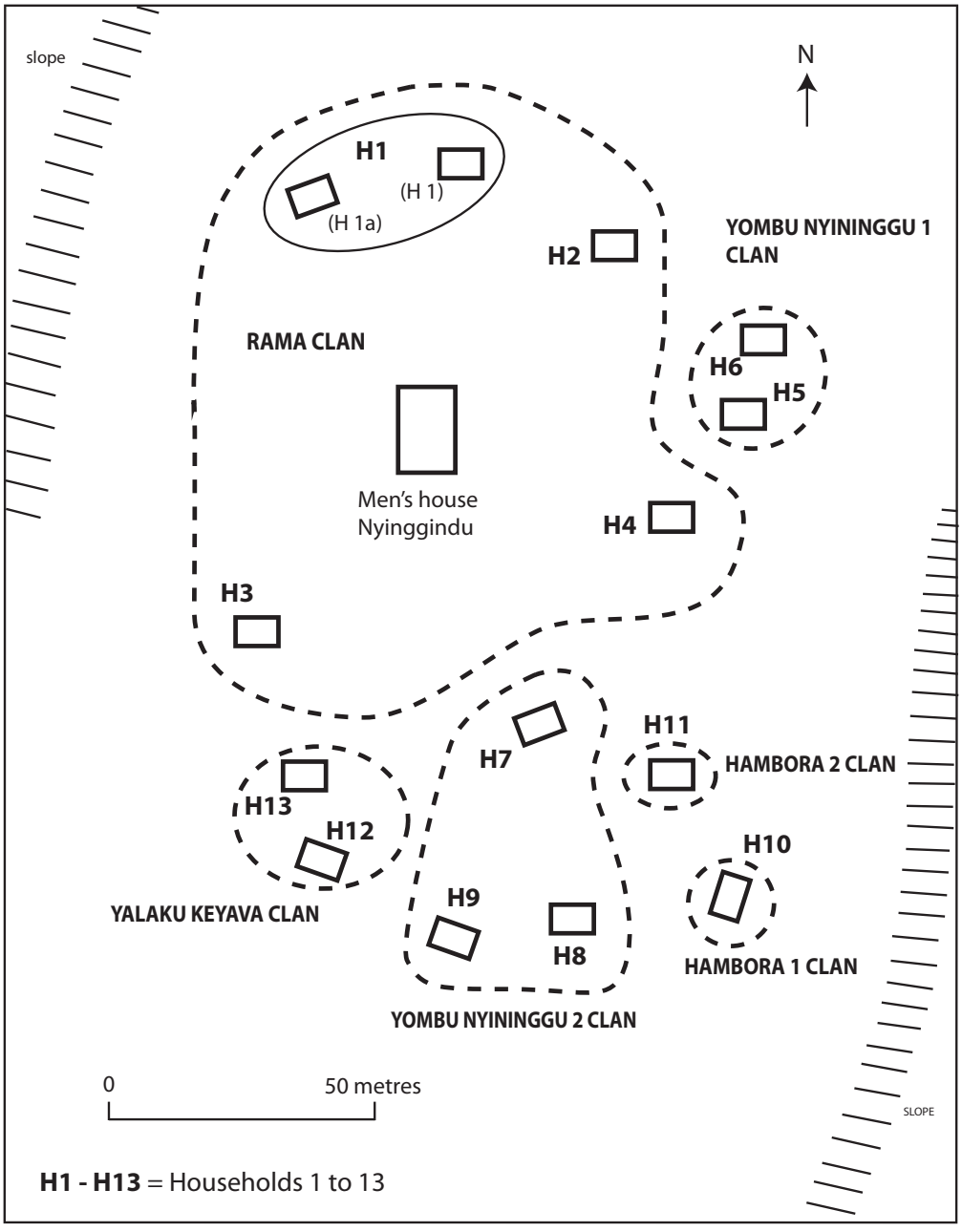


Figure 2.5 Sketch map of Yelogu village, 1973.

size. Clans are patrilineal, in that a person is normally and normatively a member of the exogamous group of which his or her father belongs. Among the Yalaku, as elsewhere in the Sepik, adoption is common. An adopted child – son or daughter – has the same status as one born to its parents.

Clans are patrilocal (or, more accurately, patrivirilocal), in that a woman when she marries takes up residence with her husband, who typically lives next to his father, if he is still alive. Clans are also localized, as their adult male members normatively build their separate dwellings next to or close to each other in the same part of their community's larger settlement.

In 1973 the village of Yelogu had a men's house (*horobo*) at its centre; the domestic dwellings belonging to its adult male members formed a rough circle around it.

In the sketch map of the village (Figure 2.5) the different dwellings are numbered. The numbers correspond to those of the households to which their members belonged.

In 1973 there were six Yalaku clans. Their names were:

i) Rama;
ii) Yalaku Keyava (YK);
iii) Yombu Nyininggu 1 (YN1);
iv) Yombu Nyininggu 2 (YN2);
v) Hambora 1 (H1);
vi) Hambora 2 (H2).

The numbers '1' and '2' are a modern way of indicating that clans that otherwise share the same name were historically closely associated in some way but currently form separate exogamous groups. The genealogical structure of these clans is given in the charts in Appendix A. All persons included in the charts are numbered for ease of reference. They are also listed separately under the same numbers in the index in Appendix B.

In 1973 no Yalaku clan had more than three married male members. The two with three married members each were Rama and YN2. Three had only two married male members: YK and YN1. The other two had only one each: H1 and H2. Ayam and Kiriyas repeatedly emphasized that in terms of size all six clans were but pale shadows of what they had been half a century earlier.

Up until the middle of the twentieth century the Yalaku tribe also contained a larger number of clans than it does today. The others became extinct when they lost all of their male members, principally through warfare or disease. Three of these extinct, but formerly large, clans were named Kumur, Korembikow ('Mango') and Ya ('Fire'). When the male members of a clan die out, any surviving female members are absorbed into other clans in the same tribe, normally other clans belonging to the same totemic division (see below). Its land is similarly divided by common agreement between these same groups.

In this society every married woman is entitled to have at least one clan 'brother' who will actively 'look after' her throughout her adult life (see Chapter 4). The brother's duties involve regularly visiting her to make sure she is being well treated by her husband, and taking her regular gifts of food. Her husband is required periodically to 'pay' (*toku*) for these gifts with shell valuables (or, today, cash). If a woman outlives all of her male clansmen, she is entitled to turn to a man in another clan for this service. When she does so, she becomes a member of that group.

Clan property

Clans, rather than tribes as wholes, are the basic land-owning units. The land is owned corporately by all of a clan's male members but by common agreement individual men exercise exclusive control over different parts. They pass these rights to their sons. If a man dies without male heirs his rights over land revert to the other members of his group, who redistribute them among themselves.

The clan's land does not form a single block but consists of hundreds of named areas of forest and sections of streams and lagoons. These are scattered throughout the territory the group has occupied at different periods in its history. The names and locations of these different parcels of land are remembered with great care and form part of each clan's history.

Each adult male member of a clan controls parcels of every type of land found in this region: tracts of forest used for hunting, gathering and gardening; sago stands; and sections of streams and lagoons used for fishing.

Today the great bulk of the land the different Yalaku clans own is located too far to the north of the community's main settlement to be visited on a daily basis. Men nevertheless still actively assert title to this land by maintaining a network of bush houses on it, which they periodically visit with their families and at which they might stay for several weeks at a time to garden, hunt and forage. Women do not own land but a man will commonly give a married sister the right to use land he controls on a temporary basis.

In addition to land, the male members of a clan corporately own an open-ended number of spirits (*wari*). These include both the spirits in anthropomorphic form who founded their group, and the many spirits whose ultimate abode is in the underworld but which periodically manifest themselves to people on different parts of the clan's land. Men and women encounter these spirits by chance, either in dreams when they are temporarily living at garden houses in the areas in which the spirits are located, or by seeing them in the form of images in pools and streams. When a hitherto unknown spirit reveals itself to someone it typically announces its name. Regardless of who 'finds' it, the spirit is owned by the clan that owns the land where it was encountered.

When a previously unknown spirit reveals itself, its name is added to the corpus owned by the clan on whose land it resides, and it is subsequently used as a personal name. Names of male spirits are given to males and those of female spirits to females. For instance, two Rama girls living at Yelogu in 1973, Siilumu (47) and Menjuwar (42), were named after two 'female' (*takwa*) spirits their clan owned. The names of other spirits are also used as personal names. Ayam's father Waspen (23) was named after the 'male' (*du*) supernatural being who founded his clan (see Genealogical Chart 1). Some spirits are identified with secret bamboo flutes formerly played during rituals, the sounds of which were said to be their 'voices' (*singaut*, TP). Their names are also given to clan members. Flutes could only be viewed by initiated men, but the community as a whole was permitted to listen to them being played and knew the names of the spirits with which they were identified.[14]

Each clan also corporately owns a set of totems (*chaba*) made up for the most part of named varieties of plants, animals and other natural entities. For instance, the clan

14 As elsewhere in the middle Sepik, Yalaku flutes are played transversely in pairs. The two instruments in each pair are of slightly different length; this gives them sounds of slightly different register. Each instrument has a mouth hole but no finger holes. The players exploit the natural harmonics of the hollow tubes to produce tunes. Bateson gives a good account of the technicalities of Iatmul flute playing in Naven (Bateson 1958:264; see also Tuzin 1980).

Figure 2.6 Ayam's house at Yelogu village, 1973.

named Yalaku Keyava (YK) owns one of the several varieties of hardwood tree known in TP as *garamut*. Members of this clan say that their ownership of this tree derives from the fact that the spirit named Mbuluway, from which they are descended, emerged from the tree of this type that Waspen, the spirit progenitor of Rama clan, came across in the forest and felled after hearing Mbuluway and other supernatural beings singing inside it (see Chapter 3). With the exception of those associated with a group's origins, no explanation is offered for how a clan came to own the bulk of its totems. They are simply regarded as part of its cultural patrimony.

Like the proper names of spirits, the terms for totemic plants and other entities serve as personal names for members of the clans that own them. Those of 'male' totems are given to boys, and those of 'female' to girls. In marked contrast to what anthropologists have reported for the neighbouring Iatmul and Manambu, there is nothing secret about which clans own which totems (e.g. Harrison 1990; Wassmann 1991, 2001).

Totemic divisions

A clan does not own its totems exclusively but shares them with an indefinite number of other exogamous groups. Clans that share the same, or broadly similar, sets of totems make up named totemic divisions (Bowden 1977:48ff, 2006:11ff). These divisions cut across tribal and even language boundaries. In 1973 the six Yalaku clans were divided between two totemic divisions, named Keyava and Tek. The first comprised Rama, Yalaku Keyava and the two Yombu Nyininggu clans; the second the two Hambora clans. 'Keyava' is a traditional Yalaku name but the neighbouring Kwoma also use it as the name for clans that own the *garamut* tree totem, specifically the variety Kwoma name *apokwala nyeebi*. 'Tek', in contrast, is a modern borrowing from the neighbouring Honggwama Kwoma, many of whose clans share a similar range of totems to those of the two Hambora groups at Yelogu (see Bowden 2006:14).

Along with the division of a language group into politically independent tribes and exogamous clans, dispersed totemic divisions are one of the key structural features of middle Sepik societies. Members of clans that belong to the same totemic division, regardless of tribal or even linguistic affiliation, regard each other as 'kin' (*omo nyimos*), a term that literally means 'elder and young siblings of the same sex as the speaker'. Thus, men of roughly the same age in different clans belonging to the same totemic

group refer to each other as either 'elder brother' ('eB', *omo*) or 'younger brother' ('yB', *nyimos*).[15] A man similarly refers to all same-generation natal female members of his totemic division as 'sisters' (*nyenegaya*); the latter reciprocally refer to him as 'brother' (*hay*). Members of different clans in the same totemic division are 'classificatory' (*yobu*) kin. Members of the same clan are 'true' (*chowa*) kin. The term translated here as 'classificatory' literally means 'track' or 'path'. Classificatory kin, as Yalaku say, are people 'met on forest tracks', in contrast to 'true' kin who 'live together'. In TP, classificatory kin are referred to as *pisin* (totemic) relatives. '*Pisin*', which also means 'bird', is the TP term for 'totem'.

Members of different clans in the same totemic division are political allies. When warfare was still being practised, such men secretly warned each other of impending attacks on their respective settlements. With rare exceptions they also refrained from participating in such attacks. Ayam's account of Yalaku warfare (Chapters 7 to 12) also indicates that men regarded an attack on another clan in their own totemic division, regardless of tribal affiliation, as tantamount to an attack on them, and one that called for revenge. Revenge might be overt through direct physical attack, or covert through sorcery. Within a tribe's main settlement, clans belonging to the same totemic division typically form discrete residential blocs.

Totemic divisions are the ultimate owners of all of the spirits and associated ritual paraphernalia belonging to their constituent clans. As among the neighbouring Kwoma, individual Yalaku clans 'own' particular ceremonial spirits, along with the sculptures and other objects that represent them. But 'ownership' in this context amounts only to custody. If a clan becomes defunct through the loss of its male members, the ceremonial spirits it owns revert to other groups in the same totemic division – in the first instance, in the same tribe.

The composition of individual Yelogu households

In 1973 there were fourteen occupied dwellings at Yelogu. These belonged to thirteen different households, each headed by an adult man belonging to one or other of the village's six clans. The dwelling houses belonging to members of Rama, the village's largest clan, encircled the men's house after the manner of a traditional clan hamlet. Those belonging to the other five clans were all located on the southern and eastern side of the village. Each married man had his own house which he shared with his wife (or wives) and unmarried children.

Dwelling houses are of two types. The traditional style has an earth floor. A family uses the interior for sleeping, cooking and storing personal effects. Cooking is often also done under a veranda at the front of the house in good weather (Figure 2.6).

Today many houses are raised on piles. This is a style introduced by the Australian administration in New Guinea early in the twentieth century for 'health' reasons, presumably to increase the flow of air around and through dwellings. Such structures are used exclusively for sleeping and storing personal effects.

Cooking is done on hearths set on the ground. A hearth consists of three large stones arranged around a smouldering fire. Pots sit on the stones with their bases positioned slightly above the burning wood. Wood is fed into the fire between the stones.

Each adult woman in a household has her own hearth. There she cooks for herself and any children in her care. Each adult woman also has her own sleeping area. Formerly, girls married as soon as they reached puberty. This meant that the adult women in a household were exclusively in-marrying wives.

In polygynous households each wife is entitled to her own house, in which she can cook and sleep with her immature children. But she might choose to share a house with her husband and his other wives – women she refers to as 'friends' (*nawa*). In a polygynous household the husband might occupy a separate dwelling in which he sleeps and keeps his personal effects, and to which his several wives bring him food at different times by arrangement. In a polygynous household each wife also has at least one garden of her own, or section of a common family garden, in which she grows whatever crops she chooses. In 1973 no Yalaku man had more than two wives.

All adult men, including those who have not yet married, have their own houses. When they marry these are the dwellings to which they bring their wives.

In the sketch map of Yelogu (Figure 2.5) the thirteen households are numbered from 1 to 13. With the exception of Household 1, which had two separate dwellings (1 and 1a), each household consisted of a single dwelling house plus one or more other structures not shown on the map: kitchens and storage sheds for firewood and other goods.

The composition of the thirteen households was as follows:

i) one case of a young adult man who had yet to find a wife (Household 4);
ii) six cases of nuclear families, i.e. a husband and wife with or without children (Households 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12);
iii) three cases of nuclear families with one or more additional members, such as the husband's widowed mother (Households 2, 3, 6);

15 If a male speaker's father refers to another man as either 'eB' (*omo*) or 'yB' (*nyimos*), then he refers to that man's sons by the same term, regardless of relative age. In the absence of an established terminological relationship, which terms are used is determined by relative age. Women's practice is the same.

iv) one case of a polygynous family with no additional members, i.e., a man, his two wives and their children (Household 8);
v) two cases of polygynous families with additional members (Households 1, 13).

Data on the composition of individual households is rarely included in ethnographies. For the sake of completeness, and the historical record, I include this data here.

Household 1, House 1 (Rama clan)
Household 1 had two separate dwellings, numbered 1 and 1a. House 1 was owned by Ayam of Rama clan – the person from whom the bulk of the information in this book derives. The house had a total of eleven occupants, the largest number for any dwelling house in the village. The occupants were:

i) Ayam (36).
ii) Yowembwiya,[16] the first of Ayam's two wives and his third wife chronologically. Ayam was Yowembwiya's sixth husband. For more on this woman's marital history see Chapter 5 and the entry on Ayam in the Genealogical Index.
iii) Yowembwiya's three unmarried children (40, 42, 43), all from a previous marriage.
iv) Ayam's second wife Hopokos (169) of H2 clan. Hopokos was Ayam's fourth wife chronologically. For more on this woman's marital history see the entry on Ayam in the Genealogical Index.
v) Hopokos's three unmarried children (50, 51, 52), all from a previous marriage.
vi) two unmarried children (53, 54), the offspring of Ayam's deceased wife Nerikiira and her deceased former husband Yuwiyaku (35). Yuwiyaku was one of Ayam's older paternal half-brothers (a terminological 'eB'). Nerikiira derived from the now-defunct Awokapa tribe; for more on her marital history see the entry on Ayam in the Genealogical Index.

Ayam had been married a total of four times. His last three wives were acquired leviratically from deceased clan 'brothers'.[17] None of the eight children in the house had been born to Ayam and any of his wives. He adopted all eight when he married their mothers.

Household 1, House 1a (Rama clan)
The dwelling house numbered 1a was part of Ayam's household (Household 1). It had three occupants:

i) a widow named Apokwala, a Honggwama Kwoma woman and member of Wapiyupu Keyava clan, Melawei village. Apokwala was formerly married to Mbaranyamba (16) of Rama clan, one of Ayam's clan 'fathers'. For further information on this woman's marital history see under Mbaranyamba's name in the Genealogical Index.
ii) Apokwala's two unmarried children (31, 32).

Household 2 (Rama clan)
Dwelling house number 2, owned by Ayambaminja of Rama clan, had a total of seven occupants:

i) Ayambaminja (37).
ii) his wife Apochey (158), a member of H1 clan.
iii) their four unmarried children (55, 56, 57, 58).
iv) Ayambaminja's widowed mother, Kwaruk (126). See also under this woman's name in the Genealogical Index.

Household 3 (Rama clan)
House number 3, owned by Haraw of Rama clan, had a total of seven occupants:

i) Haraw (44).
ii) his wife Niikiiriikaya (31), also of Rama clan (see Chapter 4);
iii) their young daughter (59).
iv) Haraw's widowed mother Manuwiya (83).
v) Haraw's father's widowed second wife Siisuk. For more on Siisuk's marital history see under Kiyanombo (33) in the Genealogical Index.
vi) Siisuk's two unmarried children (46, 47) – Haraw's paternal half-siblings.

Household 4 (Rama clan).
This household had only one member, a young adult man named Yapayeka (38), belonging to Rama clan, who had not yet married. He lived next to his older brother Ayambaminja (37) of House 3.

Household 5 (YN1 clan)
Owned by Kisala Wopureka Michael of YN1 clan, House 5 had a total of five occupants:

i) Kisala (111).
ii) his wife Kwariyangg (45) of Rama clan, the actual sister of Haraw (44), the owner of House 3.
iii) their three young children (118, 119, 120).

Household 6 (NY1 clan)
Owned by Ukwaya of YN1 clan, House 6 had a total of seven occupants:

16 In this study index numbers have been allocated only to the members of the different Yalaku clans, not outsiders such as Yowembwiya. She was captured during warfare with the Apukili people in the early 1950s.
17 See under his name in the Genealogical Index for further information on his marital history.

i) Ukwaya (110), the full older brother of Kisala, the owner of House 5.
ii) his wife Monggowur (86); see also under this woman's name in the Genealogical Index.
iii) their six unmarried children (122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127).
iv) Ukwaya's wife's widowed mother, a Honggwama Kwoma woman named Hoporeka. For more information on Hoporeka's marital history see under Kiiriimel (79) and Kapeli (80) in the Genealogical Index.

Household 7 (YN2 clan)
Owned by Kapay of YN2 clan, House 7 had seven residents:
i) Kapay (133).
ii) his wife Kiisiik (174).
iii) their five unmarried children (138, 139, 140, 141, 142).

Household 8 (YN2 clan)
Owned by Kiriyas (130) of YN2 clan, House 6 had six occupants:
i) Kiriyas (130).
ii) his first wife Moyidav, a Honggwama Kwoma woman and member of Nowil clan, Bangwis village.
iii) their three unmarried children (134, 135, 136).
iv) his second wife Monggisaniip, another Honggwama Kwoma woman and member of Nowil clan, Bangwis village.

Household 9 (YN2 clan)
House 9 had two residents:
i) Kasindimi (137), a son of Kiriyas of House 8.
ii) his wife Mowumbwiya (Nowiniyen tribe, Kumanjuwi village).

Household 10 (H1 clan)
Dwelling house number 11 had four occupants:
i) Womandu (157).
ii) his wife Hekilap (48) of Rama clan.
iii) their two unmarried children (160, 161).

Household 11 (H2 clan)
House 11 had two occupants:
i) Sor (270).
ii) his wife Nambakaya (49) of Rama clan, the full sister of the woman Hekilap, married to Womandu of House 10, located next door.

The couple, both in their twenties, had only recently married. Like Womandu of H1 clan, Sor was the only married male member of his exogamous group.

Household 12 (YK clan)
House 12 had three occupants:
i) Yuwayembi (87); this man was given as a child by Kiriyas of House 8 to Ambareka of House 13.
ii) his wife Siipwas (159) of H1 clan.
iii) one female child (94).

Household 13 (YK clan)
House 13, owned by Ambareka (82), had ten occupants. It was the second largest household in the village. The occupants were:
i) Ambareka (82).
ii) his first wife Hamikiipiika, a Honggwama Kwoma woman and member of Kwowembi Wanyi clan, Washkuk village.
iii) four of their five children (89, 90, 91 and 92); their oldest child, a daughter (Handaniimba, 88), was married to the Honggwama Kwoma man named Kiiwas of Hipo Hamikwa clan, Bangwis village.
iv) Ambareka's second wife, Awomay (173).
v) his second wife's son, Wanyinggi (93), the child of his wife and her deceased husband Membangg (168) of H2 clan.
vi) two of five unmarried children (39 and 41) born to a deceased Rama clan man named Wanenggwa (29). For further information on these two children see under Ambareka's name in the Genealogical Index.

3

Clan histories and the spirit world

Ayam and the other Yalaku men began the history of their community with the origin myths of its different clans. The male members of each clan own their group's origin myth, and only they have an automatic right to narrate it. Others may do so only with their permission. On this occasion the men had decided that one of them would speak for each group. Ayam began the proceedings by describing the origins of his clan, Rama.

Each clan's history forms an independent narrative. However, it soon became apparent that the history of Rama, the largest group in the village, provided an overarching framework for the history of the community as a whole. It was correspondingly longer than the others, which were perfunctory by contrast.

It also quickly became apparent that Ayam was a far more confident and fluent public speaker than any of the other men. One manifestation of this was that although all of the other speakers began the histories of their different clans confidently, they soon reached a point where they either became unsure about what they should say next, or confused about the sequence of the events they were describing. Most of them then asked Ayam to help out, as they knew that he was as familiar with the history of their clans as they were. Ayam was more than happy to oblige, but on each occasion he made a point of emphasizing, principally for my benefit, that he had no formal right to narrate the history of any other group and was simply 'helping' the men who had asked for assistance.

Each clan traces descent by an unbroken chain of patrilineal ties from a named founding ancestor. This founder, a human male (*du*), is referred to as the group's '*kwul*'. This term is also used for any second-generation patrilineal ascendant, such as a FF and FFB (see Appendix C). The founding ancestor is typically said to have lived four generations above the oldest living member of the group.[18]

A clan's human founder (*kwul*) is thought to be the son, or son's son, of a named anthropomorphic spirit (*wari*). This spirit, which had male human form, is the group's ultimate progenitor. He is referred to as its '*madaka*'. This term is also used for third- and higher-generation male patrilineal ascendants, such as FFF and FFFB. In principle, several clans might trace descent from a common spirit forebear (*madaka*) but no two clans share a human founding ancestor (*kwul*).

In 1973 all adult Yalaku men knew the names of their clan's human founder (*kwul*), but in three cases they were unaware of those of their spirit progenitors (*madaka*), or where they had lived. In these three cases, notably H1, H2 and YN2 clans, the groups were descended from Kwoma-speaking men who, for one reason or another, had left their language group of origin and become incorporated into the Yalaku tribe. The names of the spirit forebears (*madaka*) of these clans, the men stated, had not come down to them.

Where the name of its spirit progenitor (*madaka*) is known, the history of a clan commences with an account of how that supernatural forebear emerged from the pre-human world in which it was previously located. This was either the underworld, from which it emerged through one or other of several named holes in the ground to the north of the Washkuk Hills; or in the case of two of the Yalaku clans (YK and YN1), inside the trunk of a giant hardwood tree. All spirit forebears had the forms of adult men but with extraneous attachments. Those who emerged from the underworld though holes in the ground had matted hair like that of newborn children, their bodies were covered with birth-like fluids, and they had umbilical cords attached – all signs of a new origin. In common with those who emerged from the tree, they also had non-human features such as long tails like tree kangaroos. The myth of origin of Rama clan tells how pre-existing spirits in the form of birds came to the aid of those who emerged from the underworld, such as Waspen, and made them fully human by washing them, cutting their hair and removing their umbilical cords. Waspen in turn performed this same service for the supernatural beings he released from the tree in which they had previously been living. The stories give no details, but

18 Genealogies tend to be historically reliable only for about two generations above the oldest living member of a group. They are most reliable when the speaker, or perhaps their father, personally knew the people involved.

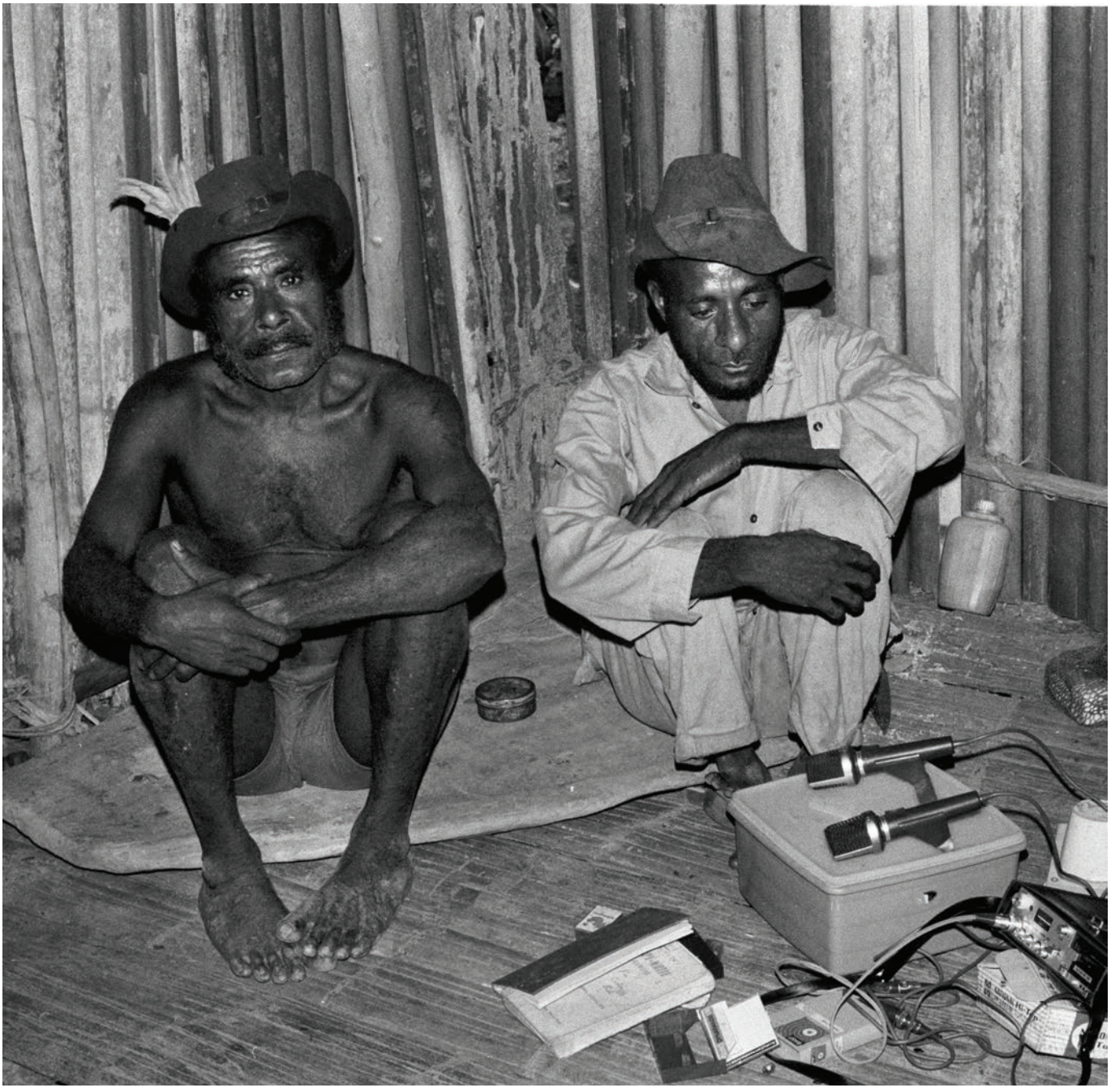


Figure 3.1 Ayam (right) and Kiriyas participating in a recording session at Yelogu in late 1973.

they state that the spirit founders of the different clans soon found human wives and had fully human sons.

Each origin myth also describes, in greater or lesser detail, areas of land the group owns, settlements at which its members were formerly located, and the names of some of its better-known spirits (*wari*) and totems (*chaba*). It concludes by tracing the patrilineal links that connect the group's founder to its current members. Like other Sepik peoples, the Yalaku believe that the events described in their clan origin myths actually happened, and that these stories are factually true.

In marked contrast to what has been reported for neighbouring Ndu-speaking groups on the Sepik, such as the Iatmul (Wassmann 1991) and Manambu (Harrison 1990, 1993), there is nothing secret about a clan's origin myth, and anyone may listen to it when it is being narrated.

It quickly became apparent that the genealogies contained in these origin myths were not, and were

not intended to be, comprehensive records of all known descendants of each group's human founder.[19] The focus, almost exclusively, was on tracing the links between the founder and the current living members of each clan. One consequence of this was that former female members were commonly excluded. Outside the context of narrating clan genealogies men showed that they knew a great deal about former female members of their groups. This was especially the case if the women had living sons that members of their clans were allied to politically (see Chapter 4). Unlike a group's male members, the offspring of out-married females in this patrilineal society are by definition members of other clans. Natal female members of a clan therefore do not provide links between a group's current members and its founder.

The genealogies also commonly excluded former male members who had no living male descendants. This was the case even with men who had played very prominent roles in the recent history of their clans and were well known to their current members. The fact that such men were commonly excluded from clan genealogies means that I am unable to say precisely how they were related to the living members (in 1973) of the same groups.

One striking example of a man who was excluded from his clan genealogy was Kapay (123) of YN2 clan. He died around 1940. Kapay was one of the last of the major Yalaku warriors and political leaders, and played a major role in the history of this community in the two decades or so immediately before warfare in this region came to a permanent end in the 1950s. Kapay left no living male patrilineal descendants; his living descendants were all through his daughter Kwaruk. When Kiriyas (130), a member of the same clan, narrated his group's genealogy he simply omitted him. I only became aware of Kapay later, when Ayam described in great detail his involvement in the last few years of Yalaku warfare (see Chapters 9 and 10). In his history, Ayam even gives a very moving account of Kapay's death following the sudden onset of an illness. Like all serious illnesses this was attributed to sorcery.

Kiriyas similarly omitted from his clan's genealogy any mention of Kapay's elderly widowed daughter, named Kwaruk (126), who was actually living at Yelogu in 1973. I only became aware of her existence when I conducted a census of the village (see Household 2, Chapter 2).

The genealogies also excluded two living men who had been born into this community but for one reason or another had permanently left it some years earlier, and subsequently ceased being regarded as members of their natal clans. Neither had living children at Yelogu. One was Kuriyanjaw (85) of YK clan, who had left Yelogu in the 1960s to work at Rabaul. He never returned and never kept in contact with his home community. In 1973 people presumed that he was still alive and living at Rabaul, but they no longer viewed him as a member of their community. Ayam described him contemptuously as a 'native of another place' (*kanaka bilong nadapela hap*, TP). When Yuwayembi (87) provided the genealogy of YK clan, to which Kuriyanjaw had belonged, he simply omitted him.[20]

The same was the case with Mundik (81), another former member of YK clan. In 1936 Mundik killed his wife in a fit of rage and, fearing that her Yalaku kinsmen would kill him in revenge, fled to the neighbouring Honggwama Kwoma for protection.[21] Throughout this region one of the rules relating to marriage is that when a woman takes up residence with her husband, he and the other members of his clan, and tribe as a whole, have an absolute obligation to guarantee her physical safety. To fail to protect an in-marrying wife, men say, would indicate to other women that it was not safe to marry into the community, and its men would find it difficult to obtain more wives. For a man to kill his wife for any reason was, and still is, regarded is an inexcusable crime. When Mundik took refuge with the Honggwama the Yalaku severed all ties with him. One indication of this was that when Yuwayembi (87), a member of the group to which Mundik had formerly belonged, narrated his clan genealogy he made no reference to him. This was in spite of the fact that Mundik was his living father's actual older brother, and his father was sitting in the Yelogu men's house at the time listening to what his son was saying. I knew of Mundik only because of my independent research among the Kwoma. It was only when I asked about him at Yelogu that I learned he had been a member of YK clan (for more on this man, see under his name in Appendix B).[22]

The clan histories

The texts of the clan histories reproduced below are verbatim translations of the original recordings, excluding the genealogical information, which is found in Appendix A. Editorial comments are contained in square brackets or footnotes. Subheadings have been added to the different sections of the narratives.

19 They share this in common with Kwoma clan genealogies (see Bowden 1977:34–59, 228–60).

20 'Kuriyanjaw' is an early example of the Yalaku incorporating TP terms into their naming system; the first part is formed from the term for the crested or crowned pigeon, '*guria*' (Mihalic 1971:91).

21 Whiting and Reed were doing fieldwork at the time in the same community. Whiting met Mundik and photographed him (see Whiting 1941:144, 213).

22 The information in the genealogies in Appendix A derives both from the clan histories I recorded and data obtained from other sources, such as the census of Yelogu village.

Clan history 1: the origin of Rama (narrator: Ayam, 36)

My clan is Rama, of Yelogu village. The main totem of my clan is the pig (*bori*). The smaller cassowary is also one of our totems, the type we call *miida*.[23] Other totems of ours include the little bird Kwoma call *jowijowi*; a type of betel nut we call *masa* (and Kwoma *mabi*); earth – what Kwoma call *nowosap*; and noses (*tama*). The *garamut* (TP) tree (*nyaba*) is also one of our totems. We don't own these totems exclusively but share them with the other 'Keyava' clans, including those here at Yelogu. The type of sago palm Kwoma call *nokuwoy* is also one of our totems. We call it *chowa nagu* or 'true sago'. So are the many types of wasps and other stinging insects that Kwoma call *heemi*; the ground-dwelling crab (*kway*); and the fish eagle, the one that is the largest of all of the varieties of eagles (*tarangau*, TP). Kwoma call this bird *aponyumay*. That's enough for the moment about our totems.

The tribe establishes its first settlement next to the 'hole' Minjowi Siingganiimbiir

The original ancestor (*madaka*) of my clan was a spirit named Waspen. He was the first of the ancestors of the different Yalaku clans to emerge from the spirit world. He was also the first of our ancestors to emerge from the underworld through a hole in the ground. He came out of the hole named Minjowi Siingganiimbiir (settlement no. 1 in Figure 6.1). This hole takes its name from two adjacent geographical features. 'Minjowi' is the name of a large grassy plain [far to the north of the present location of Yelogu]. 'Siingganiimbiir' is the name of a very large boulder located beside the hole.

My spirit forebear, Waspen, had previously lived in the underworld at the bottom of this hole. The spirit forebears of many other clans lived in the underworld with him. In the underworld Waspen had a pet pig named Kwambiyanggiin. This pig emerged first. One day it climbed through the hole of its own accord and explored the territory above ground around its opening. It foraged for food, rolled around in the dirt and then climbed back down into the underworld through the same hole, Siingganiimbir.

When the pig returned to the underworld the ancestral spirits living there saw the earth on it and decided that it must have found fertile ground up top. They said to each other, 'You can see how the pig has been feeding up there and rolling around in the dirt after it finished eating. Next time it goes up we will follow it and see what's there.' They spoke this way. So they kept an eye on the pig and when it eventually got up and set off again they hung on to its tail and let it lead them up through the hole into the new world it had found. Once above ground the men looked around in wonderment at what was there. They examined the different trees and other plants, and then sat down to talk about this hitherto unknown world. The pig meanwhile continued to forage for food. When it had eaten its fill and began moving back towards the hole to return to its underworld home the men quickly grabbed hold of its tail and, lining up behind it, let it guide them down.

Back in the underworld they told the others who had stayed behind what they had seen. They told them they had found a much better place to live than where they were presently and had decided to go back and live there permanently.

So the next time the pig climbed back through the hole into the upper world, a group of these spirit ancestors followed it. Once again, they formed a line behind it. The one in front hung on to the pig's tail and the others held on to the one in front of them. After arriving in the upper world a small bird of the type named *jowijowi* came to their aid. This bird was a spirit, not an ordinary bird of the same type that you see today. She was like a mother to them, these ancestral spirits. She cleaned them up. She used a razor-sharp sliver of bamboo to cut their long, matted hair and remove their umbilical cords and tails. Originally, they had tails like tree kangaroos. The hair she cut off she discarded in the forest. There the different locks grew into a type of decorative shrub named *yuwi* (what Kwoma call *sumunyi*). We grow this as a decorative shrub around our houses. She packed their umbilical cords (*yerej*) into coconut husks and buried them. These grew into betel-nut palms (*masa*). These entities are now among my clan's totems. After this bird had cleaned up the ancestors and shaped them into proper humans, she showed them how to construct dwelling houses. This bird, *jowijowi*, along with her 'husband', a type of bird that Kwoma call *galakiira*, showed them how to build houses.

After showing these spirit ancestors how to build houses, the same two birds showed them how to split the trunks of black palms into lengths to make spear shafts. They also taught them how to haft bamboo blades to the shafts, and how to use the spears to defend themselves against enemies.

Four ancestral spirits emerged together from this hole. They were Waspen, Yeratokwiya, Tu and Mbam. Previously, all four had lived in the underworld at the bottom of the hole named Minjowi Siingganiimbiir.

23 This is possibly a variety of the 'dwarf cassowary', *Casuarius bennetti* (see Dominy *et al.* 2018:4; Rutgers 1970:4–5). The most common type of cassowary in the Sepik is the northern or single-wattled cassowary (*Casuarius unappendiculatus*).

Figure 3.2 Ayam at Yelogu village in 1982. He is holding a small pottery figure given to him some years earlier by his personal trading partner and totemic 'brother' Mbwindimi of Avatip village (Manambu language group). Mbwindimi obtained the pot from Iatmul speakers at Aibom village in the Chambri Lakes. The people at Aibom specialize in making pottery for export to surrounding tribes and language groups. Ayam described this object as a 'sorcery pot,' i.e. as a receptacle for 'cooking' (burning) sorcery substances.

Birds, spirits in bird form, taught them how to use weapons in intertribal warfare.

These four ancestors eventually killed the pig Kwambiyanggen so they could eat it. They butchered it and divided up the different pieces. But they didn't distribute the cuts equally. One of the men, Yeratokwiya, was absent from their settlement at the time and the others allocated him only a very small and poor-quality portion. This was the foreleg, what we call *yenataba* (*hap han*, TP), and Kwoma call *tapabiyaka*. The other three men took the largest shares of the meat together with the highly prized fat. What they gave the other man was largely inedible, just skin and bone. When Yeratokwiya discovered what they had done he was deeply offended, and angrily chastised them.

The tribe moves to a second settlement at a site named Nokusuwoy

This unequal distribution of pork created such ill-feeling between Yeratokwiya and the other three ancestors, that Waspen, Tu and Mbam eventually decided to leave him at the settlement the four had jointly constructed, next to the hole Minjowi Siingganiimbiir, and migrate down a forest stream [towards the Sepik] named Woru Mbapa. They followed this to a place they named Nokusuwoy [#2, Figure 6.1], where they built a new settlement. This region was completely uninhabited when they arrived. No one hunted the animals. They all died of old age. So the three divided up the land among themselves. This included land we still own today, such as the areas of forest named Wurunggil, Hopokos and Wamasu. The region contained huge stands of sago palm that enabled the three men and their families to live well.

Trade relations established between the Yalaku and Kwoma-speakers in the Washkuk Hills

The forests that Tu and Mbam acquired lay in the direction of the Washkuk Hills – towards the northern end of the range where the Kwoma village of Tongwinjamb is located today. When our ancestors first settled this region they had no knowledge of the Kwoma or the Apukili, who at that time lived further to the west – to the north-west of the Washkuk range. Waspen hunted and gathered further to the east, following the courses of streams such as Yanggel, Wupa and Yanggemi. One day, when Tu and Mbam were hunting and foraging in the direction of the Washkuk Hills, they heard a bird named [in Kwoma] *aposhowu* calling high up in the forest canopy. It was perched in the top of a huge wild fig tree (*bikus*, TP). The two men decided to climb the tree. From its top they caught their first glimpse of the Washkuk Hills in the distance to the south-west.

Later that day, when they returned to the settlement at Nokusuwoy, they told Waspen that they had decided to migrate into the hills they had seen. They told him that he could have all of the land they had claimed around their new settlement. But they said they didn't want to lose contact with him altogether. They told him that if he ever needed clay to make cooking pots or hard stone suitable for making adze blades, he should send word to them and they would bring what he needed. None of these materials were available in the low-lying swampy area where they were living, but they are found in abundance in hill country. In return, they said, if he needed pork or cassowary meat, or the meat or pelts of other game animals, or shells of freshwater mussels to burn to make lime to chew with betel nut, he could provide these in exchange. Having arranged for the future exchange of 'hill' and 'lowland' products, they left for the Washkuk range. When they left, these two ancestors permanently renounced any claim to the land they had previously owned around Nokusuwoy. Tu joined the Kwoma tribe named Tongwinjamb and founded a clan that still forms part of that community today. Mbam joined the Honggwama tribe and founded the clan named Amachey Keyava, now located at Melawei, one of the three villages that make up this tribe.

Waspen remained behind at Nokusuwoy and he was now the sole owner of all the land. This included a huge area of forest named Yanggel and the sections of the streams that ran through the region. The largest of these streams are Yanggemi, Mbapa and Wupa. Waspen also laid claim to a section of the stream named Woru Mbapa, part of the much larger river named Mbapa. Other areas of land my clan owns that Waspen acquired at this time are those named Wurunggil, Nokusuwoy, Hopokos and Wamasu. Waspen became the sole owner of the territory in which he was now living.

Waspen discovers spirit men living inside a *garamut* tree

After Tu and Mbam left for the Washkuk Hills, Waspen began hunting and foraging further and further to the south, down the forest streams running through his territory. He slowly moved closer and closer to the area in which we live today. He explored the whole area between the stream named Mbapa over towards the Washkuk Hills, down past the river named Yanggel, right down to the major forest stream named Yanggemi. There he decided one day to construct a blind to hunt pigs.

He felled a sago palm, used its branches to construct a screen next to the trunk, and peeled off a section of the palm's hard outer shell. He then went back to Nokusuwoy to wait for a few days. Waspen might have waited for a week or two, though I'm not sure exactly how long as in the past we didn't count time in terms of weeks, only by days and the phases of the moon. He waited until there was a full moon. He then went back to the sago blind during the day to inspect the palm. He found that pigs had been feeding off the pith. So he went home, collected his spears and late that afternoon returned to wait for the pigs to become active after dark. He settled down some distance away from the blind at the end of a path he had cleared. He sat down at the base of a huge *garamut* tree. There he intended to wait until he heard sounds of pigs

Figure 3.3 A Yalaku man (left; probably Ukwaya, 110, of YN2 clan) visiting Bangwis village in December 1973, to participate in a performance of the Kwoma Minja ceremony. He is resting, with a mouthful of betel nut, outside the men's house at Bangwis next to Mburunggay of Melawei village, Amachey Keyava clan. Mburunggay's clan traces descent from Mbam, a man who originally belonged to the Yalaku tribe but migrated in ancestral times into the Washkuk Hills, together with another Yalaku man named Tu. Mbam was accepted into the Honggwama tribe, and Tu into the Tongwinjamb.

chewing the exposed sago pith. He was using a hunting technique we still use today.

Night fell and he sat quietly listening for the sound of pigs. Suddenly he heard voices inside the tree he was sitting under. It was the sound of men singing. They sounded like voices coming out of a tape recorder. Waspen jumped to his feet in surprise. He stood next to the tree, put his ear against the trunk and listened carefully. Fascinated by the choral singing, he forgot all about the pigs and spent the entire night listening to it. Meanwhile pigs came and went with impunity throughout the night.

At dawn the singing stopped. Waspen then returned home. Having been awake all night he was exhausted, so he went to bed for a while. Later that day he got up and after washing at the stream that ran past his house drummed out a message to his two brothers in the Washkuk Hills, Tu and Mbam. He signalled that he had found a group of men singing inside a huge *garamut* tree, and that he wanted them to come and help fell the tree and cut them out. As soon as they heard the signal the two men came over. He took them into the sago forest, and together they felled the tree and split it open.

When the trunk was opened, men began emerging from it, like beetle larvae spilling out of a rotten log when it has been broken open. The men who emerged weren't properly formed humans. They had long tails, like tree kangaroos, and huge ears and long noses like many forest animals. They also had woody protuberances growing on their bodies, like those found on old trees. When all of the men had emerged from the tree, Waspen, Tu and Mbam cut off the ugly woody protuberances growing on them, whittled their noses down to normal size, cut off their long tails and trimmed their ears.

As soon as they had acquired normal human form, some of these spirit men promptly ran off into the forest. They became the founders of the Nowiniyen tribe, the group that has its main settlement at Kumanjuwi. When these men started to run away, Waspen called to them and asked why they were leaving. 'Do you want to become our enemies?', he asked. 'Let me tell you,' he shouted, 'I've already acquired the art of fighting. I didn't come here to treat you like enemies. I released you from the tree in the hope that you would join me at my new settlement. But if you are determined to run away and behave like enemies, go ahead. Later, when you engage in warfare with us, your children will stand and stare in dismay at your corpses.' The other men who emerged from the tree agreed to remain with Waspen and help found a new community. But the others all ran off into the forest.

The Yalaku move and establish a new settlement at the place named Niikiiriinggow Walaminjuwi

Waspen and the men who had remained with him decided to establish a new settlement for themselves, this time at the place named Niikiiriinggow Walaminjuwi (no. 3, Figure 6.1). This was not far away from Nokusuwoy and was on the bank of the Yanggemi River, the same river that flowed past the giant *garamut* tree Waspen had felled. Walaminjuwi was one of our tribe's many ancestral settlements. So Waspen abandoned the settlement at Nokusuwoy and moved with his new-found tribesmen to Walaminjuwi. The *garamut* tree from which these men emerged was named Nayiwama. When Waspen and his brothers were splitting it open, they threw one very large piece of it into the adjacent stream, the Yanggemi. This piece of timber can still be seen in this stream today. Women come across it when they are wading in the stream fishing with hand nets.

Sometime later a man paddling up the Yanggemi River from the direction of the Sepik suddenly appeared at this new settlement. When Waspen saw him, he asked his name. The man replied 'Kayiniir' (66, Genealogy 2, Appendix A). Waspen invited him to join his settlement. He agreed and became the founder of the clan named Kumur. None of us today know where this man came from. He simply appeared one day at Walaminjuwi in his canoe. Kumur clan today is extinct, as it no longer has any male members. It's only surviving natal members are female. One is the woman named Wapiyalum (84), who is married to a Kwoma-speaking man and lives at Bangwis village.

The growing Yalaku community moves to its fourth settlement, at a site named at Walawili

One day a group of women from the new settlement at Walaminjuwi went into the forest to forage for edible ground-dwelling spiders (*hiiriis*; probably *Selenocosmia crassipies*). They climbed a hill while looking for them and at the top found an ideal place for a new village. A powerful wind had swept over the hill and blown down all of the largest trees, forming a cleared area that was ideal for a settlement. Being on a steep rise, the site would also be easy to defend if it came under attack from another tribe. When the women returned to Walaminjuwi later that day, they told their husbands what they had found and recommended that the entire community move to this new site. The men took their advice and the entire community moved. They named their new settlement Walawili. The earlier settlement at Walaminjuwi had been constructed in low-lying country; its main advantage had been that it was on the edge of a huge sago forest named Ndowama.

The founding ancestor of one clan joins Waspen's community after being caught in a pig trap

After moving to this new settlement at Walawili, Waspen and several of the other men constructed a set of pig traps in the nearby forest. They felled a *yera* palm, what Kwoma call *mawuj*, and placed a section of the trunk with edible pith exposed inside each trap. The pith of this palm can be processed like sago to yield an edible flour. But the flour is not as abundant or as nourishing as that of the sago palm, and we and other peoples in this region, such as the Kwoma, only use it in emergencies when no sago is available. But pigs and other animals are greatly attracted to it.

After a few days the men went back to inspect their traps. When Waspen reached his, he found it contained one of the men who had earlier emerged from the *garamut* tree and run off into the forest. Instead of remaining with the others who had run away, this man and another who had also emerged from the same tree had been roaming the forest searching for food. He was so hungry that he had crawled inside Waspen's trap to get at the exposed pith of the *yera* palm inside. But having crawled inside he couldn't get out. When Waspen arrived to inspect the trap, he found the other man who had also been roaming the forest foraging for food standing beside it, wondering how he could get his companion out. As soon as he saw Waspen he fled, never to be seen again.

Figure 3.4 Clearing forest for a new garden near Yelogu, 1973.

The man inside the trap had been well and truly caught. He was sitting on the section of palm trunk that Waspen had placed inside it. Seeing him, Waspen asked him what he was doing. He replied that he had been so hungry that he had crawled into the trap to eat some of the uncooked pith but now couldn't get out. Waspen asked who the other man was. The trapped man replied that he was not a relative, just someone who had been hunting and foraging with him. Waspen then asked whether he would run away if he released him. The man replied that he would not. Waspen assured him that he had nothing to fear, and that he had no intention of killing him. He then opened the trap and allowed the man to crawl out.

Once he was out of the trap, Waspen gave the man some of the food he was carrying with him, and then took him back to his village. This man was Kisala (95). He remained with Waspen and became the ancestor of another of our tribe's clans, the one named Yombu Nyininggu 1, one of two Yalaku clans that have the name Yombu Nyininggu. We distinguish them today by adding the numbers '1' and '2'. '*Yobu*' means 'track'. The people who were already part of our community gave the clan this man founded the name 'Yombu' ('Track') because Waspen had found Kisala in the forest beside a track. We also call this clan 'Yera', after the type of palm that Waspen had put inside the trap to attract pigs, and on which he had found Kisala sitting when he came to inspect it. The equivalent name for this clan in Kwoma would be 'Mawunj', after the Kwoma term for this type of palm.

It was my ancestor Waspen who brought different spirit ancestors together to create a new political group, the Yalaku tribe. Kisala joined our community when its main settlement was at Walawili. For Waspen, Walawili was the fourth settlement he had helped establish. The first was next to, and named after, the hole Minjowi Siingganiimba. The second was at Nokusuwoy, and the third at Walaminjuwi.

The Yalaku tribe grows

Over time Waspen persuaded more men to join the new community at Walawili, men who became ancestors of different Yalaku clans. They included Apwi (143), Womandu's (157) ancestor. He was originally a Kwoma-speaking man descended from a spirit forebear who had emerged from the underworld through the hole named Wanmay, the hole from which the ancestors of the most of the Kwoma-speaking clans emerged. Kayimeni (162), Sor's (170) clan ancestor, was similarly a Kwoma-speaking man descended from another spirit who emerged from the underworld through Wanmay. The founding ancestor (*kwul*) of Kiriyas's (130) clan, a man named Payap (122), was also descended from a spirit forebear who emerged from the underworld through Wanmay. However, we don't know the names of the spirit forebears of these three Yalaku clans. Their names have not come down to us.

Payap, the founder (*kwul*) of Kiriyas's clan, was the son of a Kwoma man named Amanenji (121a), who belonged to the Kowariyasi tribe; but Payap's mother, a Yalaku woman named Halop, brought him back with her to live with the Yalaku when her husband died. After returning to her own tribe, Halop married a Yalaku man named Naniyas (121); he adopted Payap and raised him.

The ancestors who emerged from the garamut tree teach Waspen the song cycle named Haya

Following the establishment of the Yalaku settlement at Walawili, Waspen asked the men he had cut out of the *garamut* tree about the song cycle he had heard them performing. They told him that this was named Haya. Waspen asked if they would perform it again, so that he could learn it. They said they would, but that it was only performed when yams were being harvested, so he would have to wait until a new crop was ready and learn it then. Waspen agreed. He explained that he was not insisting they perform it immediately, only letting them know that he would be very interested to hear it and learn it when they were ready to do so. Walawili was the place where the last of the ancestors of the different Yalaku clans joined our community, both clans that still form part of our community today and those that have since become extinct. It was there that all of the members of our tribe acquired their knowledge of the song cycle Haya, having been taught it there by the spirit men who emerged from the *garamut* tree.

Yalaku men's houses

Following the establishment of Walawili, by far the largest of our early settlements, Waspen and the other spirit ancestors living with him built our community's first men's houses (*horobo*). They constructed these in exactly the same form as those they had owned in their pre-human spirit worlds, either in the underworld or in the tree from which they had emerged. They abandoned these buildings when they decided to live in the world we humans occupy today. Our men's houses are all modelled on those our spirit forebears constructed. In design they are of supernatural origin.

At Walawili each clan had its own men's house, but only the largest were used for community-wide ceremonial purposes. My clan's men's house was named Hamakela. The men's house built by YK clan was

named Nyinggindu. This is the name we have given the men's house here at Yelogu. The one owned by the clan named Kumur, which is now extinct, was named Nyanggalaniimbiir.

The main ceremonial men's house at Walawili was the one named Tokimba. This building was not owned by any one clan, but by the community as a whole. All of the men in the community helped construct it. When a new settlement is constructed a small men's house owned by one clan might be used for ceremonial purposes initially, but this would only be the case until a much larger communal men's house, like Tokimba, was built. A smaller men's house would also be used for ceremonial purposes if the main men's house was burnt down during intertribal warfare, but only until the main building was replaced.

At this point in his narrative Ayam provided the genealogy of Rama clan on which Chart 1 (Appendix A) is based. The genealogy was narrated in the form: 'A had (*kamapim*, TP) the sons B and C, and the daughter D; B had the sons E and F', and so on.

After tracing the descent of all of the current members of his clan from the group's chthonian forebear, Waspen (1), Ayam named four of the better-known spirits (*wari*) his clan owned. Each was associated with a pair of bamboo flutes (*hama*), instruments formerly played in connection with men's secret ceremonies. Two of the four spirits, named Ndiyinggu and Kangguwi, were described as 'male' (*du*) and two, named Siilumu and Menjuwar, as female (*takwa*). Ayam stated that the knowledge of how to make bamboo flutes and play them was also something that the Yalaku learnt from their spirit progenitors, such as Waspen. These, he said, had played the same type of flute in their pre-human worlds.

The origin myths of the other five Yalaku clans were much briefer than Ayam's.

Clan history 2: the origin of Yalaku Keyava, YK (narrator: Yuwayembi, 87)

My ancestor, Mbuluway (60), was one of the spirits who emerged from the *garamut* tree that Waspen found and split open. Waspen had come to the part of the forest where this tree was located to hunt pigs. While he was waiting for pigs to approach the sago palm he had felled, he heard voices coming out of the tree under which he was sitting. Hearing the voices, he called to the men inside and asked who they were. The men inside the tree were spirits, spirits in human form. They included Mowiyaw, Siingganggiin, Takawus, Mbuluway, Kwarchenggi and Nggalokaman. But there were many others as well.

Each spirit in turn called out its name. So Waspen felled the tree, split it open and let them out. The men who emerged settled with Waspen at Walaminjuwi. Today these spirits live in the underworld at the bottom of the stream named Yanggemi, the stream that flows past the place where this tree stood. These men were spirits, not true men like the founding ancestors of our different clans, who we call '*kwul*'.

The men who emerged from the *garamut* tree didn't have fully developed human form. They were part human, part forest animal and part tree. Waspen had to cut off their unwanted parts and clean them up. He cut off the woody protuberances growing on them, like those found on old trees, and their other non-human parts. Waspen then took them to live at Walaminjuwi. While living there a group of women went out to forage for edible spiders (*sentapit*, TP) and found a place, a hill, where local spirits had been active (*ples masalai*, TP). The spirits had caused a powerful whirlwind to knock over the huge trees growing on it. This cleared a site suitable for a settlement. Seeing that the wind had done all the hard work, the women persuaded the men to go there to live. So they constructed a new settlement at this new site, named Walawili (settlement no. 4, Figure 6.1). There our community prospered and grew enormously in population.

Yuwayembi added the following when prompted by other men listening to the narrative:

I forgot to say earlier that when Waspen cut open the *garamut* tree, several of the men ran off into the forest. Waspen warned them that if they left and settled elsewhere he would henceforth treat them as enemies. One of those who ran away was the one later caught in the pig trap. The others became ancestors of the clans located today at Kumanjuwi village, where they form part of the Nowiniyen tribe.

Once settled at Walawili our clan, descended from Mbuluway (60), rapidly grew in size and its men built their own ceremonial house, which they named Nyinggidu. We also gave this name to the men's house here at Yelogu. Our clansmen lived next to the members of another clan named Kumur, descended from the man named Kayiniir (66). That clan also had its own men's house, named Nyanggalaniimbiir. These two exogamous groups shared many of the same totems and hence belonged to the same totemic division: Keyava. I don't know if Kayiniir and the founder (*kwul*) of my clan, Hikisaw, were related patrilineally or not. That other clan, Kumur, is now defunct. The only man still living who was a member of it is named Kuriyanjaw (85). But he left Yelogu many years ago and moved permanently to Rabaul. He's no longer a member of

> our community. We haven't heard from him since he left. The only other living natal member of that clan is the woman named Wapiyalum (84), but she is now a member of our clan. So the group named Kumur is finished. My clan is descended from Hikisaw (62). Hikisaw's father was Woyamaka (61), who was a son of our spirit progenitor Mbuluway (60).

Yuwayembi at this point provided the part of the genealogy in Chart 2, Appendix A, that related to the descendants of the spirit forebear Mbuluway. The other parts relate to the defunct clans named Kumur and Ya. These are based on information obtained separately. The only living natal member of Ya clan in 1973 was the women named Monggowur (86). Like Wapiyalum (84), she had been incorporated into YK clan.

Clan history 3: Yombu Nyininggu 1, YN1 (narrator: Michael Kisala, 111).

> I want to tell you my story. We also derive from the *garamut* tree that Waspen found. The spirit progenitor (*madaka*) of my clan was named Kisala. After Waspen released the different spirits inside this tree, my ancestor was one of those that promptly fled into the forest. But later, when he was foraging for food, he came back to the same area and got caught in the pig trap that Waspen had constructed. After eating some of the pith of the *yera* palm that Waspen had placed inside the trap to attract pigs he tried to get out but found he couldn't. Originally my ancestor had a long tail like a tree kangaroo. When Waspen found him in the trap he asked him if he would run away if he released him. Kisala gave a firm undertaking that he would not, so Waspen released him and took him to the settlement at Walawili, where he became a member of the community there.
>
> Kisur lived peacefully at this settlement with the other residents. It was a good settlement. Sometime later a man named Kayiniir, the founder of Kumur clan and a member of the Keyava totemic group, like my clan, went off to process sago in the forest. While he was away Waspen killed a domestic pig and butchered it. Its name was Songgalamba. When Waspen distributed the pork among the settlement's residents, he allocated only a very small part to Kayiniir. This consisted of one foreleg. When Kayiniir returned to the village and discovered that his share was principally skin and bone, not meat and fat, he was furious with Waspen. He angrily chopped up his portion with an adze and threw it into the forest. This led to him and my ancestor Kisala, together, splitting off from this settlement and founding a new group at a place named Sowariika. But later they changed their minds and returned to Walawili. Since then, the members of my clan have lived peacefully with the other Yalaku clans.

Kisala then provided the genealogy in Genealogical Chart 3, Appendix A. The group traces its descent from a human ancestor named Changg (96), a son of the spirit forebear (*madaka*) Kisala (95), after whom the narrator was named.

Clan history 4: Yombu Nyininggu 2, YN2 (narrator: Kiriyas, 130)

> The ancestral spirit from which the members of my clan are descended came out of a hole in the ground named Wanmay Wakembi (lit. 'the hole named Wanmay'), but I don't know his name. He was the forebear of a Kwoma-speaking clan that belongs to the Kowariyasi tribe in the Washkuk Hills. We are descended from one of this spirit's human descendants: a man named Payap (122), Payap Amanenji.[24] When Payap was born the Kowariyasi tribe had its main settlement at a place named Yomonomonggey. Amanenji was married to a Yalaku woman named Halop and they had the son Payap (122), my clan's founder. Amanenji died while Payap was still young. His widow, Halop, decided to return to her natal tribe and remarry there. The Yalaku at that time were located at Walawili. There Halop married a Yalaku man named Naniyas (121), who adopted Payap and raised him. When the kinsmen of Halop's deceased Kwoma husband came to the Yalaku settlement to collect the bridewealth payment for her (see Chapter 4), her new husband and his kinsmen made an exceptionally large payment. Seeing how large it was, her former husband's kinsmen said there would be no need to make a separate payment for Payap, and that Payap could now be considered a member of Naniyas' clan, our clan. Normally a separate and substantial payment is made for any child a widowed woman takes with her if she remarries into another clan or tribe. My clan consists of people descended from Payap.
>
> When his mother took him back with her to the Yalaku tribe, Payap lost any right to inherit his Kwoma father's clan spirits (*wari*). Payap left all of these spirits behind in the Washkuk Hills. They included the Yena ceremony spirit named Manjiirekiiyas and another named Ukusonggiila. But he and his Yalaku descendants subsequently found many other spirits in the country they claimed to the north-east of the Hills. One was a male spirit named Kupuchir.

24 The man's name was Payap, but Kiriyas is here following the modern practice of giving him his father's name as a surname, hence 'Payap Amanenji'.

One of the well-known totems my group owns is a type of banana termed *asakapa*. Kwoma often name my clan after this type of banana: 'Asakapa'. Another of our well-known totems is a spherical gourd termed *kiirubu*. This gourd has a story. The name of this type of gourd was given to a legendary warrior named Kiirumbuyena (*kiirubu* + *yena*). I'm not sure when this man lived, but he was an ancestral member of our clan. Ayam knows the story of this legendary warrior and I am going to ask him to tell it now.

Ayam then told the story as follows:

A legendary warrior named Kiirumbuyena

A *kiirubu* plant once grew at a site where an elderly woman used to urinate outside her house at night. The plant had only one gourd on it. We soak these gourds in water to soften their insides so that we can hollow them out. After drying them in the sun we use them as water containers. The woman picked the gourd and put it in her house. There it transformed into a boy child. This boy didn't eat meat or most other normal foods. Instead, he collected the oily sap of a tree Kwoma call '*kwar*' in a bamboo container, and at meal times would pour some of it into a coconut-shell bowl and drink it while eating boiled sago. The boy grew into a man of extraordinary strength. His name was Kiirumbuyena.

While he was still a mere youth he would go hunting and kill every bird and forest animal he found. While he was hunting his mother, the woman who raised him, would prepare the sago they would both eat. He would bring home the birds and other animals he had killed, and his mother would cook them. He was such an effective hunter with spear and bow that even while still a young man he wiped out all of the wild pigs, cassowaries and other game in the region in which he was living.

When he was fully grown he decided to start attacking and burning the settlements of neighbouring tribes. He would collect a large number of sago palm fronds (*suku*) and tie them to his ankles. The loud rustling sound they made when he dragged them through the forest caused the enemy think there was a huge war-party on its way, so everyone would flee into the forest. This enabled him to burn their settlements with impunity. Kiriyas's clan owns a personal name that derives from this man's habit of tying sago palm leaves to his legs and dragging them behind him when attacking other settlements: Yatiisuku ('Legs of Sago Leaves'). This is a traditional Yalaku man's name. The first half is the same as the Kwoma word for 'leg': *yatii*; the other half, '*suku*', is common to both of our languages, and means green sago-palm branches. Kiriyas's clan owns this name because it owns the *kiirubu* gourd totem and hence also the story of this legendary warrior, Kiirumbuyena.

This man was so strong that he could go to war on his own. He was a one-man war-party. His body was impervious to spears and arrows. But he was vulnerable in one spot, on his calves. He was so destructive that his elderly mother eventually became concerned that he would wipe out all of the surrounding peoples as well as all the animals. So she paid a visit to several of the neighbouring tribes and asked their men why they hadn't killed him. They said they had frequently hit him with arrows and spears, but without effect. The weapons simply bounced off his body. She then revealed that he was vulnerable in one spot, on the back of the lower half of his legs. She told them that the next time he waged war against them they must shoot him there. She told them that if they didn't, she was afraid that her son would kill all of them, and then start on the members of his own tribe.

So the next time he went to war, several of the opposing group's most able warriors stood firm. As he approached, they encircled him and shot arrows into the backs of his legs. Fatally wounded, he staggered home. When he arrived, his mother opened her legs wide and allowed him to crawl inside her vagina, where he lay down and died (a comment that provoked much laughter among the people listening to the story). Others later extracted him from his mother's body and buried him. The place where he died and was buried is near the modern township of Nuku, at a site named Mambos Lakaw.

When Ayam had completed this story, Kiriyas traced the descent of the members of his clan from its founder, Payap (122). This data is presented in Genealogical Chart 4, Appendix A.

Hambora 1 and Hambora 2 clans

In 1973 there were two clans at Yelogu named Hambora; they were distinguished by the numbers '1' and '2'. Both had long been associated residentially and once might even have formed a single exogamous group, but the patrilineal connections between them had been forgotten. Both belonged to the Tek totemic division, the one to which the majority of Bangwis village clans also belong. 'Tek' is the Kwoma name for this totemic division. I am unaware of its Yalaku equivalent.

In 1973 both clans had only one married male member each. Both traced descent from men who were originally Kwoma-speaking but left their natal tribe as adults and migrated east, where they were incorporated into the Yalaku tribe. The Yalaku also name Hambora 1 clan 'Mbondiiwa', after the Kwoma term for yellow ochre, one

of this group's totems. The Yalaku term is '*paduwan*'. The also give the other Habora clan a second name: 'Wanyinggi', after a type of plant (*wanyigi*) that is one of its totems.

Clan history 5: Hambora 1, H1 (narrator: Womandu, 157)

> My clan ancestor (*kwul*) was named Apwi Nyakambaya (143). He was descended from a spirit (*madaka*) who emerged from the hole named Nggwandiimbay Wakembi. This is the hole Kwoma call 'Wanmay'. At first Apwi lived with his clan brothers near this hole at a place named Mambu Wasawen. But his group became caught up in the fighting between the Kwoma and the Apukili, and he decided to migrate north-east into the region where Waspen, the founder of Rama clan, was living. Apwi found huge unoccupied areas of forest there, and claimed them as his own. This region still forms part of our clan's territory. It includes the areas of forest named Siyapambonggi, Wachii'om and Korombay. He also claimed the parts of the streams that flowed through this forest country, such as Werima, as well as massive sago stands like Posonggel. Apwi followed the streams that flowed (south) through this region and eventually settled with Waspen at Walawili.
>
> Our totems include yellow ochre (*paduwan*); the dog; birds such as the green parrot, red parrot and white cockatoo; and trees including the *magi* (*malas*, TP) and one Kwoma call *aponyokunggu*. We share these totems with the different clans that belong to the Tek totemic division at Bangwis. Our clan, therefore, belongs to the Tek division.

Womandu then traced the descent of the members of his clan from its founder (*kwul*) Apwi. This data is presented in Genealogical Chart 5, Appendix A.

Clan history 6: Hambora 2, H2 (narrator: Sor, 170)

> The original spirit forebear of my clan emerged from the underworld through the hole named Nggwandiimbay Wakembi, to the north-west of the Washkuk Hills. I don't know this spirit's name. One of his descendants, the man named Kayimeni, migrated north-east into Yalaku country, like the founder of H1 clan, and there founded my clan. He joined Waspen and the rest of the Yalaku community at Walawili. Like the ancestor of H1 clan, Nyakambaya, Kayimeni left his original home to avoid being caught up in warfare between the Kwoma and Apukili. At that time the Apukili were an immensely powerful group. In the course of his migration Kayimeni claimed all of the forest resources and sago stands that we still own today. This land was previously unoccupied. It includes huge sago stands such as Watiyombu, sections of the streams named Werima, Tepi and Wurumbay, and the areas of forest named Nyamba, Karakuri, Hambingganggey, Komonggawul and Winggiiroku.
>
> When Kayimeni joined his community, Waspen shared with him all of his magical knowledge: magic relating to warfare, hunting pigs and cultivating yams. Yam magic involves rubbing the leaves of certain aromatic plants on the seed tubers and aspersing them with other highly aromatic magical substances. The crop will then be very prolific. The magic relating to hunting pigs involves singing spells.
>
> The two Hambora clans were probably formerly united, but must have grown to the point where they divided into two segments: the clans we today call 'Hambora 1' and 'Hambora 2'. At the Walawili settlement each of these two clans had its own men's house. H1, founded by Nyakambaya, owned the men's house named Woyilisa. My clan owned the men's house named Panduwan Chivi (*paduwan*, yellow ochre). The Kwoma knew this building as Mbondiiwasi.
>
> The spirits my clan owns include Yaniip and Nggiilasapi, both male; these are represented by flutes. We also own several spirits associated with unusually shaped boulders on our land. These include the female spirit Nanarombo, and the male spirits Kawapambonggi and Hayambiyamenda.
>
> That's the end of my story.

Sor then traced the descent of the members of his clan from its founder Kayimeni. This data is presented in Genealogical Chart 6, Appendix A.

4

Marriage alliances

Kaunga social organization, like that of the neighbouring Kwoma, has two distinct but complementary parts to it. Structurally, both are equally basic. One is the division of the society into different kinds of groups: i) politically autonomous tribes; ii) the exogamous clans of which tribes are composed; and iii) the dispersed totemic divisions that link clans within and between tribes on the basis of shared totems.

The other part consists of the ties of different kinds that link members of different groups. These are based on: i) marriage; ii) totemic kinship; iii) the institution of friendship; and iv) trade. The different types of groups and the different types of relationships between them all figure prominently in the following history of the Yalaku. The different types of groups found in this society have been discussed in the preceding chapters. Here I give a brief account of the inter-group alliances that marriages establish.

Although the data presented in this chapter was collected primarily in 1973, my more recent research suggests that the structure of affinal alliances has changed little if at all since then. In the following account I therefore use the ethnographic present.

The first generation of an affinal alliance

The Yalaku understand marriage as the exchange of a woman between two men. One man 'gives' a woman to another, who 'pays' (*toku*) for her with shell valuables (or cash). Women share this exchange model, and unselfconsciously say that their husbands have either 'paid' for them, or are yet to do so.

Every Yalaku marriage establishes an obligatory exchange relationship, and wider political alliance, between the wife's brother (the wife-giver) and her husband (the wife-taker), an exchange relationship that implicates their two clans as wholes. This alliance endures obligatorily for up to two generations: in the first for the duration of the life of the wife, and in the second for the lives of her sons (Figure 4.1). The wife-giver is always formally the wife's brother – either an actual brother or clan equivalent – not the wife's father, though the latter may act in this role informally if the woman's brother is immature at the time of the woman's marriage.

A marriage commences when a woman physically moves to her husband's house and begins a sexual and domestic relationship with him. As soon as she does so, her husband is required to make the bride-wealth payment for her. Formerly this consisted of shell valuables of different kinds. Today it also includes cash. This payment is made publicly, in front of the husband's house, where the valuables (and cash) are displayed on a specially constructed frame. The husband (with his father's assistance) contributes roughly half of the valuables involved; the other half is contributed by his clan 'brothers', regardless of their degree of genealogical connection to him. Other relatives may contribute if they wish. The wife's brother, or his father on his behalf if he is still immature at the time, has the exclusive right to take possession of the valuables at the end of the transaction. However, when he returns to his house, he is required to distribute roughly half of the wealth received among all of his same-generation clansmen: men he refers to as 'brothers' (either '*omo*' or '*nyimos*'). Ideally, the size of a bride-wealth payment for a woman marrying for the first time is the same as her mother's, plus a little more.

A bride-wealth payment gives the husband exclusive access to his wife's sexual and domestic services, and legal control over his children. There is no fixed time by which it must be made, but ideally it should be as soon as possible after the marriage commences. Until it is made any children that result from the union legally belong to the wife's clan.

A bride-wealth payment does not end the exchange relationship between brothers-in-law. For the duration of the marriage a married woman's brother is obligated to 'look after' (*lukautim*, TP) her by regularly visiting and making sure she is being well treated, and by taking her substantial gifts of food – which she shares with her husband and children. A married woman is also entitled to visit her brother periodically and, within reason, request food and other domestic goods from him. Today these might include store-bought goods such as clothes and fishing nets. The woman's brother also regularly assists her husband with economic activities, such as roofing a new

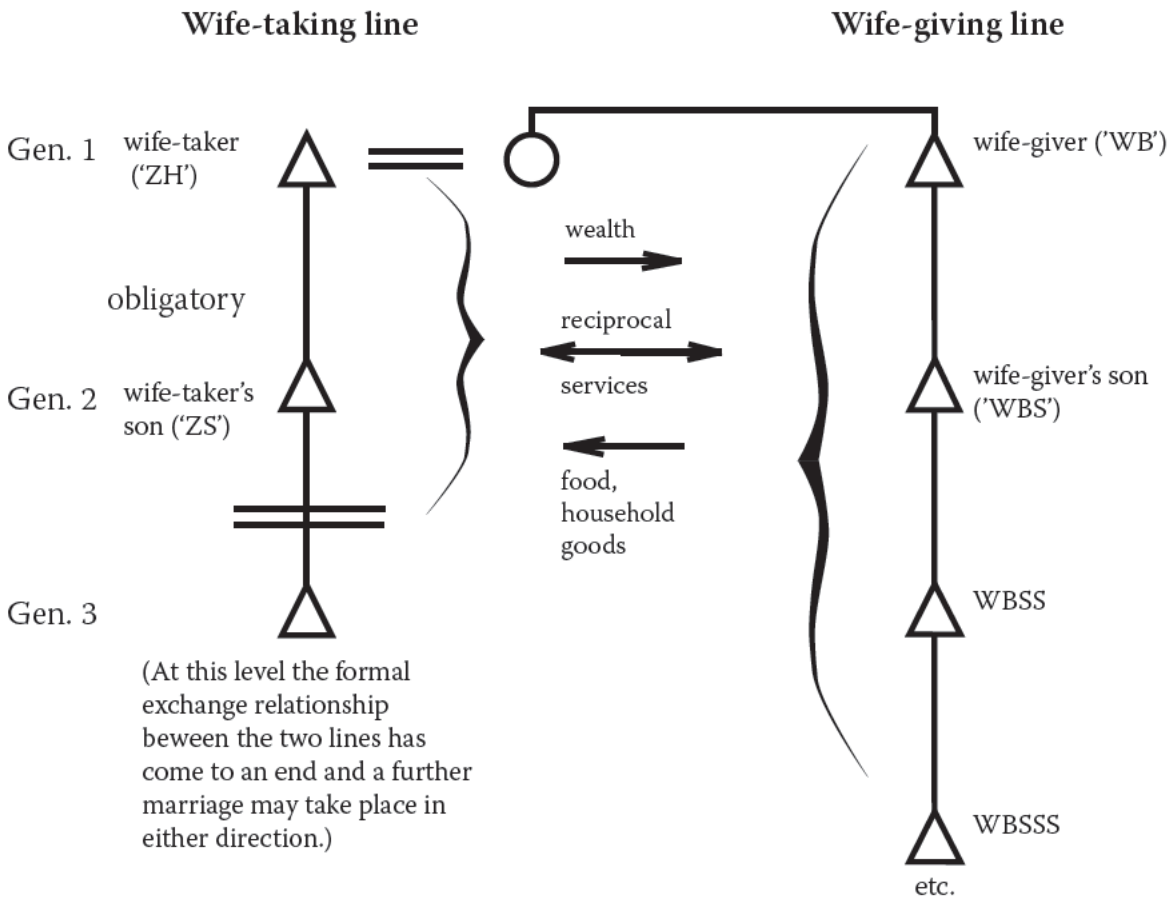


Figure 4.1 The structure of Yalaku affinal alliances.

house or clearing forest for a new garden. These services are reciprocated.

In exchange for the food and other services the woman's brother provides, her husband is periodically required to 'pay' (*toku*) her brother with additional quantities of shell valuables (or cash). A wife's brother does not 'pay' his sister's husband for the equivalent economic services, as in Yalaku marriage exchanges wealth in the form of shell valuables (and cash) flows exclusively to the wife-giver. He reciprocates with additional quantities of food and household goods.

Brothers-in-law are also political allies. When warfare was still a feature of this society, they secretly informed each other of impending attacks on their respective settlements, both by their own clans and other groups, and ideally, though not always in practice, refrained from participating in such attacks.

When a married woman dies her husband (if he is still alive) makes a large and final payment of shell valuables to her brother. This is the 'head' or death payment for a married woman (Figure 4.2). The valuables are of the same kind as those used to make the bride-wealth payment. As with that payment, the valuables are displayed publicly in front of the woman's husband's house, i.e. the house at which she was living at the time of her death. The husband contributes roughly half of the valuables involved and his clan 'brothers' the remainder. The woman's brother (assuming he is still alive) is the formal recipient of the payment and retains roughly half of the valuables involved, but he is required to distribute the remainder among his clan brothers.

If a woman outlives her husband and is elderly, she might choose not to remarry but remain living with one of her adult sons or other close male relatives. In this case, for the remainder of her life the exchange relationship continues between her brother (or brother's son etc. – see below) on the one hand and her sons on the other. When she dies, it is these sons who make the death payment for her, assisted by their, and their deceased father's, clan 'brothers'. If a widow remarries leviratically to one of her clan brothers, no further marriage payment is made, and the exchange relationship is re-established between her brother (or brother's son, etc.) and her new husband. Women typically choose to remarry leviratically if they have young children, with whom they will always choose to stay.

If a marriage ends in divorce, or the husband dies and the woman remarries into another clan, the exchange

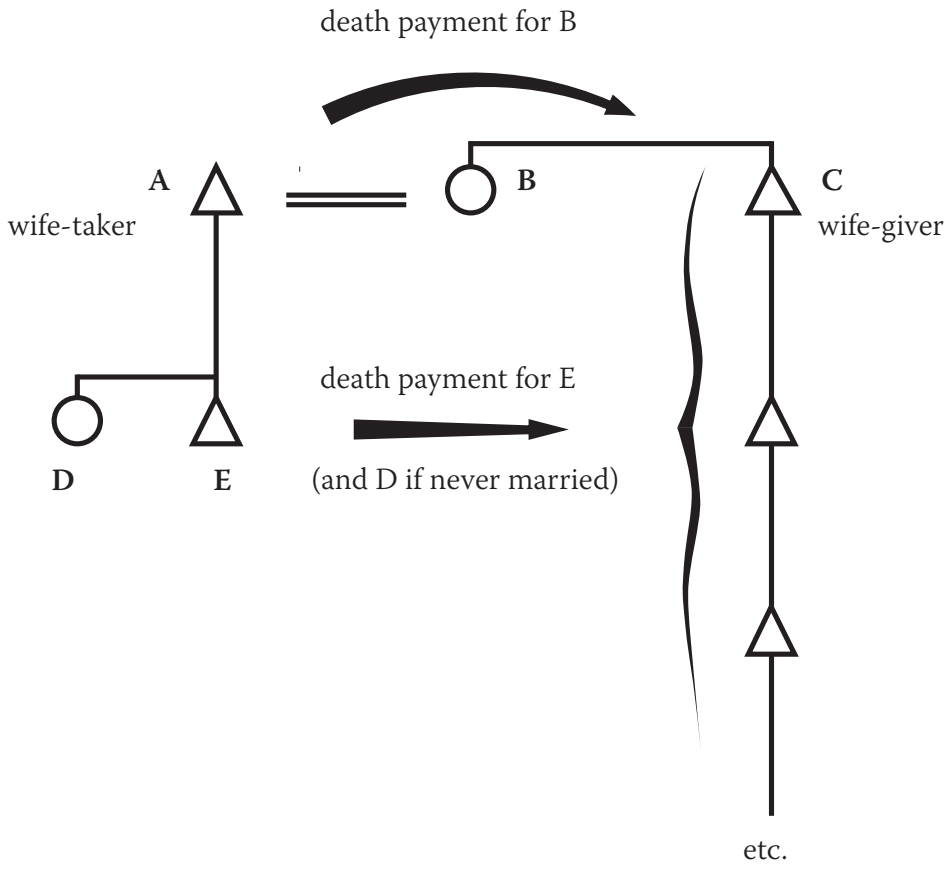


Figure 4.2 Structure of Yalaku death ('head') payments.

relationship that previously obtained between her brother and her former husband is replaced with an identical one between her brother and her new husband. The new husband is also required to make a bride-wealth payment for the woman. This goes not to her brother but to her former husband (or other members of his clan if he is deceased). No such payment, I was informed, was made when a woman was captured in warfare.

Inheritance of exchange rights in a wife-giving patriline

A married woman commonly outlives her brother. If this happens the exchange relationship and political alliance does not come to an end, but continues between her husband on the one hand, and her brother's son (or clan equivalent) on the other. In the first generation of an affinal alliance, therefore, what begins as an exchange relationship between brothers-in-law, is transformed on the wife's brother's (WB's) death into one between a wife's brother's son (WBS) and a father's sister's husband (FZH). The wife's brother's son now becomes obligated to 'look after' his father's sister (FZ) in exactly the same way as his father did before him. If a married woman should outlive both her brother and brother's son, the latter's role in the exchange relationship is inherited by his son (or clan equivalent) – and so on down the wife-giving line for the duration of the woman's life. There is no limit, in fact, to the number of descending-generation male members of a wife-giving patriline who can potentially inherit the original wife-giver's exchange rights in his married sister (Figures 4.1 and 4.2).

The second generation of an affinal alliance

If no children result from a marriage, the exchange relationship and wider alliance between the woman's husband and members of her brother's patriline come to an end when she dies. However, if she has had children, an identical exchange relationship and wider political relationship continues obligatorily between the same male members of the wife-giving patriline on the one hand and her sons on the other. This endures obligatorily for the duration of her sons' lives. This represents the second generation of an affinal alliance.

The second generation of an affinal alliance begins as an exchange relationship between the wife's brother on the one hand and the woman's children of both sexes on the other. This is the 'mother's brother-sister's child' relationship. A mother's brother (MB), for instance, is obligated to 'look after' his sister's children in the same way

as he does his married sister: by regularly visiting them to ensure that they are being treated well and by taking them substantial gifts of food and other domestic goods. A sister's child, like a married sister, is also entitled, within reason, to request domestic goods from their MB. While the children are young their father 'pays' (*toku*) to their MB (his wife's brother) for these goods with shell valuables or cash.

When the oldest of the sister's children reaches physical maturity their father, assisted by his kinsmen, makes a puberty payment to their MB. This is made publicly in front of the house at which the children are living, and consists of the same types of shell valuables used in bride-wealth and death payments. This payment is said explicitly to terminate or 'buy off' (*baim*, TP) the MB's exchange rights in his sister's daughters after they marry. Following their marriages, it is their brothers who will exclusively hold exchange rights in them and exclusively have the right to receive the bride wealth and other payments their husbands make for them throughout their lives.

A puberty payment, however, does not terminate the exchange relationship between a MB and his sister's sons. For as long as a sister's son (ZS) lives the MB is obligated to 'look after' him in exactly the same way he does a married sister. This involves periodically visiting him to make sure he is doing well, providing him with substantial gifts of food and giving him regular assistance with economic activities, such as building a new garden and roofing a new house – services the ZS reciprocates. A ZS must 'pay' for this assistance with additional quantities of shell valuables. A MB reciprocates, but does not 'pay', for the same services with additional quantities of food and other goods.

A MB and a ZS are also political allies. When warfare was a still a feature of this society, they secretly warned each other of impending raids on their respective settlements and, ideally, refrained from participating in such attacks.

The formal exchange relationship and wider alliance between a MB and a ZS continues obligatorily until the latter dies. When the ZS dies, his clan 'brothers' – assisted by any other relatives who might wish to contribute – collectively make the death or 'head' payment for him to his MB (Figure 4.2). Unlike the death payment for a married woman, therefore, which always goes to her brother's clan, the death payment for a man always goes to his MB's group. Like all of the other major inter-clan exchanges of wealth that arise out of a marriage, this payment is made publicly in front of the house at which the ZS was living at the time of his death. The MB retains roughly half of the wealth received but distributes the remainder among his clan 'brothers'.

If the MB dies before the ZS, as commonly happens, the exchange relationship that defines the second generation of an affinal alliance does not come to an end, but continues obligatorily between the ZS on the one hand and the MB's son (or clan equivalent) on the other. What begins in the second generation of an affinal alliance, therefore, as an exchange relationship between a MB and a ZS, is transformed on the MB's death into one between a mother's brother's son (MBS) and a father's sister's son (FZS). If the ZS should outlive the MBS as well, the relationship continues between the ZS on the one hand and his mother's brother's son's son (MBSS) on the other – and so on down the MB's patriline for as long as the ZS lives. There is no limit to how many descending-generation male members of the MB's patriline may potentially inherit the MB's exchange rights in the ZS.

If a married woman has several sons it is only when they have all died, and separate death payments have been made for each, that the formal exchange relationship and wider alliance comes to an end. It is only at this level, furthermore, that a second marriage may take place between the same two patrilines. Ideally this should take place in the opposite direction from the earlier one, to 'balance' the exchange of women between them.

Marriage prohibitions

The prohibition on repeating a marriage between a wife-giving and wife-taking patriline during both generations of an affinal alliance gives rise to a wide-ranging set of negative marriage rules. These have the effect of widely dispersing marriages between patrilines and clans. Among the many other prohibitions entailed, two men may not exchange sisters, and a man may not marry either his FZD or MBD – i.e. marriage may not take place between cross-cousins (see Figure 4.1).

Men justify the prohibition on repeating a marriage between two affinally linked patrilines for the duration of an alliance in different ways, but primarily on political grounds. All marriages, they say, should create new alliances between previously unrelated (*wayina*) people. For a man to marry his wife's sister polygynously, they say, would be a complete waste politically, as he is already allied to that woman's brother because of his existing marriage. Similarly, for a man to marry his mother's brother's daughter (MBD) would be a complete waste politically, as this would involve marrying the sister of a man (the MBS) to whom he is potentially already allied politically – in the second generation of an affinal alliance – because of his mother's marriage.

Men rationalize the prohibition on marriage within the same clan in similar terms. For a man to marry a woman in the same clan would be a complete waste politically, as he would be marrying the sister of a man to whom he is already allied politically by virtue of their membership in the same exogamous group.

The preference for dispersing marriages widely between different clans and tribes is reinforced by the system of signalling on slit-gongs. Each person has a call sign on them. This enables messages to be sent to people from their home settlement if they are in the forest, or from one part

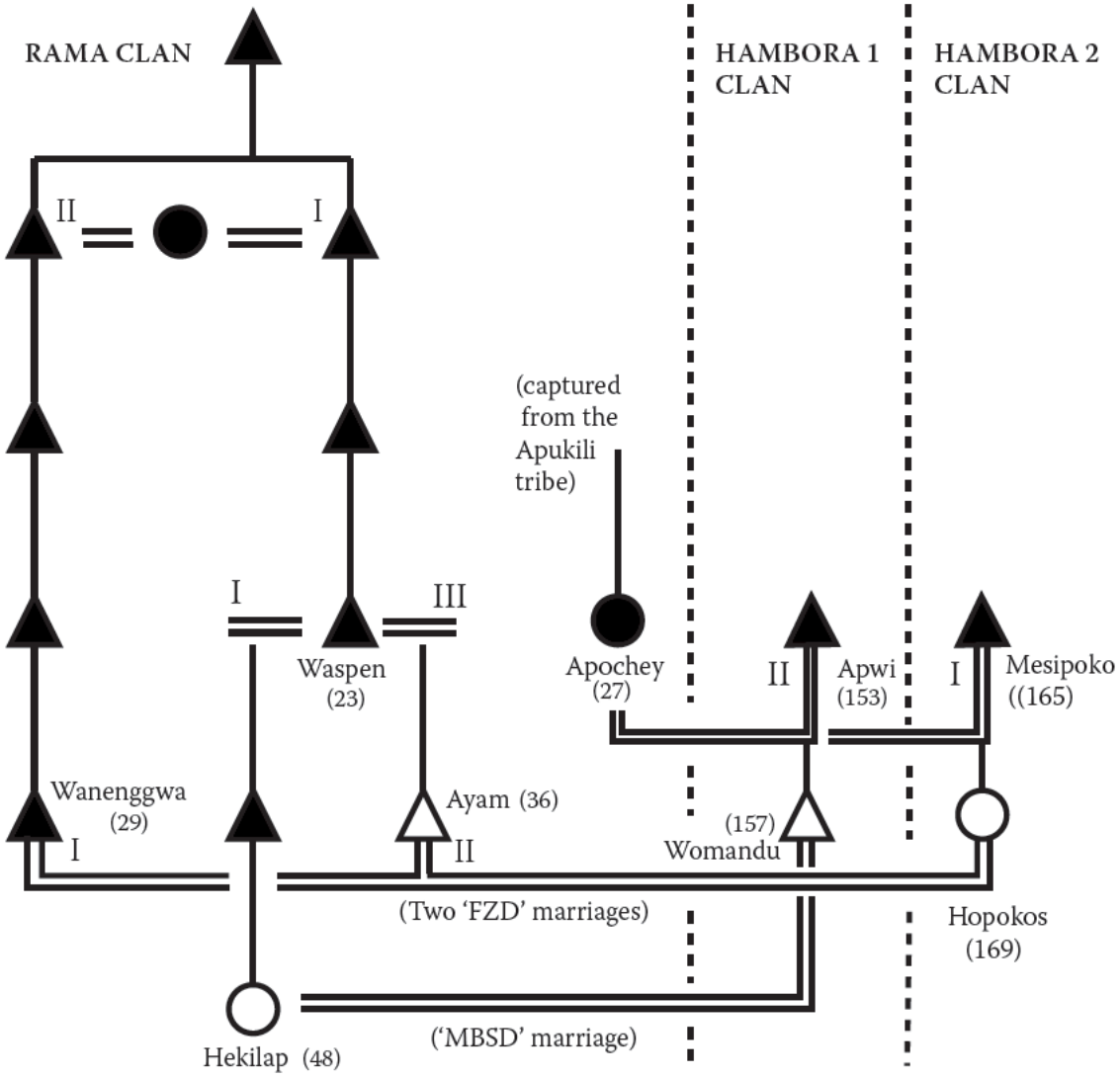


Figure 4.3 Wanenggwa's (29) marriage to his 'FZD' (rawa) Hopokos (169), and Womandu's (157) marriage to his 'M' (ayiwa) Hekilap (48).

of the forest to another. In the forest, the flanged buttress roots of large trees are used in place of slit-gongs.

A person's call sign has two parts. The first consists of the call sign for their father's clan (i.e. their own clan). The second consists of the call sign for their mother's clan. Thus, the call sign for a man whose father is (or was) a member of clan A, and whose mother derived from clan B, is A+B. Given that a person's call sign is made up of those for their two parents' clans, the signalling system cannot distinguish between full siblings. This degree of ambiguity is tolerated. To maximize the effectiveness of the signalling system, however, people say that no other persons should have the same call sign. This can only be achieved if male members of the same clan obtain their wives from different exogamous groups. More specifically, a man should not obtain a wife from any clan that has provided another member of his group with a wife where there are living children from that marriage. Thus, if a man's father or one of his father's full siblings is still alive, he ideally should not obtain his wife from his father's mother's clan, otherwise his children and any living offspring from that earlier union will have the same call signs. Similarly, a man should not obtain a wife from his mother's clan, otherwise he and his children will have the same call signs on the slit-gongs.

Although the signalling system in principle requires that marriages be dispersed much more widely than the rules discussed above, it does not generate formal prohibitions. It is not formally prohibited, for example, for a man to marry a woman from his mother's clan – only members of her patriline. Nevertheless, the signalling system is something of which men are well aware when choosing their spouses.

Balancing the exchange of wives between clans

In addition to the explicit requirement that all marriages should create new alliances between previously unrelated people, there is also a strong preference for the exchange

of women between groups to be balanced over time. One of the ways men express this is by saying that it is 'good' to marry women from particular kinship categories. It is always understood, however, that the spouses are genealogically distant and not already closely related as the result of an earlier marriage.

For instance, men say that it is 'good' to marry a terminological '*rawa*' ('ZD'). From a man's perspective, this kinship category includes women who are both formally prohibited as spouses, such as ZD, FZD and FFZD, and those who are permitted, i.e. the daughters of distantly related clan 'father's sisters', such as a FFBDD or FFFBSDD. When they recommend marriage to a woman from this kinship category, it is understood that a genealogically distant person is being referred to. Marriage to a genealogically distant '*rawa*' is approved, as it entails that a woman (the wife) is returned to the clan from which her mother derived.

Figure 4.3. provides an example of such a formally correct '*rawa*' marriage. Ayam's (36) deceased clan 'elder brother' (*omo*) Wanenggwa (29) was formally married to Hopokos (169) of H2 clan. Prior to his marriage, Wanenggwa referred to Hopokos as *rawa* ('FZD') because her mother, Apochey (27), was a member of Wanenggwa's clan of his father's generation – and he referred to her as 'FZ'. He consequently referred to her daughter, Hopokos, as 'FZD' (*rawa*). This marriage was described as 'good' as it involved the return of a woman (Hopokos) from the clan to which her mother had belonged. The marriage was also said to be formally correct, as Wanenggwa and his wife's mother were members of different patrilines within Rama clan. This meant that his wife Hopokos was not an actual FZD. Wanenggwa was in fact not genealogically related to his 'FZ' Apochey at all, as she had been captured as a young girl from the Apukili during warfare and adopted by a distantly related member of his clan.

Wanenggwa died not long before I first visited Yelogu. Following his death, his widow Hopokos decided not to remarry outside Rama clan, as she was entitled to do, but marry Ayam, Wanenggwa's 'yB'. This enabled her to stay with the three children she had had with Wanenggwa, all of whom were still young. Like Wanenggwa, Ayam had referred to Hopokos prior to his marriage as '*rawa*' ('FZD'), because he had also referred to her mother, Apochey, as 'FZ'. This marriage was also formally correct, as Ayam and his 'FZ' Apochey were members of different patrilines within Rama clan.

Figure 4.3 also illustrates a case of an acceptable marriage to a terminological 'mother' (*ayiwa*). This was Womandu's (157) marriage to his 'mother' (*ayiwa*) Hekilap (48). Womandu belongs to H1 clan and his wife to Rama. Hekilap's mother was the Rama clan woman named above, Apochey (27). Apochey was married twice. Her first husband was Mesipoko (165) of H2 clan, with whom she had three children, including Ayam's wife, Hopokos. Following her first husband's death Apochey married Apwi (153) of H1 clan and with him had Womandu (157). Prior to his marriage, Womandu referred to Hekilap by the same term he used for his mother, Apochey: '*ayiwa*' ('M'). This follows from the fact that a man uses the same term, *ayiwa*, for all natal female members of his mother's clan of mother's generation and below – such as MZ, MBD and MBSD. Hekilap reciprocally referred to Womandu as 'son' (*padi*), the same term a woman uses for her own son. The marriage was formally correct as Hekilap was a member of a different patriline within Rama clan from that of Womandu's mother, Apochey.

A marriage to a 'mother' involves repeating a marriage between two clans in the same direction as an earlier one. Such marriages are regarded as acceptable because they are a way of reinforcing the political ties between the spouses' two clans. They are approved, however, only on the condition that they do not occur 'too often', as they could potentially lead to an imbalance in the exchange of women between the groups involved – one giving more wives over time than it has received.

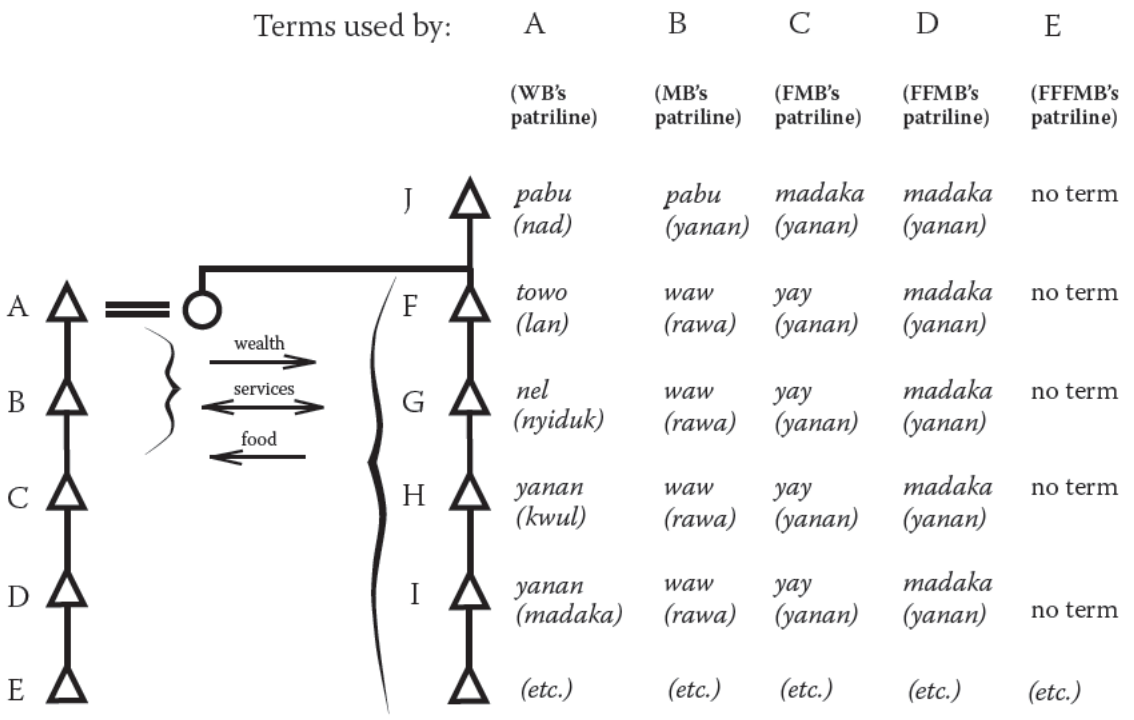
Terminological relationships prior to marriage between Yalaku spouses

In 1973 there were fifteen extant marriages at Yelogu. This number is far too small to draw conclusions of a statistically significant nature about Yalaku marriage patterns. They nevertheless illustrate the points already made.

Of the fifteen marriages, eight, or just over half, were between spouses who were 'unrelated' (*wayina*) prior to their marriage. 'Unrelated' in this context means the spouses used no kinship terms for each other and were not otherwise closely related. Of the other seven,

i) three were to women who their husbands had referred to, prior to their marriage, as '*yanan*' ('ZDD'; recip. *pabu*, 'MMB'): in all three cases the wives were daughters of genealogically distant female *rawa* (either a 'ZD' or 'FZD');
ii) two were to female *rawa* ('ZD'; recip. *waw*, 'MB'), daughters of a genealogically distant 'sister' or 'father's sister';
iii) one was to a genealogically distant 'M' (*ayiwa*; recip. *padi*, 'S') – see Figure 4.3 above;
iv) one was to a genealogically distant female *yow* ('FZ'; recip. *nel*, '[f.s.] BS'); this was Haraw's (44) endogamous marriage to his clan 'FZ' Niikiiriikay (30; see Household 3).

Of the fifteen marriages, only the last was formally 'incorrect', as the couple were members of the same clan: Rama. The wife was her husband's actual FFFFeBSSD. Although the spouses were of different genealogical levels, they were of roughly the same age. Ayam reported that when this couple announced their intention to marry (in



Note: Apart from A's sister, the sisters of B, C and D use the same terms for the members of the wife-giving line as their brothers. A's sister has no terms for male members of the wife-giving line.

Figure 4.4 Kin terms used in the context of Yalaku affinal alliances. Reciprocals are in brackets.

the 1960s), he and other members of Rama clan bitterly opposed the union. The couple nevertheless received active support from both the local evangelical Christian church, of which they were members, and government officials at Ambunti. The latter informed them they were free to marry whoever they wished, provided they did not contravene national law.

When a couple marry, they drop whatever relationship terms they might have used previously and refer to each other exclusively by name or as 'wife' or 'husband' (see Appendix C).

The structure of the kinship terminology

Figure 4.4 illustrates the kinship terms that the members of wife-giving and wife-taking patrilines use for each other. (A more detailed listing is given in Appendix C.) From the Figure it can be seen that a sister's son (B, the wife-taker's son) uses a single term, '*waw*', for the male members of his MB's patriline of MB's generation and below (F, G, H etc.). Among other persons, therefore, the term '*waw*' refers to MB, MBS and MBSS. These persons all use a common reciprocal: '*rawa*'. A male speaker, therefore, also merges cross-generationally such relatives as ZS, FZS and FFZS – i.e. the sons of all same- and ascending-generation natal female members of his own patriline.

Kinship terminologies that merge relatives cross-generationally (e.g. MB = MBS = MBSS) have been the subject of an immense amount of speculation in the theoretical literature.[25] Those that merge members of a MB's patriline are conventionally designated 'Omaha', after the Native American people of Nebraska who provide the 'type' terminology (Barnes 1984).

From the discussion of affinal alliances above, it will be apparent that the use of a single term, '*waw*', for MB and MB's patrilineal descendants coincides precisely with the range of persons who either hold or stand to inherit exchange rights in a male ego in the second generation of an alliance. The Yalaku in fact see these two terms, '*waw*' and '*rawa*', as defining this relationship.

Figure 4.5 illustrates the kinship terminology the Yalaku use when speaking Tok Pisin. From this it can be seen that the TP terminology displays the same 'Omaha' features as the indigenous one. MB is merged cross-generationally with MBS and other lower-generation male members of the MB's patriline. All are referred to a '*kandere*' (TP).

25 See Barnes 1984; Bowden 1977; Godelier 2011; Köhler 1975[1897]; Lounsbury 1964; Lévi-Strauss 1965, 1969:xxxv–xliii; McKinley 1971; Murdock 1965:232–33 *et passim*; Radcliffe-Brown 1941; Trautmann 2012; Trautmann and Whitely 2012a, 2012b:5, 2012c.

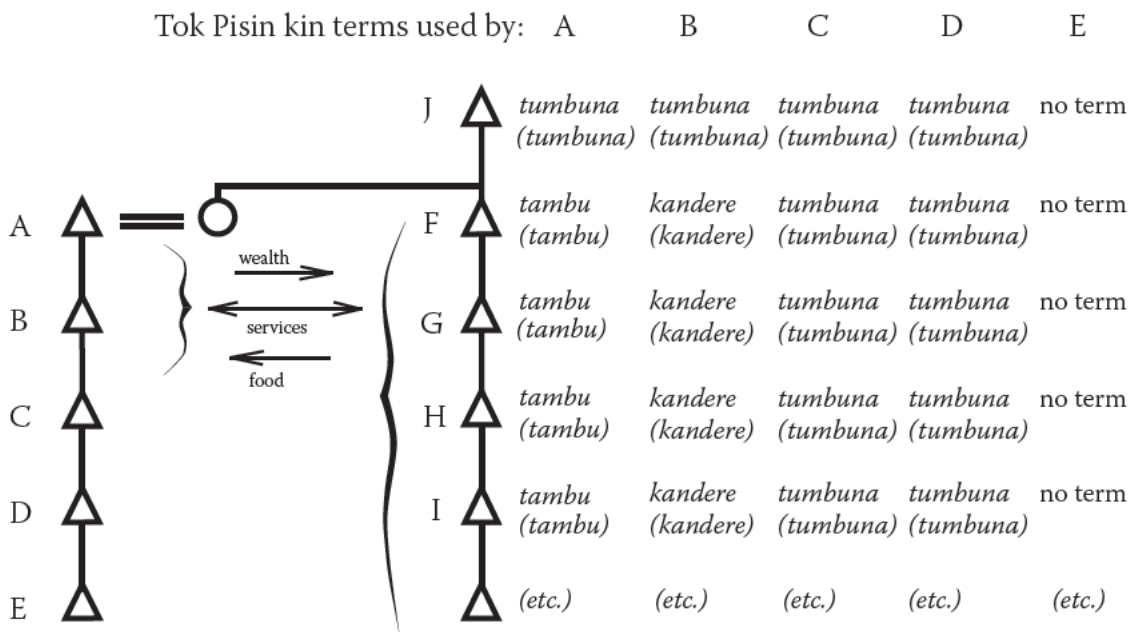


Figure 4.5 Tok Pisin kin terms and the structure of Yalaku affinal alliances. Reciprocals are in brackets.

From the point of view of kinship theory, however, there are two striking differences between the TP and indigenous terminologies. First, when speaking TP, a man cross-generationally merges members of WB's patriline (and clan as a whole) of WB's generation and below (i.e. WB = WBS = WBSS etc.). In the indigenous terminology WB is distinguished from WBS (Figure 4.4). Although the merging of WB and WB's male patrilineal descendants is not found in the indigenous terminology, the merging of these relatives in its TP equivalent can be correlated with the fact that a man has a structurally equivalent relationship, actually or potentially, in the first generation of an affinal alliance with all members of his WB's patriline of WB's generation and below. Cross-culturally, in fact, the merging by a male speaker of members of WB's patriline of WB's generation and below is characteristic of so-called 'Omaha' type terminologies. Coult has even attempted to derive the structure of terms used for MB's patriline in such systems from those used for WB's line (Coult 1967:38). I can offer no structural explanation for this inconsistency between the indigenous and TP terminologies.

From a theoretical perspective, the second striking difference is that the TP terminology almost completely obliterates the asymmetry of the indigenous one, as the great majority of terms are self-reciprocal. For instance, a male speaker uses a single term, '*kandere*', for both MB and ZS. He similarly uses a single term, '*tambu*', for both WB and ZH. For the Yalaku, the absence of asymmetry in the TP terminology is a minor inconvenience. If the referent of a term such as '*kandere*' is unclear, the speaker will either identify the person by adding a name (such as '*kandere* X') or by means of a descriptive circumlocution. From a theoretical perspective, however, the lack of asymmetry in the TP terminology is highly anomalous, as theoreticians of 'Omaha' terminologies have taken asymmetry to be one of their diagnostic properties (e.g. Buchler and Selby 1968:261; Lounsbury 1964; Murdock 1965:224).

The 'Omaha' features of the Yalaku kinship terminology are effectively identical to those found in that of the neighbouring Kwoma. Elsewhere, I have argued that the various theories that have been advanced in explanation of such features cross-culturally are either not relevant to the Kwoma terminology, or only apply with significant modifications (Bowden 1977:1–12, 187–220, 1983b). That analysis would apply equally well to the Yalaku terminology, in both its indigenous and TP forms.[26]

26 Note that Godelier in his account of the structure of 'Omaha' terminologies makes a significant error (2011:198) – probably one of proofreading. He states that a male speaker equates FZS and S. In fact, a male speaker distinguishes FZS from S (i.e. a son). A female speaker, on the other hand, does equate FZS and S (both are 'son').

Part II

History and warfare

5

Yalaku history and warfare

An overview

When Ayam and the other Yalaku men had completed telling their clan origin myths (Chapter 3), Ayam took centre stage. With Kiriyas seated beside him, over the following two days he narrated the history of their community as a whole. This principally involved describing the warfare in which the Yalaku had been engaged from the earliest remembered times. Once the narrative commenced, Ayam paused only briefly to allow other men to query something he had said, jog his memory if he had forgotten a name, or to suggest additional topics he might include.

The following six chapters (Chapters 6–11) are little more than a lightly edited translation of his narrative. The text differs, however, in two ways from the original recording. First, when Ayam added something that he said he should have included earlier in the history, I have included it in the appropriate place. Second, like other Sepik peoples, the Yalaku narrate history, like myths, in direct speech and quote at length conversations that allegedly took place among the people being referred to. When I began translating this history, I found that it was much easier to follow if the direct (quoted) speech was recast as indirect (reported) speech. There are only a few places where conversations are quoted rather than reported. Those interested in comparing this translation with the original recordings will have the opportunity when they are eventually made available online. This will require fluency in Tok Pisin.

With no independent events before the arrival of Europeans to use as timelines, it is impossible to say precisely when the great majority of the events described took place. The earliest were probably around the beginning of the nineteenth century, a little over a century and a half before the date of my first fieldwork. Independent evidence for this derives from the neighbouring Kwoma. One of the early Yalaku settlements Ayam refers to was at a place named Wosakapi. Members of Nowil clan at Bangwis village separately told me that the founder of their clan, a man named Kamendu, visited the Yalaku at Wosakapi with several other Honggwama men early in the period when the Kwoma were actively engaged in warfare with the Ngala, the people who occupied the Washkuk Hills before them, and who they eventually violently expelled. This warfare lasted for several decades and came to an end around 1850. Given that Kamendu's visit to Wosakapi took place early in this period of prolonged warfare, it can reasonably be assumed that it took place around the beginning of the nineteenth century and no later than 1810–20.

Ayam's account of the establishment of the settlement at Wosakapi occurs early in his narrative, but the move by the community to this new village is not the earliest event he describes. This suggests that the earliest events recalled took place no later than the beginning of the nineteenth century. Given that the narrative ends in the 1960s, the history covers a period of roughly one hundred and fifty years. To help orient the reader I have included section headings that include estimates of when the events being described took place.

Yalaku warfare

A key point to be made about Yalaku warfare is that, with few if any exceptions, it involved fighting between groups whose members interacted on a regular basis during times of peace, knew each other's names, and were often well known on a personal level. Warfare took place within what might be called a larger, supra-tribal 'community'. Like members of other tribes in this region, Yalaku men and women regularly visited the groups with which their own periodically fought, to participate in ceremonies and visit relatives. Intermarriage was common. This was especially true of the four tribes with which the Yalaku most regularly fought, notably the two other Kaunga tribes (the Nowiniyen and Motek), the Apukili (Kwanga speakers) and the Tongwinjamb Kwoma. The only people with whom the Yalaku and other Kaunga periodically fought but with whom they did not intermarry were Manambu speakers on the Sepik, principally those at Avatip. Intermarriage did not take place for ecological reasons.

During visits in times of peace to communities with which their own periodically fought, men would spend long hours sitting in their hosts' men's houses discussing intertribal affairs, including any recent warfare in which their hosts had been involved. When they returned home,

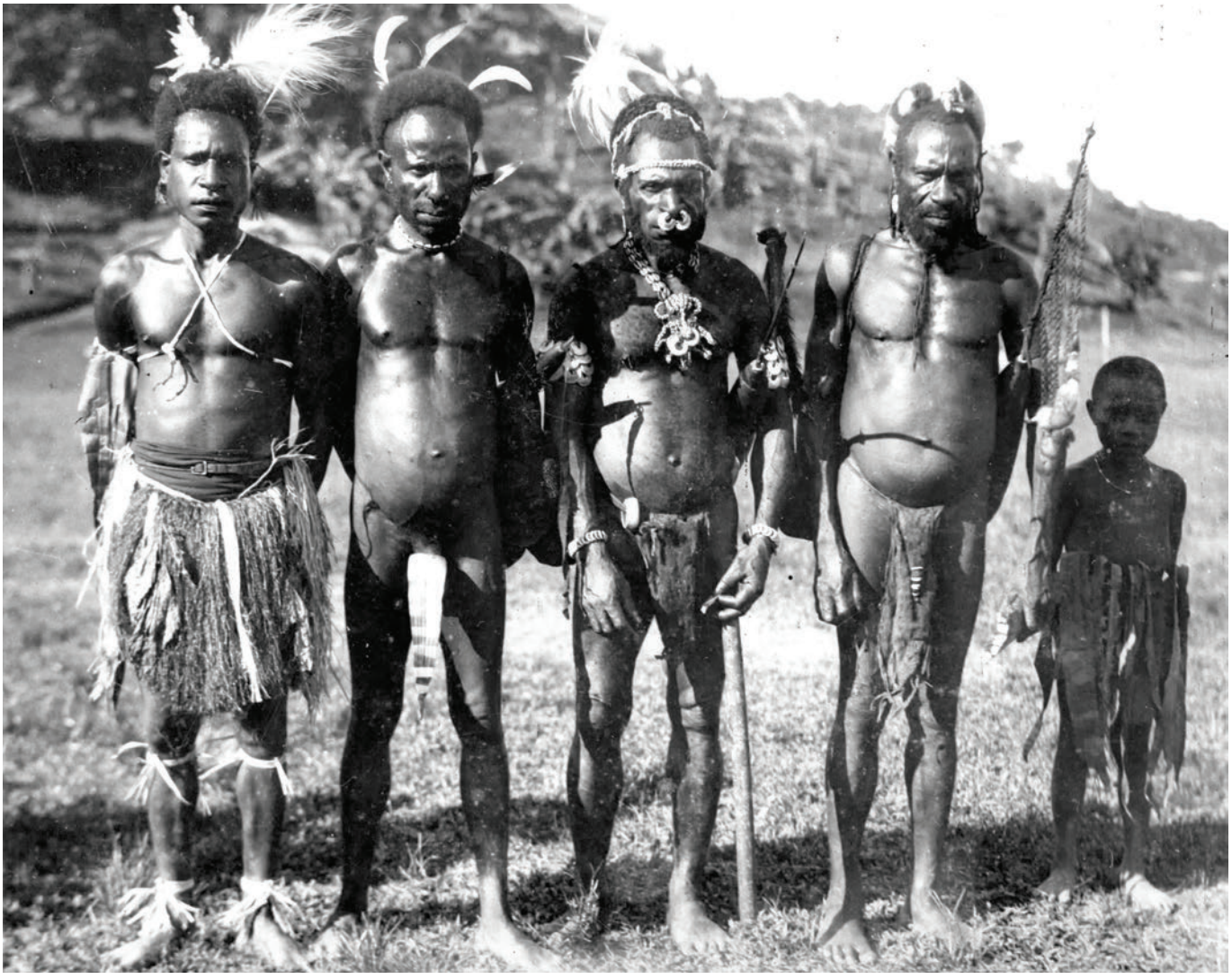


Figure 5.1 Photograph taken at Ambunti c.1930 of three men (in the centre) from unidentified Sepik River villages. They were at Ambunti to participate in the Christmas festivities that patrol officers hosted annually to bring members of formerly warring groups together in a friendly environment. The men are decorated with a variety of warrior insignia common to many middle Sepik language groups. These include flying-fox and snake-skin pubic coverings, shell chest and forehead ornaments, chicken and bird-of-paradise hair ornaments, and lime sticks with tassels. The man on the left, who is also participating in the festivities, is one of the native police stationed at Ambunti; he is wearing a woman's grass skirt over his police-issue loin-cloth, and bird-of-paradise plumes in his hair. At that early date in the history of Ambunti the policeman would have derived from a community outside the Sepik. The photographer is not known but was probably Fr. Franz Kirschbaum, a Catholic missionary of the Society of the Divine Word and the first European to settle permanently on the Sepik. Photograph courtesy of Mrs Lorna McGuigan.

they would relay what they had learned to other members of their own communities. Knowledge of fighting that had taken place was not limited therefore to the members of the groups directly involved. Such visits, furthermore, were not restricted to other communities in the same language group, as multilingualism was common, especially among political leaders. Yalaku men, for instance, commonly spent extended periods visiting personal trading partners at Avatip on the Sepik.

The causes of warfare

Ayam's narrative makes it clear that Yalaku warfare had many causes. The principal one was the need to defend territory from encroachment by other groups. According to the Yalaku themselves, this was the reason they set out, in the 1940s and 1950s, to exterminate what remained of the Apukili tribe. They succeeded in doing this with the help of Honggwama Kwoma allies.

Major intertribal fighting, however, could also be precipitated by what people themselves acknowledged were

relatively trivial reasons. In Chapter 6 Ayam attributes the outbreak of warfare with the Apukili, around the middle of the nineteenth century, to the theft by a man belonging to that tribe of a Yalaku man's dog. Prior to this, he reports, the Yalaku had been on good terms with this powerful group. When the dog went missing during a hunting trip, its owner went on a long but fruitless search for it among the neighbouring tribes. The last group he visited was the Apukili. When he was leaving that community, he was informed by totemic kin that one of their tribesmen actually had his dog but was hiding it. Realizing that he had no realistic chance of recovering it, he took revenge by killing one of two Apukili boys encountered by chance in the forest on his way home. He would have killed the other as well, except he escaped and immediately reported what had happened. The killing of the child by this Yalaku man led to a long series of military clashes between the two groups that proved to be equally damaging to both sides. Reflecting on the destructiveness of this warfare, Ayam commented that it was astonishing that the previously good relations between these two communities could have be so badly damaged by an event as relatively trivial as the theft of a dog.

Ayam also gives a detailed account of a long period of equally destructive warfare, for both sides, between the Yalaku and the Nowiniyen that was precipitated by a sexual affair. This involved the wife of a very prominent Yalaku political leader and a renowned Nowiniyen warrior. The couple involved chose to engage in a none-too-secret liaison lasting several days, following a visit the woman and her husband made to the other man's settlement to participate in a ritual. People throughout this region acknowledge that extramarital affairs are common, especially during rituals when large groups of people come together. But those who engage in them are expected to conduct themselves with great discretion for fear of what an enraged husband might do. In this case, highly atypically, neither the woman nor the other man made any real attempt to hide the affair from her husband.

The groups involved in warfare

The Yalaku tribe as a whole rarely, if ever, engaged as a unit in intertribal fighting. If it did, it would have been in defence of people or property, not in offence (Roscoe 1996, 2009). The main reason was that the Yalaku, like every other tribe, was made up of clans belonging to different totemic divisions, and men would rarely agree to participate in fighting against totemic kin in other tribes. Typically, a raid would be conducted by men belonging to just one or two clans. To prevent news of the planned attack from reaching the target group, via a member of the attackers' community linked to the enemy through totemic kinship or marriage, they acted in secret. When a group that had come under attack subsequently took revenge, it would normally only target the clan (or clans) directly involved in the raid, not the opposing tribe as a whole.

Leadership in warfare

As elsewhere in the middle Sepik, the Yalaku had no hereditary military leaders – nor hereditary leaders in any other area of social life. Leadership in warfare was exercised exclusively by men who had demonstrated their fighting abilities over many years. This included the ability not just to handle weapons effectively, but also to judge the best time to launch an attack. Only such men were able to persuade others to follow them into battle. Others might try to put a war-party together but fail.

A war-party typically had one leader. He would be the man who planned the attack, put the party together and physically led the group into battle. Other seasoned warriors would lend support. The leader always positioned himself at the front of the group and took the most active part in the fighting. Not uncommonly, the leader might call off a planned raid at the last minute if he judged the outcome was too uncertain. This was typically the case if he learned that the enemy had got wind of the planned raid and that the element of surprise had been lost.

In warfare, all persons on the opposing side were legitimate targets. A warrior earned just as much prestige from killing a woman or a child as a man. When a war-party was approaching its target, its members would agree among themselves who would have the right to throw the first spear at particular individuals. These arrangements did not always work out in practice once the fighting was underway. The man who struck an opponent first with his weapon, provided the victim subsequently died, was acknowledged as the 'first spear' (*namba wan spia*, TP) and received the greatest prestige from the kill. Only he earned the right to wear a rooster's white tail feathers in his hair, the most prestigious of all feather ornaments. Only he, furthermore, had the right to attach a string tassel to his lime stick (Figure 5.1). If other men assisted in the killing and struck the victim while he or she was still alive, they were acknowledged as the 'second spears' (*namba tu spia*, TP). They earned the right to wear all of the same shell and feather ornaments as the 'first spear' except for the white chicken tail feathers in their hair and the tallies on their lime sticks.

No special status accrued to a man who speared a victim who was already dead. According to Ayam, younger members of a war-party might do so simply to 'see what it felt like'.

Men who had killed in intertribal fighting, either as a 'first' or 'second' spear, formed a horticultural elite, as only they were thought to have the capacity to grow yams, the most highly prized of all garden crops. (Sago, in contrast, is largely uncultivated.) If other men attempted to grow yams, it was thought, the seed tubers would not germinate but rot in the ground.

Killers in warfare were also the men who women above all aspired to marry. The reason was that in this society women took their status from their husbands. The wives of the leading warriors, for instance, had the right to wear the same shell and feather ornaments as their husbands when attending ceremonies, and to paint their faces and torsos black. Other women were limited to wearing lower-prestige flowers in their hair, like their husbands. Women, that is, had a direct personal investment in a status system that celebrated warrior values.

As in other Sepik societies, the leading Yalaku warriors were typically also the most influential men politically. Not uncommonly they were also the ritual leaders, positions they achieved through their mastery of ceremonial procedure and the songs performed. In this part of New Guinea leading warriors were often also the most prominent painters and sculptors (see also Roscoe 2009:104).

Women's role in warfare

Yalaku women never fought directly alongside men in intertribal engagements (cf. Merlan 2016). Nor did they handle spears and bows and arrows, the two principal weapons of war. When a settlement came under attack, some of the older and more self-confident female residents might cheer on the men defending it and even hurl insults at the attackers. But a woman's primary role was to protect herself and any children she had in her care by fleeing into the surrounding forest and hiding until the fighting was over.

Military strategies

The aim of Yalaku warfare generally was to kill as many men, women and children as possible in the target group, and then beat a retreat before the opposing warriors could organize their defence. On the evidence Ayam provides, the most common forms of fighting involved surprise raids on individual hamlets, or ambushes in the forest of individuals or small groups living or working well away from their tribe's main settlement.

Raids were normally launched during daylight hours and typically at first light – before members of the target group had gone about their business of the day. Launching an attack at first light also meant that the thick mists that often hang over settlements before the sun has risen provided the attackers with extra cover.

A community that had come under attack, whether or not it had suffered any deaths, would immediately begin planning a revenge raid. This was designed both to square the account between the two groups and, in theory, to be so damaging that it would deter the target group from taking similar action in the future. A revenge raid, however, might not take place immediately, as the man, or men, planning it would always wait until the time was opportune. This might be months, or even years, later.

The main settlements of the different tribes in this region were, and still are, typically located up to a day's walk or more apart. When planning an attack, therefore, the war-party would commonly approach the target group the day before and bivouac overnight in the forest. They would remain out of earshot of the intended victims, but close enough to launch the raid at first light the following morning. During the night, the members of the war-party would not sleep but instead would fortify themselves with food they had either brought with them or harvested from bush houses and gardens passed on the way. During the night they would also engage in formalized boasting about who they intended to kill the following day. The Yalaku refer to this ceremonial boasting as '*yayibu wakan*' (*paitim tanget*, TP). This expression refers to the practice of a man striking (*paitim*) cordyline (*tanget*) or other leaves against some object while calling out the names of the people he intended to kill once the fighting started. Men known for their wit might use these occasions to mock individual members of the target group, or their community as a whole, for their lack of fighting ability. Yalaku men said this was done to keep up the spirits of the assembled men, and especially those of the younger participants whose courage might fail them at the last minute.

During the night men would also call on the ghosts of great warriors of the past from their community to aid in the fighting. This would involve summoning them from the underworld. Their role would be to deflect the enemy's spears away from the members of the clans to which they formerly belonged, and temporarily befuddle the enemy and thus make them more vulnerable to being killed.

As soon as there was sufficient light to see on the morning of the attack – but still well before the sun had risen – the war-party would approach the intended target, being careful to remain out of sight. When the leader gave the signal, the attack would be launched.

Not uncommonly, a war-party would enter a settlement only to find that the people had got wind of the impending raid and decamped into the forest. Rather than pursue them, and risk being ambushed, the attackers would retreat, but only after they had ransacked the different dwellings for food, shell valuables and other useful goods. They might also set fire to the local men's house and domestic dwellings. Burning buildings was such a common feature of warfare in this region that the standard expression in TP for attacking another settlement was 'burning it' ('*kukim ples*').

Military assistance

The core of any war-party consisted of its leader and those members of his clan he had persuaded to join him. If the leader had judged that there would be too few participants from his own clan to conduct the raid successfully, he would call for assistance on other members of the same tribe and, if need be, from men in one or more other tribes. In the

latter case he would do so by secretly sending an invitation to a leading warrior in the form of parcel of 'war magic' (*val*; *kawawar bilong pait*, TP). This typically consisted of a substantial quantity of cured tobacco leaves, betel nuts and betel pepper all wrapped in the 'black' leaves of one or other form of shrub, the black colour being a well-understood symbol of warfare among the Yalaku and their neighbours.

If the recipient was willing to accept the invitation, he would remove some of the contents for his own use and pass the remainder to others who he thought might also be interested. If he was not willing to participate, he would hand the parcel unopened to others who might be. The parcel would be carried to the intended recipient by a member of the sender's hamlet who was closely related to someone in the recipient's community, and whose visit would be regarded as unexceptional.

To consume some of the contents of such a parcel was not only a sign that the recipient was willing to participate in the planned attack, but was also thought to cause him to be overcome by an irresistible desire to commence fighting without delay. If the invitation was accepted, further secret communications would be required to determine the precise date of the attack and where the participants were to rendezvous.

Fortifications

Before warfare in this region came to a permanent end in the 1950s the individual hamlets that made up the different Kaunga settlements were typically fortified by palisades of heavy logs set vertically in the ground and lashed together with lengths of rattan. In some cases, a hamlet might be surrounded by two or more concentric palisades. Each wall would have several small doors strategically placed at different points around its perimeter. On its inner side, adjacent to each of its doors, a palisade typically had raised platforms on which local warriors could stand and rain down spears and other projectiles on a war-party attempting to break through them.

Another common defensive strategy was to clear all of the trees around a palisade for up to fifty metres or more to allow direct sunlight to stimulate the rapid growth of dense thickets of thorn-covered rattans. Once established, these formed an almost impenetrable barrier and forced an attacking war-party to use the narrow paths through the vines that led to the doors where the defence would be concentrated.

The capture of women

One striking aspect of warfare as practised by the Yalaku and other Kaunga, at least during the period covered by Ayam's narrative, was the frequency with which women of child-bearing age were captured and taken as wives. Men stated explicitly that this was done so that the women could raise children who would, in the case of boys, become future warriors for their captors' communities. If a captured woman was already married and had young children, her captors would always try to kill her children, as well as her husband. According to Yalaku men the killing of her children deprived a captured woman of a major motivation for trying to escape. They also stated that when a captured woman had children by her new husband, she would always prefer to stay with them rather than try to escape. The intense emotional attachment between a woman and her dependent children, regardless of who fathered them, provides a recurring theme in Yalaku myths.

Women captured in warfare were fully incorporated into their new community. No distinction in status was made between them and other women. When it was safe to do so, a woman's captor would contact her brother (or clan equivalent) and establish a normal affinal alliance with him. Once established, this endured for the duration of the marriage, as it did for every other married woman.

Occasionally, a woman of reproductive age in the course of her life might be captured during warfare more than once. One consequence of this was that she might have children living simultaneously in more than one tribe, and even in more than one language group.

The frequency with which the Yalaku and the two other Kaunga tribes captured women for wives during the period covered by this history is probably explained by the fact that for up to a century before warfare finally came to an end in the 1950s members of all three tribes had rapidly declining populations. Capturing women was a way of trying to stop the decline.

Weapons

In the forest environment in which the Yalaku are located, the principal weapons of war were the spear, stone adze, bone dagger and shield. Bows and arrows were used sparingly. Shields were either made of wood or the dried skins of pigs or crocodiles (Figures 5.2, 5.3 and 7.3–7.5). Spears typically had bamboo blades hafted to black-palm or bamboo shafts. Those with black-palm shafts were preferred over those made of bamboo as their greater weight gave them greater impact. When a spear was thrown, a member of the opposing side would typically recover it, after extracting it, if necessary, from the body of a fallen comrade and hurl it back. Much fighting was done at close quarters and involved strenuous hand-to-hand combat, not just with spears but also with adzes and bone daggers.

I never saw any Yalaku or other Kaunga shields and cannot therefore say how those made of wood were decorated. Elsewhere in the Sepik (Figures 5.2 and 5.3) wooden shields are decorated with incised and painted designs, and are among this region's most admired art forms (see Beran and Craig 2005; Evans 2019). Yalaku shields made of crocodile or pig skin were reportedly constructed

Figure 5.2 Kwoma shield decorated with a stylised face representing a shooting star (in Kwoma 'maway'), 1982. Both the Kwoma and Yalaku believed that a shooting star was the soul of a recently deceased renowned warrior flying through the night sky with a lighted sago-frond torch held in the hand, and headed towards one of the many lagoons located on both sides of the Sepik. The lighted torch is the source of the light seen in the sky. When the soul reaches the lagoon it temporarily alights in one of the nearby trees and then plunges head first into the black water to travel down into the spirit world. Immediately prior to launching a raid, Kwoma and Yalaku warriors formerly called on the ghosts of such men to emerge from the underworld and assist them in the fighting, such as by deflecting the enemy's spears away from them.

Figure 5.3 Wooden shield from Brugnowi village (Iatmul language group), 1982. The face depicts a tutelary forest spirit (Iatmul 'mi jubu') of a kind believed to intervene in warfare on behalf of the members of the clan that owned it – such as by deflecting the enemy's spears away from them.

in the same way as the Kwoma shields illustrated in Figures 7.3 to 7.5.[27]

Peace pacts and tribal alliances

From time to time two groups that had been involved in a long period of mutually destructive warfare might decide to bring the conflict between them to an end by entering into a formal peace pact. Peace pacts were established in different ways. One was for the two groups to meet at a pre-arranged site and have a young boy or other representative of each side publicly eat a totemic object that the other side had provided, mixed with food. Consuming a totemic entity presented in this way was seen as ingesting part of the opposing side's substance and thus uniting the two sides politically.

Another way was by exchanging secret ritual objects, such as sculptures or flutes associated with clan spirits (see Figures 5.4 and 5.5). Custody of the spirit was transferred to the recipient group, and it became one of that group's protective powers. If the recipients had an appropriate ritual, they would incorporate the object into their ceremonial life.

Peace pacts were organized by the opposing tribes' most influential men. Occasionally they were entered into without the knowledge, or even the approval, of all members of one or both groups. However, once established, people had little option but to accept them. For a man to defy a powerful leader, and try to continue fighting with the group with which peace had been established, risked ostracism and potentially retaliation from other members of his own community through sorcery.

Ritual objects were also periodically exchanged between two tribes, or segments of them, to prevent future conflict. For instance, in the 1940s, when their long-standing alliance with the Tongwinjamb Kwoma finally came to an end, the Yalaku entered into a formal political alliance with the Honggwama Kwoma, who subsequently became their principal Kwoma ally. The Honggwama tribe by this time, for reasons that had nothing to do with the Yalaku (see Chapter 9), had split into two politically opposed factions: one had taken the name 'Bangwis' and the other 'Washkuk'. The Yalaku were already linked to the 'Bangwis' faction through several marriages, but to cement this relationship with the Honggwama tribe as a whole they separately established peace pacts with each faction. The pact with the 'Bangwis' faction was established by a boy representing each group consuming one of the other's totems. (This event is described in more detail in Chapter 11.) The pact with the 'Washkuk' faction was established by presenting to one of that group's most influential political leaders, a man named Kelapawach, a pair of bamboo flutes named Ndiyinggu. These embodied a spirit of the same name. For a number of years the recipients played these flutes during rituals they sponsored. When the flutes decayed and became too fragile to be played, one of Kelapawach's sons, named Marak, a member of the Yena ceremonial moiety (Bowden 1983a), replaced them with the Yena figure illustrated in Figure 5.4, to which he gave the same name. (The man who carved it is shown in Figure 13.1.)[28]

Harrison's *The Mask of War*

In the second half of the 1970s, several years after I did my first field research, the anthropologist Simon Harrison conducted fieldwork at Avatip, one of the three politically independent communities that make up the Manambu language group. The Avatip are the nearest of the Yalaku's neighbours on the Sepik (see Figure 1.1). In the book *The Mask of War* (Harrison 1993), based on his fieldwork, Harrison advances a theory of warfare that is intended to apply not just to the Avatip but to neighbouring groups in the Sepik, such as the Yalaku, and even 'Melanesia' as a whole. Although the book has been well received (e.g. Schiltz 1994; Vandkilde 2006), it seriously misrepresents the structure of middle Sepik societies. Given that his theory is intended to apply, among others, to the people who are the subject of this book, his argument is worth reviewing in some detail.[29]

In contrast to what I have asserted for the Kaunga, Harrison contends that neither the politically independent tribes that make up the different language groups in the Sepik, nor the exogamous groups (clans) of which they are composed, are primary structural features of societies in this region. For him, the primary structural features are exclusively the networks of interpersonal ties, based on kinship and trade, that connect groups. Structurally, tribes and clans, as he puts it, are 'exiguous and contingent'

27 For a comprehensive review of the weapons used in Melanesian warfare more generally, see Orchiston 1975.

28 Godelier (2011:418–20) is mistaken when he states that cultural objects that symbolized group identity, such as ceremonial sculptures, were 'inalienable' and were 'never' exchanged between groups in New Guinea. In this respect he is following Weiner (1992:150–1), who makes the same mistake. In the Sepik, such objects were commonly exchanged between groups either to bring a prolonged period of warfare to an end or to prevent warfare from taking place. These exchanges took place both between tribes belonging to the same language group and those of different language groups. The Manambu, for example, exchanged such objects with the Kwoma, just as the Yalaku did with the Kwoma. Godelier is therefore premature in taking Marcel Mauss to task for not acknowledging in his essay on the gift (Mauss 1970) that there is in indigenous societies a significant class of inalienable objects that are never given as gifts. For Godelier, this class included '"sacred objects", gifts from the gods to humans to be kept and transmitted to their descendants…' (Godelier 2011:419).

29 For a comprehensive review of theories of warfare advanced by anthropologists, archaeologists and historians see Otto *et al.* 2006.

in contrast to the intergroup kinship ties, which are permanent and 'indissoluble' (Harrison 1993:10).

Harrison also contends that the interpersonal ties that connect members of different groups magnetically pull groups together in a way that would cause them to amalgamate politically and socially unless counteracted in various ways. In Harrison's view, the main way clan and tribal leaders have historically prevented such amalgamations taking place was through warfare. Warfare had the effect of driving groups apart, and hence enabled their members to preserve their separate political and economic identities. For Harrison, warfare in the middle Sepik and elsewhere in Melanesia was not a product of conflict between groups over such matters as the control of economic resources, but the means by which opposing parties actually 'constituted' themselves structurally as separate groups. Through 'opposing' each other antagonistically, tribes 'bring themselves into existence' (Harrison 1989:595, 1993:17). Warfare, therefore, was simply a 'mask' that political leaders used to justify this process of group formation – hence the title of his book.

According to Harrison, a second strategy that Avatip political leaders used to counteract the magnetic pull of interpersonal ties between groups was to restrict the frequency of out-marriage (ibid.:34). This is how he accounts for fact that the majority of marriages at Avatip were intra-tribal. For the same reason, he asserts, clan and tribal leaders in this region never condoned regular or 'institutionalized' intermarriage with other groups for political purposes (ibid.:137). Such institutionalized intermarriage, he believes, would have posed an additional threat to the political autonomy of the groups involved.

Several points can be made here. First, Harrison presents no factual evidence that politically independent tribes and exogamous groups are not primary structural features of societies in this region – or elsewhere in Melanesia. The oral historical evidence, furthermore, strongly suggests that in the Sepik such groups have great stability over time, and that people themselves view them in this way. My fieldwork suggests that this is true not just of the Yalaku, but of all five of the other Sepik language groups in which I have done fieldwork.[30] On the basis of evidence that Harrison himself presents, both in this book and an earlier work (Harrison 1990), this is also true of the Avatip. In his earlier book, he discusses at some length the growth and decline of different exogamous subclans at Avatip. But he nowhere attributes their decline and eventual extinction to the effects of intermarriage with other groups. The causes, he asserts, were other factors, such as warfare and a decline in fertility (e.g. 1990:76; see also, pp. 5–6, 59, 65, 90–1, 145). This is not to say that new tribes and new exogamous clans have not from time to time come into existence in different Sepik societies, and eventually become defunct and gone out of existence. This book provides several such examples relating to the Yalaku. But the historical evidence indicates that the decline and eventual extinction of individual clans and even entire tribes has nothing to do with groups amalgamating because of the ineluctable pull of interpersonal ties between them. It was exclusively the result of warfare and other demographic factors such as disease.

If Harrison was correct in arguing that politically independent tribes and exogamous clans are not basic structural features of societies in this region, it could also be asked why clan and tribal leaders would even want to preserve their groups' distinct political identities over time, especially through such a catastrophic measure as warfare. Roscoe makes the same point in his critique of Harrison's theory when he asks:

> If Melanesians take a network of sociability between kin and neighbours as axiomatic [i.e. as structurally fundamental], why not rest content with this state of affairs? Why seek to create "insiders" and "outsiders" in the first place by imposing local polities on their primordial relationships?
>
> (Roscoe 1996:647)

Harrison also fails to provide any factual evidence that Avatip political leaders have ever had a deliberate policy of restricting intermarriage with other groups – for fear that this would compromise their community's political autonomy. The Yalaku evidence, and the much more detailed data on marriage patterns that I collected among the neighbouring Kwoma (Bowden 1977), demonstrate precisely the opposite. When warfare was a feature of this region, both Yalaku and Kwoma clan and tribal leaders actively encouraged intermarriage with potentially hostile groups, precisely to create long-lasting networks of political

Figure 5.4 View of a Yena sculpture named Ndiyinggu, displayed in the centre of the stage, during a performance of the Yena ceremony at Washkuk village, December 1973. The sculpture is named after a pair of flutes the Yalaku gave in the 1940s to members of the Kwoma clan that owns this figure in order to establish a permanent political alliance between the two groups (see below, this chapter). When the flutes decayed their Kwoma owners replaced them with the sculpture illustrated.

30 The five other language groups are the Kwoma (several villages), Manambu (at Avatip village), Mayo (at Nau'ali and Maio villages), Iatmul (Brugnowi village) and Keram (Wom and Korogopa villages).

Figure 5.5 Ayam with a pre-contact Kwoma Yena-ceremony figure named Wasamanj, 1988. The figure was given to his community during the Second World War by a leading Tongwinjamb (Kwoma) man named Wuruwur, to create a political alliance that would enable members of the donor's clan to flee into Yalaku country if they came under attack from other tribes (see Chapter 10). This was a period when there was no civil administration in the Sepik. The sculpture is now in the National Gallery of Victoria (Melbourne, Australia).

allies who could act as their eyes and ears among potential military enemies.[31]

Nor is any factual evidence presented by Harrison that indicates intermarriage and other personal ties actually have the effect of drawing different groups together and potentially causing them to amalgamate. For instance, he undertakes no historical analysis of intermarriage between the Avatip and any of their neighbours, or between the various exogamous groups within Avatip itself – where the majority of marriages take place. The evidence that does exist, furthermore, flatly contradicts his theory. In the course of my fieldwork among the neighbouring Kwoma in 1973, I undertook a detailed historical analysis of marriage patterns (Bowden 1977:146–86, 246–85). This showed that two tribes, or two clans belonging to the same tribe, could intermarry repeatedly over several generations without those marriages in any way compromising the political independence of the groups involved, or giving rise to warfare.

A related, and obvious, point is that if Harrison was correct in arguing that intermarriage ineluctably pulls groups together, this presumably would have led Avatip long ago to becoming a single exogamous (or endogamous) group, rather than a community composed of several intermarrying clans (or the equivalent), as it is today. Over time, the likelihood of the various intermarrying groups within Avatip amalgamating would also have been greatly increased by the fact that intra-tribal warfare was prohibited. Warfare, therefore, was not a strategy that Avatip clan leaders could have used to prevent such amalgamations taking place.

Harrison attempts to support his claim that the kinship ties that link members of different groups are structurally more fundamental, and stable, than the groups they connect by referring to the so-called 'indissoluble' nature of 'matrilateral' intergroup ties (1993:10). It is not clear, incidentally, why he singles out 'matrilateral' ties in this respect in contrast to other intergroup 'kinship' relationships, such as those between brothers-in-law. By 'matrilateral' ties, Harrison is referring to the relationship between a mother's brother (MB) and a sister's son (ZS).

The only evidence Harrison offers for the 'indissolubility' of this relationship between a MB and a ZS is a reference to an unsubstantiated comment along the same lines by Anthony Forge, who did fieldwork in the late 1950s among the Abelam (e.g. Forge 1971:138, 1972:537–8). Contrary, however, to what both Harrison and Forge assert, matrilateral relations, like all other kinship ties, require the cooperation of the parties involved if they are to be sustained. If this does not occur, such relationships can, and do, fail. For instance, among both the Yalaku and the Kwoma, if a sister's son (ZS) repeatedly fails to 'pay' his mother's brother (MB) for the food and other services the latter provides, the MB is entitled to terminate the relationship, and even take revenge by one means or another. I recall very clearly a Kwoma man telling me how one of his sister's sons had failed over many years to 'pay' him for the substantial quantities of food and services he had provided, and how he eventually took revenge by asking a sorcerer to 'poison' the man's three daughters, all of whom died in quick succession. Similarly, if a MB fails to honour his obligations to his ZS, the latter is entitled to sever his ties with him and turn to another of his mother's clan 'brothers' for equivalent support. If this happens, the ZS will not only cease to make any further payments of wealth items to his MB, but will instruct his clan brothers to make the very substantial death payment for him, when he eventually dies, to that other 'MB'. This would have the effect of depriving the original maternal uncle of one of the most important sources of wealth open to him. The potential loss of this wealth is one of the principal sanctions of the MB's obligations to his ZS. Harrison's contention that matrilateral ties are 'indissoluble', and hence more stable structurally than the exogamous groups they link, betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of how 'kinship' relationships in this region actually work.

On a more general level, Harrison also seriously misrepresents the relationship between river-based communities, such as the Manambu, and their hinterland neighbours. Like other anthropologists who have done fieldwork in river communities (e.g. Falck 2018; Gewertz 1983), Harrison reports that the Manambu regard themselves as culturally superior to their hinterland neighbours. The Avatip, he reports, even regard their 'dry land' neighbours, such as the Yalaku and Kwoma, as barely human: 'as crude and dirty, as little better than wild pigs'. Instead of building 'proper houses on stilts' they sleep 'like animals upon the earth in houses built directly on the ground' (Harrison 1993:31). According to Harrison, the Avatip even consider their languages 'unintelligible', and liken them to the 'cries of birds of paradise feeding on a branch' (ibid.:40).

What Harrison fails to note is that all peoples in this region periodically make disparaging remarks about their neighbours, especially if their cultural practices differ significantly from their own. The Yalaku and Kwoma are no different.

The actual relations between river and hinterland peoples, furthermore, belie the derogatory stereotypes in which all Sepik peoples occasionally deal. For instance, for as long as anyone can remember, trade has taken place between river and hinterland communities to the benefit of both – something that Harrison himself notes (1993:40, 43). This trade traditionally took two forms, both of which are still found today. One consisted of individual trading

31 In the case of neighbouring groups that did not intermarry for ecological reasons, totemic kin and personal trading partners played an equivalent role to that of affines.

partnerships between men who were totemically linked and regarded each other as 'brothers'. Such men often inherited their partnership from their fathers. Today, trading partners communicate in TP or English. Formerly, they would have been fluent in each other's languages. In the past, trading partners periodically also visited each other's villages, often with their wives, and commonly stayed for several weeks at a time. During their stay, they would engage in whatever social activities their hosts were involved in. This included participating in rituals.

Ayam of Yelogu is a case in point. Throughout his life he was a personal trading partner of an Avatip man named Mbwindimi. These two men inherited their relationship from their fathers, who inherited it from their fathers in turn. On one occasion, when Ayam was staying with him at Avatip, Mbwindimi gave him the small decorated clay pot of Iatmul origin (Figure 3.2). This was the kind of pot, Ayam said, that Yalaku and other Kaunga men used for 'cooking' sorcery materials. On another occasion, Mbwindimi gave him a small carved figure that he himself had made in part exchange for an especially large quantity of raw sago flour that Ayam and his wives had prepared at his request. The carving had previously been on display in a men's house at Avatip owned by Mbwindimi's group. (Ayam subsequently gave this figure to me.) Ayam told me nothing about Mbwindimi personally, but Harrison has a photograph of him in his book (1993:118) and notes that in the 1970s he was one of his community's most senior ritual leaders.[32]

Trade between river-based and hinterland groups also took the form of communal markets.[33] Trading parties would meet at one or other of many named trading sites well away from the Sepik – often several kilometres away. River traders would reach these sites by canoe, and hinterland groups by foot. Women were (and still are) the principal traders (Figure 13.7). This trading was largely done in silence: a woman on one side would silently offer a product to one on the other in exchange for something she had. The latter, silently, would either accept or reject it (Bowden 1991). Although largely conducted in silence, individual women nevertheless commonly had preferred trading partners and frequently arranged for them to bring particular items they wanted to their next meeting. Today, if need be, they will communicate in TP or English. Formerly, if they could not speak each other's languages (as some could), they would use one of the indigenous lingua franca found in this region. This lingua franca was made up of words from the two traders' languages. Harrison (1993:40) refers to the pre-contact lingua franca that Kwoma and Manambu women used and asserts that it consisted predominantly of Manambu words. For him, this presumably reflected the cultural superiority the Manambu felt over their Kwoma neighbours. Harrison, however, provides no examples of this lingua franca. I have documented it, in contrast, and from the examples I obtained (Bowden 1997:337–9) it can be seen that the vocabulary consisted of roughly equal numbers of Manambu and Kwoma words used more or less alternately. This equivalence in the amount of vocabulary drawn from the two languages is consistent with the much more equalitarian relationship that actually existed, and still exists, between these two peoples, rather than the hierarchical one Harrison assumes.

Before European contact, groups of men in river-based and hinterland communities such as Avatip also actively involved themselves, as equals, in the wider lives of their neighbours. This commonly involved participating in rituals and providing military assistance in attacks on third parties. The following chapters give several examples of Avatip war-parties providing both the Yalaku and Kwoma with such assistance (e.g. Chapter 7).

Political leaders in both communities also actively involved themselves individually in the lives of their neighbours. One of many examples I documented is provided by the Avatip man named Vakinap (Figure 9.1; see also Chapter 11, pp. 130, 148ff.). Vakinap was a much admired and prominent political leader at Avatip for several decades from the 1920s. He was born around 1900 and was still alive in the late 1970s, when both I and Harrison were doing fieldwork. Vakinap was fluent in Kwoma – one of the languages Harrison claims the Avatip find unintelligible – and had life-long personal trading partners among Kwoma totemic kin at Bangwis village. In his later years Vakinap was in the habit of staying at Bangwis with totemic kin during the height of the wet season (Figure 9.2), when his own village was inundated by the Sepik's flood waters. This is where I met him. In the 1950s, Vakinap played an important part in the history of the Yalaku and other Kaunga. This is described in greater in detail in Chapter 11. At the request of his then Bangwis village trading partner, a prominent political leader named Yamban, Vakinap mobilized a substantial workforce of Avatip and other Manambu men to help the three Kaunga communities cut all-weather tracks through the forest between their main settlements. The work was arduous and took several months. Prior to the termination of warfare among the Kaunga in the 1950s, the leaders of all three communities had actively prevented the construction of all-weather tracks between their main settlements – to make access by enemy war-parties more difficult. The major assistance that Vakinap personally provided the Kaunga on this occasion paralleled the support he gave, in the late 1920s, the members of the Honggwama tribe, who later founded Bangwis village

32 According to Harrison, Mbwindimi was a '*simbuk*'. In his earlier book on Avatip, he defines a *simbuk* as the leader of one of the several 'divisions' that make up the community's two ceremonial moieties (1990:106).

33 The first of the myths in the final part of this book gives an account of the origin of this interethnic trade.

(see Chapter 9, pp. 129–30). On that occasion, he acted as an intermediary for two years between them and the administration at Ambunti following the killing by other members of the same tribe of two native policemen.[34] This was before any Kwoma knew TP and could communicate directly with the authorities. Vakinap had learnt TP at the beginning of the 1920s, when he had worked as a contract labourer outside the Sepik.

The personal assistance, and immense amount of time, that Vakinap gave the Kaunga in the 1950s and the Bangwis people in the 1920s is hardly what one would expect from a member of a group that regarded its hinterland neighbours as 'little better than wild pigs'.

Harrison also seriously misrepresents the Kaunga when he states that they traditionally lived in tiny settlements consisting of only of a 'few families' (1993:33). As the following chapters on Yalaku warfare indicate, for much of their history all three Kaunga communities maintained large and heavily fortified multi-clan settlements.

The biggest disappointment with Harrison's book, however, is that although it is ostensibly concerned with warfare it contains almost no information about actual fighting in which the Avatip had been involved. He refers at one point to fighting between Avatip and Kaunga (1993:33–6) but provides no details. This means that it is impossible to correlate what he does say with the information presented in this book.

34 J.K. McCarthy gives an account of these events in his book *Patrol into Yesterday* (McCarthy 1967:56–62). He was the officer in charge at Ambunti in the early 1930s.

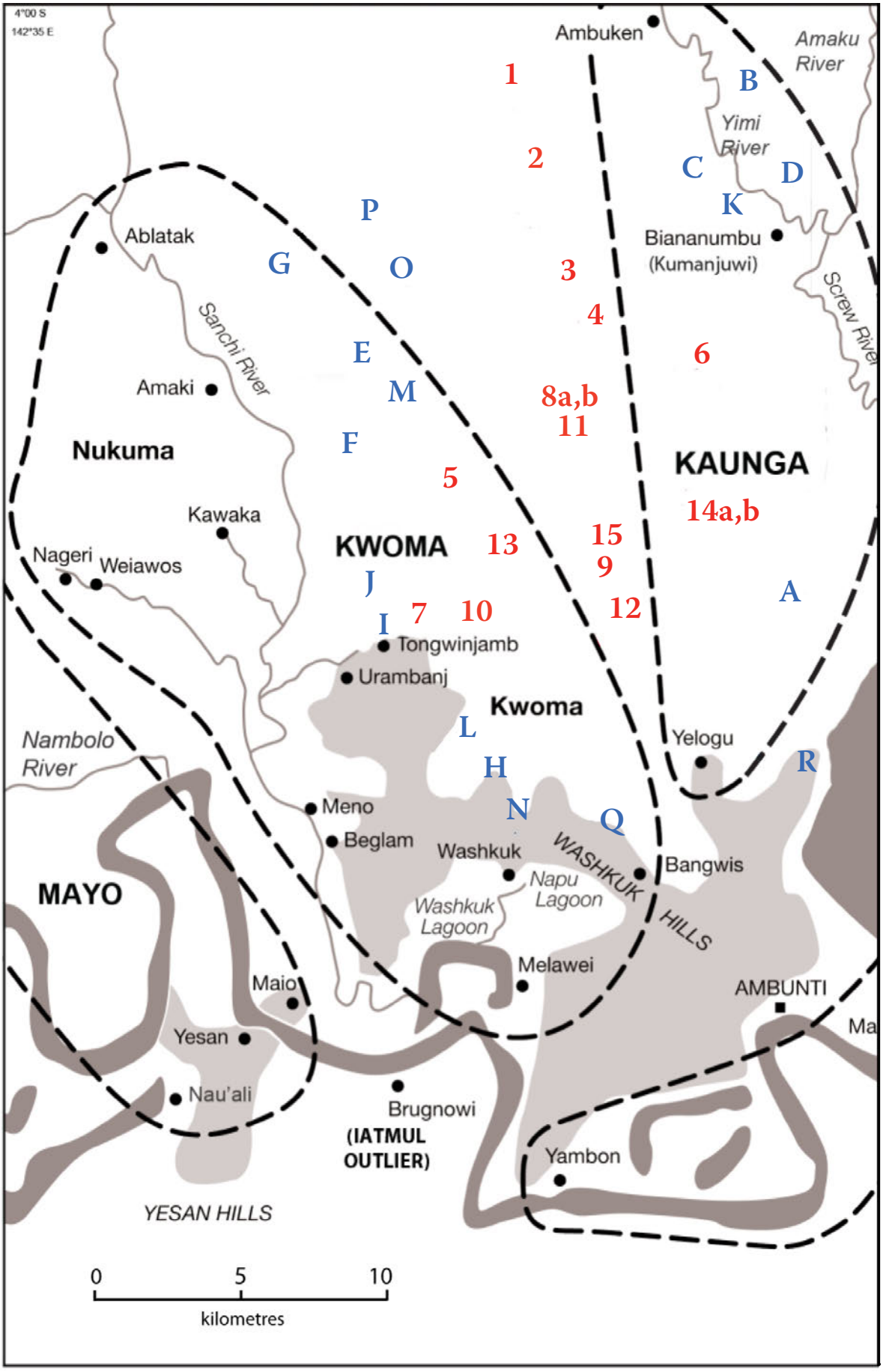


Figure 6.1 Map of former Yalaku settlements (red numerals) and other sites (blue capital letters) referred to in the text (see Key opposite).

6

Earliest remembered warfare

The Nowiniyen and the Apukili

Introduction

Ayam began his community's history with an account of the origins of warfare between the Yalaku and two other groups: the Nowiniyen and the Apukili. As indicated in Chapter 3, the Yalaku believe that the Nowiniyen community was founded by several of the spirits in human form who Waspen, the spirit progenitor of Rama clan, released from the tree in which he had heard them singing. The two groups initially lived in harmony but eventually came into conflict. It is impossible to date with precision when the first fighting took place, but it was probably around the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The Apukili, in contrast, were a pre-existing people in this region. By the 1970s they had ceased to exist as an independent political entity, but in the first half of the nineteenth century they were a powerful group occupying an area that stretched from north of the Washkuk Hills to west to the Maruwa River, a branch of the Nambolo (see Figure 1.1), one of the Sepik's many northern tributaries. According to Kwoma oral traditions, the Apukili were already in occupation of this region when their own ancestors first entered it – from the underworld through a hole in the ground named Wanmay, close to the present-day site of Amaki village. The Kwoma immediately came into conflict with the Apukili and over time appear to have forced them further to the east, closer to the Yalaku.

Ayam divided his account of warfare with the Apukili into several sections. In this book it forms part of several chapters. However, he concentrated the account of warfare with the Nowiniyen in the first part his narrative, which forms the bulk of this chapter. It begins with an account of the earliest remembered fighting and concludes with a description of how the outstanding Yalaku leader of the day, a man named Yuwayembi, came to an agreement with his Nowiniyen counterparts to bring warfare between their two groups to a formal end.

*c.*1800

The beginnings of warfare with the Nowiniyen tribe

The Yalaku know the Nowiniyen people by two names: 'Kirichembikiri' and 'Nowiniyen'. According to Ayam, the first is a much older name but was replaced relatively recently by the second. In the narrative, Ayam also commonly referred to them as 'Kambor', the name the Honggwama Kwoma give them. To avoid confusion here I refer to them exclusively as the Nowiniyen.

When warfare with the Nowiniyen first broke out, the Yalaku had their main tribal settlement at the place named Walaminjuwi (more fully, Niikiiriinggay Walaminjuwi; settlement 3 in Figure 6.1). This was located to the west of the Yimi River on the banks of the Yanggemi, one of the many substantial streams that flow south through this region (see Chapter 3). The Nowiniyen at that time

Key to Figure 6.1

1	*The 'hole' Minjowi*	*12*	*Nyinggi*	*G*	*Apinow (Apukili)*
2	*Nokusuwoy*	*13*	*Tepi*	*H*	*Nggandawaya (Kwoma)*
3	*Walaminjuwi*	*14a*	*Wamanggey*	*I*	*Mbayikwi (Kwoma)*
4	*Walawili*	*14b*	*Nggweriyaman*	*J*	*Watiyombu (Kwoma)*
5	*Wosakapi*	*15*	*Hopokwow*	*K*	*Mbandala (Nowiniyen)*
6	*Awakiit and Siluwi*			*L*	*Hambandum (Kwoma)*
7	*Cherenggwunj*	*A*	*Korindu (Ngala and Tumbuma)*	*M*	*Kwarembu (Kwoma)*
8a	*Kowinumbu*	*B*	*Awul (Nowiniyen)*	*N*	*Honggwama (1930–55)*
8b	*Kumanggey*	*C*	*Kayanggwa (Nowiniyen)*	*O*	*Amba (Apukili)*
9	*Kiiriikiitok*	*D*	*Mboch (Nowiniyen)*	*P*	*Apoki (Apukili)*
10	*Mbalay*	*E*	*Meer Kwopa (Apukili)*	*Q*	*Siinparaway (Kwoma)*
11	*Molipiir*	*F*	*Patakatowa (Apukili)*	*R*	*Kwarananggambaw*

were located to their north-east, also on the western side of the Yimi. This was possibly close to their present site at Kumanjuwi. According to the Rama clan origin myth (Chapter 3), Walaminjuwi was the third settlement that Waspen, the founder of Rama clan, helped establish and was the one at which the majority of the founders of the other Yalaku clans came together to form a new political group: the Yalaku tribe.

Ayam reported that the specific events that led to the outbreak of warfare between the Yalaku and Nowiniyen had been forgotten, but apparently resulted from a dispute with neighbouring Sepik River peoples over the right to trade at particular market sites on the Yimi River. This led to a Nowiniyen war-party attacking a group of Yalaku traders who had assembled at a market site on or near the Yimi River, and were waiting for their river counterparts to arrive. He did not identify the river traders, but they would have been ancestors of either the Manambu-speaking people located today at Avatip or one of the Iatmul-speaking peoples whose settlements today are situated further down the Sepik. As they still do today, these river peoples would have reached the market sites at which they traded with both the Yalaku and Nowiniyen by canoe up the Screw and Yimi rivers.

Song 1: Lament commemorating the earliest remembered fighting between the Yalaku and Nowiniyen

1 *Hopovi ow, Walavi ow,*
  At Hopovi and Walavi,
2 *Kaw bej ow biyetay.*
  Great warriors were brought down.
3 *Na vi yow mane.*
  Sago-spike spears (*na vi*) dragged between the toes.
4 *Hopo vi ow raba.*
  Rattan spears (*hopo vi*) carried in the hand.
5 *Say wunada, nyapa bol sada.*
  At my marketplace, a great treasure was lost.
6 *Say wunada, Monyikej say,*
  At my marketplace (*say*), at Monyikenj market,
7 *Nyapa bol sada.*
  A great treasure was lost.
8 *Yey yey, nyapa bol sada, nyapa bol sada.*
  A great treasure was lost, a great treasure was lost.

Whatever its precise causes, when warfare broke out it resulted in the deaths of several very prominent Yalaku and Nowiniyen warriors, which both sides regarded as major tragedies for their communities. These deaths are recalled in a number of laments the Yalaku composed at the time. According to Kiriyas, his community's acknowledged master of this genre of Yalaku sung verse, these laments were the oldest songs relating to warfare that the Yalaku had preserved. Like other songs, laments are composed in highly elliptical and metaphorical language that makes them difficult to translate. As noted earlier, they were composed exclusively by men but they were reportedly commonly inspired by, and based closely on, the words women had used while keening for the loss of a husband or other loved one, though not always in warfare. Although the names of the men who composed them have been forgotten, those of the women whose keening prompted their composition often are remembered.

Song 1 is one of the laments relating to this period. It indicates, in line 6, that the attack on the Yalaku traders took place at a market site (*say*; *bung*, TP) named Monyikenj. Line 1 names two other places that are close to this market site: Hopovi and Walavi. The former is an area of grassland; the latter is a sago forest. Without identifying the attackers by name, lines 3 and 4 describe two ways in which they transported their weapons. One was by dragging their spears, through an adjacent area of long grass, between their toes, to hide them from their intended victims. The other was by carrying them in their hands. Dragging spears held in the toes through grassland was apparently a strategy that warriors in all three Kaunga groups could use when approaching a group they intended to attack treacherously.[35]

Like all Sepik peoples, the Yalaku greatly admire cleverness in the way a song is composed and often laugh out loud at the conceits being employed, however grim its subject might be. One illustration of this is the reference to the two places named in line 1: Hopovi and Walavi. Ayam and Kiriyas both indicated that although these two places were located at some distance from the actual site of the attack, the composer incorporated a reference to them as their names fortuitously evoke two types of spears (*vi*) the Yalaku and other Kaunga commonly used in fighting. These are referred to specifically in lines 3 and 4: *hopo vi* and *wala vi*, respectively. *Hopo vi* spears are made from lengths of straightened and fire-hardened rattan (*hopo*). This type of weapon is alluded to by the name of the area of grassland adjacent to the attack: Hopovi (Hopo + vi). The other type is made from the stem (*wala*) of the flower spike at the top of a sago-palm (*nagu*). Here, this type of weapon is alluded to by the name of the nearby sago forest: Walavi (Wala + vi). This second type of spear is also referred to in line 3 as *na vi*, '*na*' being an abbreviation of the term for sago-palm: *nagu*.

The song includes other puns of a kind that people enjoy. For instance, the term for 'spear' (*vi*) is a metaphor for the military enemy (*birua*, TP). In this song the place name Hopovi, therefore, serves simultaneously as the name of a place that helps locate where the fighting took place (Hopovi), a reference to a type of weapon used in warfare, and as a reference to the warriors (*vi*) carrying it. 'Walavi'

35 See Elkin (1971: plate facing p. 170) for a photograph of an Australian Aboriginal man demonstrating the same technique.

likewise simultaneously serves as a reference to a place, a weapon (*wala vi*) and the warriors (*vi*) carrying the weapon.

Like their Kwoma counterparts (see below), Yalaku historical songs also make extensive use of parallelism as a stylistic device (see also Aikhenvald 2014; Borchard and Gibbs 2011; Culler 1975:55ff.; Sollis 2011). This takes the form of an assertion in one line, or in one part of a line, that is paralleled by one in another line, or another part of the same line. The two assertions have different literal meanings but they are understood by listeners to refer to the same person, place or event. Parallelism in verse, both spoken and sung, is a common stylistic feature cross-culturally, including in the Old Testament. The following examples are from the Book of Amos: 1) 'But let justice roll on like a river, / righteousness like a never-failing stream' (5:24); 2) 'There will be wailing in all the streets / and cries of anguish in every public square' (5:16); 3) 'Away with the noise of your songs! / I will not listen to the music of your harps' (5:23) (all from the New International Version).

One example of parallelism in this song is provided by lines 3 and 4. Line 3 states that the approaching Nowiniyen warriors are dragging spears made from sago-palm spikes between their toes. Line 4, in contrast, states that are carrying spears made of rattan in their hands. While translating the song Ayam indicated that although it refers to two types of spears, and two ways of transporting them, in all probability only one type of spear would have been used, which would have been transported in only one way. The reference to a second type of spear, and a second way of conveying it, are poetic elaborations.

The lament also illustrates another stylistic feature of Yalaku historical songs that they share with their Kwoma equivalents. This is the division of the text into two quite distinct parts, each of which has a different, but related, subject. In this case, the first half (lines 1–4) refers to the place the attack took place, the weapons used and the warriors' mode of approach. The second half (lines 5–8) switches the focus to one person's response to the fighting. This is composed from the singer's perspective. The singer is not identified but from the context it would have been a woman keening for the loss of her husband or other close male relative.

In lines 5 and 6 the singer refers to the site of the fighting as 'my' (*wunada*) market site (*say*), 'my' indicating that this is a place at which the Yalaku have many times in the past engaged in trade with neighbouring river peoples. At communal markets of the kind referred to, women are the principal traders. Line 6 names the trading site as Monyikenj, a place close to the Yimi River at which Yalaku women still trade with river people. Lines 5, 7 and 8 metaphorically equate the person whose death is being mourned with a highly ornamented and treasured (*bol*) net bag (*nyap*) that has been put down (*sada*) somewhere and subsequently lost.

***c.*1810**

The Yalaku move away from the Yimi River closer to the northern end of the Washkuk Hills

Sometime after the outbreak of warfare with the Nowiniyen, the leaders of the different Yalaku clans collectively decided to move their community to a new location further to the west (5, Figure 6.1). This was on the banks of the Woru Mbapa, another of the substantial streams that run through this region south towards the Sepik. This move had the effect of bringing the Yalaku into much closer contact with both the Tongwinjamb Kwoma, a tribe whose main settlement then, as today, was located at the northern end of the Washkuk Hills, and the Apukili. The date of the move is not known but it seems to have been early in the nineteenth century.

Woru Mbapa is a branch of the much larger river named Mbapa that marked the boundary between Yalaku and Apukili territory. Like all forest streams, the Woru Mbapa provided the Yalaku with unlimited quantities of fish and other aquatic resources. There were also numerous sago stands in the area. But because this site had never previously been used for a settlement it had none of the different types of fruit trees that people plant around their houses, and which can flourish for many years even after a settlement has been abandoned. These include coconut, banana, fruit pandanus, mango and fig. As they always do when they create a new settlement in a previously unoccupied area, the people immediately planted a new set of fruit trees. While they were waiting for them to mature they had to rely on the fruit that was locally available. This was principally from a tree named *wosakapi*. The fruit was in fact so important in their diet during the early years of this new settlement that the people named the settlement after it: Wosakapi. In recognition of its importance as a source of food they also gave its name to the first child born there, a girl.

***c.*1830**

The Yalaku come into conflict with the Tongwinjamb Kwoma, who they suspected of causing an epidemic in their community

The Yalaku reportedly lived at peace at this new site for about two decades. Then an epidemic, caused by an unknown disease, swept through the community and resulted in many deaths. In this region epidemics were not unknown prior to European settlement (see Koch 1974:128 for an example from Indonesian New Guinea).[36] For instance, the Mayo-speaking peoples who currently have their main settlements at Maio and Yesan villages (see Figure 1.1)

36 The following comments on the epidemic that afflicted the Maio and Yesan peoples in the second half of the nineteenth century derive not from Ayam but from my independent fieldwork among Mayo speakers.

report that sometime in the second half of the nineteenth century, before Europeans first entered the middle Sepik, they experienced an epidemic they likened to 'leprosy' that ate away at the skin. At the time, these two communities had their main settlements at the southern end of the Washkuk Hills close to the present site of Ambunti township. They had established these settlements only two or three decades earlier, following the final expulsion by them and the Kwoma together of the Ngala from the Washkuk Hills. The Maio and Yesan peoples attributed this epidemic to sorcery practised by neighbouring Manambu-speaking peoples on the Sepik, who were in competition with them for the same rich resources of sago at the southern end of the Washkuk Hills. To escape the epidemic the two Mayo-speaking groups abandoned these settlements and established new villages at old Ngala settlement sites on the western side of the Washkuk Hills. These are the present locations of Meno and Beglam villages. Later again, possibly around the beginning of the twentieth century, they moved their main tribal settlements to their present locations in the Yesan Hills, immediately to the south-west of the Washkuk range. Maio village is located on the northern side of the Sepik, and Yesan directly opposite on the southern side.

Whether or not it was the same disease, when the epidemic struck the Yalaku the woman named Wosakapi was an adult. Two of the first people to die were men from the clan into which she had married. Shortly afterwards, Wosakapi's husband also succumbed to the disease. His name was Kanggayombu. Although she was still a young woman, Kanggayombu was Wosakapi's second husband. Her first had died only a year or two earlier.

When her second husband died, his kinsmen placed his body in the customary manner high up on a burial platform next to his house, at which Wosakapi was still living. A few weeks later, after putrefaction had set in, his kinsmen climbed up a ladder propped against the platform to inspect the corpse. Their purpose was to look for signs that would reveal the type of sorcery that had been used to kill him. For the Yalaku, like other peoples in this region, there is no such thing as a 'natural' death. People die either from physical violence, as in warfare, or from covert attack through sorcery.

When the men removed the layer of sago-palm fronds covering the body they noticed a white substance being exuded from the dead man's nostrils and mouth. They interpreted this as evidence that the sorcery had involved the use of some similarly coloured substance, such as a scrap of white sago jelly or the white meat of a mature coconut.

His kinsmen decided that the sorcery responsible, not just for Kanggayombu's death but also for that of all the other members of their community who had died during the epidemic, had been practised by the Tongwinjamb Kwoma, their nearest neighbours. The two groups had intermarried regularly since the foundation of Wosakapi, and members of both groups frequently visited each other's settlements. The Yalaku decided that their Tongwinjamb visitors must have been secretly collecting the leavings of members of their community and giving them to sorcerers.

The Tongwinjamb soon became aware that the Yalaku were blaming them for the epidemic and vigorously protested their innocence. To prove this, and to reaffirm the good relations they had enjoyed with their neighbours, a large group of Tongwinjamb men arranged to pay a visit to Wosakapi and consume part of Kanggayombu's rotting corpse. Traditionally, both Kwoma and Yalaku believed that if a man was innocent of the sorcery that had caused a death of which he was suspected, he could demonstrate this by eating part of the deceased's body with no noticeable effect. If he was implicated, it was thought, his testicles would become hugely swollen, a condition that could not be disguised given that men in both language groups formerly went completely naked in everyday life (Bowden 2006:20).

On a prearranged day, a large party of Tongwinjamb men arrived at Wosakapi. As always in situations where tensions are high, they came fully armed and fully decorated. The majority of the visitors, along with the Yalaku spectators, sat around the burial platform and watched while several Tongwinjamb men took it in turn to climb the ladder propped against the burial platform to detach bones from Kanggayombu's hands. The plan was to grind up the bones and eat them mixed with boiled sago in front of the assembled crowd.

While they were doing this Kanggayombu's widow, Wosakapi, was sitting in front of the house she had shared with her husband, and keening loudly. Her brother was reportedly so affected by her keening, and by the severe distress she was evidently experiencing, that he picked up his spear and hurled it at the Tongwinjamb man who happened to be on the ladder at that moment. The Tongwinjamb man fell heavily to the ground with the spear sticking into him. Fearing that a major fight was about to break out, the Yalaku women and children screamed and scattered. The Tongwinjamb warriors gathered around the wounded man and threatened to spear any Yalaku who approached. After picking up their wounded tribesmen they beat a retreat.

Not wanting to engage in open warfare with the Tongwinjamb, the Yalaku later sent envoys to their settlement to assure them that Wosakapi's brother had acted without the support of his community's leaders. The Tongwinjamb agreed to take no action and in time the epidemic passed.

Song 2: A lament (howi) commemorating the death of the man named Kanggayombu who died in a pre-contact plague

1 *Hole wayi, reka wayi.*
The new, the old.
2 *Madakara? Madakara?*
How could it be? How could it be?
3 *Horok wuni ey, ey?*
What can I do now?
4 *Jabwi na woluku, wada.*
Kwoma sorcery, no doubt.
5 *Wayi yekich, kapa yekich.*
Not *wayi* [i.e. Yalaku] sorcery, not *kapa* powder.
6 *Jabwi na woluku, wada.*
Kwoma sorcery, no doubt.
7 *Jabwi na woluku, wada.*
Kwoma sorcery, no doubt.
8 *Wayi yekich, kapa yekich.*
Not *wayi* [Yalaku] sorcery, not *kapa* powder.

Many laments were composed at the time to commemorate the numerous deaths the Yalaku had suffered during this epidemic. Several gave expression to the widely held belief that the Tongwinjamb had indeed been responsible for it. One (Song 2), although composed by a man, reportedly consists exclusively of words and phrases that Wosakapi herself had used while keening for her husband. The name of the man who put her words into song has not been preserved.

The song is composed from Wosakapi's perspective. Although she is not named, line 1 indicates that the singer has outlived two husbands, men she refers to as the 'new' (*hole*) and the 'old' (*reka*) respectively. *Hole* and *reka* also mean 'fresh' (*nupela*, TP) and 'dry' (*draipela*, TP), respectively.

Lines 1 to 3 express the singer's bewilderment that she has lost two husbands in quick succession, and has her asking what she will do next. The remainder of the song represents Wosakapi speculating about the cause of her second husband's death. She asserts that it was not the type of sorcery the Yalaku use, termed *wayi*, or the one involving the use of a poisonous white powder termed *kapa*, to which Kwoma are thought to have exclusive access. The singer is nevertheless convinced that the Tongwinjamb caused her husband's death and must have used a type of sorcery Kwoma term *siiga* (*woluku*, Yalaku). This involves a sorcerer secretly 'cooking' (i.e. heating) some of the victim's leavings and intoning spells over them. The white substances exuding from Kanggayombu's nostrils and mouth were seen as confirmation of this.

The song refers to the Kwoma several times as 'Njambwi' (= *Jabwi*, lines 4, 6 and 7). This is one of several names the Yalaku give the Kwoma. They also gave this name to the Ngala-speaking people who occupied the Washkuk Hills before the Kwoma. 'Kwoma' is a Kwoma-language name meaning 'hill people' (*kwow*, hill; *ma*, people).

***c.*1840**

The beginnings of warfare with the Apukili tribe

Sometime after this epidemic had come to an end, and while still living at Wosakapi, the Yalaku came into conflict for the first time with the Apukili. The Yalaku know the Apukili as 'Numbuhapa'. 'Apukili' is the name the Honggwama Kwoma use. Knowing that I was more familiar with the Kwoma name than their own, Ayam consistently used it in his history. I do the same here.

Before establishing their settlement at Wosakapi the Yalaku had apparently had little contact with the Apukili. But following the move they came into regular contract with them, and intermarriage became common. However, the peace that initially obtained between the two communities was eventually shattered by what Ayam himself acknowledged was a relatively trivial incident. This was the theft of a dog a Yalaku man had lost while on a hunting expedition.

Throughout the Sepik, both men and women place a high value on dogs. In addition to their value as companions, they act as guards at night when they alert their owners to the presence of something unusual happening outside, such as a person searching for leavings to use in sorcery, or a hungry ghost looking for food. They are also highly valued as hunters of small pigs and other game. Dogs are so effective as hunters that people liken them in usefulness to European firearms. They were also a source of highly prized meat on festive occasions.

One day a female dog belonging to a Yalaku man named Asanembii[37] went missing when he took it hunting. An Apukili man found it, and although he knew who its owner was, decided to keep it. He took it to one of his isolated bush houses. Other Apukili soon became aware of what he had done.

When the dog failed to return to his house after a day or two, Asanembii set off in search for it. He was fearful that the dog might have been gored by a pig it had been chasing, and was lying injured in the forest. He first searched the area around his bush house, as he knew the dog was familiar with that area.

Unable to find it, he travelled over to the Apukili tribe's main settlement, at that time located at a place named Apinow. There he walked around the village asking if anyone had seen his dog. Everyone knew that one of their tribesmen had it but they all feigned ignorance.

Failing to locate it, Asanembii set off for home. While passing through a hamlet on the outskirts of the settlement,

37 This is possibly the man numbered 97 in the Genealogical Index, Appendix B.

a man to whom he was related totemically informed him that one of the Apukili men did actually have his dog, and everyone knew it, but that no one was prepared to tell him. He was informing him of this, the man said, because he was concerned for him as a 'kinsman' (*omo nyimos*).

Asanembii was outraged to discover that the Apukili were hiding his dog, but he also knew that unless they voluntarily gave it up there was no way he could recover it. Disguising his feelings, he told the man that he was no longer interested in the dog and that whoever had it could keep it. He then continued on his way.

On his way back to the Yalaku settlement, Asanembii encountered two Apukili boys felling a sago-palm not far from the track. He stopped and asked them what they were doing. They told him they were felling a palm to get the edible cabbage (*kru*, TP) at the top, a favourite food throughout this region. Adopting a friendly manner so as not to alarm them, he strolled over to where they were working and asked where they had obtained their adzes. They told him their fathers had made them. He asked if he could have a look at the adzes to see how their fathers had hafted the stone blades to the handles. The two boys innocently brought them over. When the first boy handed over his adze, Asanembii promptly brought it down hard on the boy's head, splitting his skull open and killing him instantly. Fearing that he too would be killed, the other boy bolted into the forest and headed for home. Wanting to be sure that the Apukili would find the dead boy, and understand clearly that he had killed him out of revenge for the theft of his dog, Asanembii dragged the dead boy back on to the track and dumped him there. When the other boy reached home, he immediately gave an account of what had happened.

Although the Apukili at this time were still militarily powerful, they were not strong enough to launch a direct attack on the main Yalaku settlement at Wosakapi. Instead, they chose to take revenge for the boy's death by picking off individual Yalaku men and women they encountered working in the forest. The Yalaku similarly lacked the strength to avenge these killings by launching a head-on attack on the Apukili settlement and retaliated in a similar manner, by picking off individual men and women they found in the forest.

When the cycle of killings and counter-killings showed no sign of abating, the leaders of the different Yalaku clans decided that it was too dangerous to continue living as close as they were to the Apukili, and moved the entire community to a new location further to the east, back towards Yimi River (6, Figure 6.1). For reasons Ayam did not specify, instead of constructing a single consolidated settlement that would have been easy to defend, the community split into two sections along totemic lines, each of which built a separate, multi-clan hamlet. One section settled at a place named Siluwi and the other, which included Ayam's clan, at a place named Awakiit. Both were on the banks of Yanggemi River.

***c*.1845–50**

Fighting with the Nowiniyen resumes: a hamlet is attacked while the people are making salt

Having distanced themselves from the Apukili, the killings temporarily stopped. But eventually the segment of the Apukili tribe with which the Yalaku had been feuding launched a devastating attack on the Awakiit hamlet. The attackers were supported by a substantial group of totemic kin belonging to the Nowiniyen tribe.

The attack took place on a day when many of the women at Awakiit had decided to make salt. This involved burning the stalks of dry sago-palm branches and other materials. Salt is used to flavour food.

The women had started their work in the customary manner at first light and soon the entire the hamlet was filled with dense smoke. Some of the smoke had drifted out into the forest along the paths that led into the village. Unwittingly for the women who were its source, it provided the attackers with extra cover, enabling them to get right up to the edge of the hamlet without being seen. Most of the hamlet's men had gone into the forest the day before, to hunt cassowaries, crowned pigeons and other birds at various blinds they had earlier constructed next to forest trees that at that time of the year were shedding large quantities of fruit.

When the war-party launched the raid, it consequently met with almost no resistance, and the attackers succeeded in slaughtering the majority of the women and children, as well as the elderly. After killing everyone they could catch they beat a hasty retreat. The men hunting in the surrounding forest were out of earshot and knew nothing of what was happening. When they returned to their homes later that day they were shocked to discover their wives and children lying dead, or dying, around their settlement. Angry and frustrated at not having been there to defend them, the men howled with rage.

One of Ayam's clan forebears, named Nyakay (14), was among the men who had been hunting in the forest. After successfully capturing several birds he had retired that night to his bush house. He was intending to return home the following morning. During the night something highly unusual happened that worried him, which he later told others about. A bird of paradise, a grammatically 'female' (*takwa*) bird, had perched in a tree close to his bush house, but instead of calling once or twice and then flying away, it had remained in the tree calling repeatedly throughout the night. The bird's unusual behaviour had deeply puzzled him. When he returned to his settlement the following day, and found that his wife was among the dead, he realized that the bird of paradise was his wife's soul (*hach*). Her soul, a ghost in the making, had known that the woman

whose body it normally inhabited would die the following morning, and in anticipation of this had left her body the night before to begin its journey to the underworld. On its way, it had perched in the tree outside Nyakay's bush house and called to him throughout the night, informing him that his wife was about to die.

So many members of the Awakiit hamlet died in the attack that instead of constructing separate burial platforms for each adult, the men built a single long burial platform in the centre of the village and put all of the bodies on it together. Nyakay placed his wife's body at one end. That night, as an expression of the depth of his grief, he climbed up on to the burial platform and lay down beside her body to sleep. He did the same thing every night for several months while her body was slowly putrefying. Each morning before climbing down, he would give added expression to his grief by rubbing fluids from his wife's decaying corpse into his hair and on his face and chest. He would then spend the day aimlessly wandering around the village and in the forest. He reportedly lived on scraps of food his kinsmen gave him.

In this society people are permitted to give unrestrained expression to their grief when a loved one dies, but even by Yalaku standards Nyakay's behaviour was considered excessive. Try as they might, his kinsmen could not persuade him to sleep in his own house or resume finding food for himself. Nyakay in fact continued to sleep on the burial platform next to his wife until only her bones were left.

When all of the bodies had eventually decomposed their husbands or other male relatives recovered their bones. In the customary manner, they retained some of them, such as the jaw bones to attach to 'friendship' net bags, and then crushed the remainder and buried them in the earth floors of the houses in which the women and children had lived. It was only after Nyakay had removed his wife's bones from the burial platform that he washed for the first time since her death, cut his hair and resumed a relatively normal life. Even so, he left the hamlet and for an extended period lived on his own at one of his isolated bush houses, at a place named Gaw'ar.

c.1850

The Yalaku tribe as a whole move to a new settlement next to Tongwinjamb in the Washkuk Hills

While Nyakay was still sleeping at night on the communal burial platform next to his wife's decaying body, one of his Tongwinjamb Kwoma friends (*nawa*), named Wunsinggila, paid him a visit. Unaware of what had been happening, he was shocked to discover how bizarrely Nyakay was behaving. Out of sympathy for him he rubbed the white clay of mourning all over his own face and body. In that condition he returned to Tongwinjamb.

When Wunsinggila entered his clan's men's house the other men immediately asked what had happened. For whatever reason, he initially refused to tell them. It was only when his kinsmen, out of frustration, threatened him with violence that he revealed that he was grieving for his friend Nyakay. He also told them that he was fearful that the Apukili and their Nowiniyen allies might attack again, and that he wanted to invite the whole Yalaku community to leave their two hamlets and establish a new settlement close to Tongwinjamb, on the eastern edge of the Washkuk Hills. There, he said, their Tongwinjamb allies could help protect them if need be.

The leaders of the different Tongwinjamb clans debated Wunsinggila's proposal among themselves, and eventually agreed to invite the whole Yalaku community to settle close to them on the lower end of the spur on which their own main settlement was located, at a site named Cherenggwunj (7, Figure 6.1). The Tongwinjamb settlement was at a site named Mbayikwi (I, Figure 6.1).

c.1850–60

Relations with the Tongwinjamb sour when two Yalaku girls are killed for thieving

The members of both Yalaku hamlets accepted the offer and the tribe as a whole moved to this new site. For a time they lived without incident, cheek by jowl with the Tongwinjamb. Good relations between the two groups, however, eventually soured as the result of what Ayam himself acknowledged was the recklessly irresponsible behaviour of two Yalaku girls. The girls were inveterate thieves, who regularly stole garden produce and other food from Yalaku and Tongwinjamb families alike. On one occasion they helped themselves, in the forest, to all of the edible fungi a Tongwinjamb man had been carefully tending on a pile of spent sago pith next to a palm he and his family had recently processed. When their owner discovered that the mushrooms had all been stolen, he complained loudly and angrily to both his fellow Tongwinjamb and the neighbouring Yalaku.

The Tongwinjamb man had no idea of who had stolen the mushrooms, but eventually relatives he had in the Yalaku community privately told him about the two girls and their inveterate thieving. He and another Tongwinjamb man decided to put an end to their activities. One day they followed them into the forest and killed them. To deflect attention away from themselves, and the Tongwinjamb more generally, they cut off their heads and hid them in the forest, well away from the girls' torsos. This was to make it look as if the girls had been killed by a trading party from one of the nearby Sepik River communities, who had taken the heads to display as trophies in one of their men's houses. Foolishly, the two revealed to some of their Tongwinjamb friends what they had done, and in time this became known to the Yalaku.

The Yalaku acknowledged that the girls' thieving was reprehensible, but also took the view that the killings could

not go unavenged. The girls' Yalaku kinsmen, therefore, took revenge soon after, by killing one of the Tongwinjamb men responsible when they encountered him hunting in the forest on his own. Before setting out to take revenge, the killers had discussed their intentions with the leaders of the different Yalaku clans. The latter had approved their plan, but knew that as soon as they took action the Tongwinjamb would retaliate. They therefore advised the members of all of the different Yalaku clans to prepare to abandon their settlement at short notice. As soon as the killing was carried out, and before the Tongwinjamb had discovered it, the entire Yalaku community abandoned their settlement and moved to a new site to the north-east. This was a low but steeply sided hill named Molipiir (11, Figure 6.1) located roughly halfway between the northern end of the Washkuk Hills and the Yimi River. Individual men had long used Molipiir as a place to construct bush houses that they could use while hunting or gardening in the area, but it now became for the first time the site of the community's main settlement.

Not long after this move to Molipiir, Yalaku kinsmen of the two dead girls managed to ambush and kill the other Tongwinjamb man involved in their deaths, who they similarly encountered in the forest hunting on his own. Named Yangganay, his killing evened the score between the two tribes, the deaths of the two Tongwinjamb men cancelling out the deaths of the two Yalaku girls.

When the Yalaku moved to Molipiir the different clans initially built a series of small hamlets scattered around the hill rather than a consolidated settlement directly on it. But the tribe's leading men were concerned that the dispersed form of the settlement would make it difficult to defend if it came under attack, and eventually persuaded the majority of the people to consolidate their dwellings at a single site close to, but not directly on, Molipiir. This was at a place named Kowinumbu (8a, Figure 6.1). Technically, Kowinumbu was owned by one of the clans that belonged to the Nowiniyen tribe, but its owners were linked totemically to several of the Yalaku clans and they gave their permission for the tribe as a whole to build a new settlement on their land. Nevertheless, a minority of the Yalaku clans refused to move to Kowinumbu and built a separate hamlet for themselves a kilometre or so away at a site named Kumanggey (8b, Figure 6.1).

Warfare with the Tumbuma and Ngala: the Ngala kill three young Yalaku men

It was at this time that the Yalaku came into conflict for the first time with two other tribes: the Ngala and the Tumbuma.[38] Both groups, now extinct, spoke Ngala, a distinct Ndu language (Laycock 1973:28). The Ngala consisted of remnants of the people who had formerly occupied the Washkuk Hills, but whom the Kwoma had expelled following their migration south into the range from more ancient settlements to the north. According to Ayam, the Ngala were an originally an offshoot of the Tumbuma, who lived to the north-east of the Washkuk range. After separating from them they had migrated south-west into the Washkuk range. This occurred long before the Yalaku themselves entered this region. Following their expulsion from the hills, the Ngala moved from settlement to settlement, over what was probably three or four decades, immediately to the east of the range. Over time they progressively declined in numbers through warfare with neighbouring groups, such as the Honggwama Kwoma and the Manambu-speaking Avatip on the Sepik (Bowden 1997:xviii–xix). Eventually they decided to rejoin their parent group, the Tumbuma. When the Yalaku came into conflict with them, the Ngala and Tumbuma shared a settlement to their south named Korindu (site A, Figure 6.1). Korindu was located on a small river named Woronggey. The most influential leaders of the combined Tumbuma and Ngala community at that time were two celebrated warriors named Manggimanggi and Wanakay.

Following the establishment of their two hamlets close to Molipiir, the Yalaku initially lived on good terms with the Ngala-speakers at Korindu. The Yalaku people at Kumanggey, furthermore, had many totemic relatives and affines at Korindu, and were in the habit of regularly visiting that settlement to stay with them and participate in ceremonies. These Yalaku spoke Ngala as a second language, and their relatives likewise spoke Kaunga.

On one occasion four young Yalaku men from the Kumanggey hamlet decided to pay a visit to Korindu. For reasons Ayam did not explain, and might not have known, one of the subgroups at Korindu decided to take revenge on the four for some long-standing grudge against the Yalaku, and killed three of them. They had attempted to kill all four, but one escaped.

The day before the four young men were due to leave Korindu and return to their own settlement, the men plotting their deaths divided them into two groups of two each. Several of their hosts then accompanied each pair into a separate section of the forest. They had told them that they wanted to help them find food they could take home. One pair was taken to a wildfowl mound to harvest the eggs. Once the two Yalaku visitors had helped excavate a deep hole in the middle of the mound, their hosts suddenly speared them and buried their bodies in the hole.

The other two young men were taken to a grove of betel-nut palms. When they arrived, their hosts asked one to climb a palm and throw the fruit down. When he reached the top, ten metres or so above the ground, they suddenly turned on the other, attacking him with their adzes. Although badly wounded, the injured man managed to escape into the surrounding forest. Two Korindu men

38 The Yalaku also know the Tumbuma as 'Mowumowundu'.

remained at the base of the palm while the others took off in search of their quarry. They soon found him and completed the execution.

In the meantime, the other Yalaku man, aware that the two men at the base of the palm were distracted, managed to climb unnoticed into an adjacent tree along an overhanging branch and slide down the trunk and escape. When the killers of the other young man returned and everyone turned their attention to the one they assumed was still at the top of the palm, they were astonished to discover he was missing. They made a search of the surrounding forest but were unable to find him. They therefore decided to return home. There they informed the others of what had happened. Knowing that the young man who had escaped would immediately alert other Yalaku to the killings, they advised everyone to prepare for an eventual revenge attack.

The young man who managed to escape was named Monggwiya. When he arrived back at his hamlet, Kumanggey, he went straight to his clan's men's house and put out a call on one of the slit-gongs for the local men to meet immediately. When most had assembled, he gave a report of what had happened. Two of the leading members of the hamlet belonged to Ayam's clan. They were Manggimal (15) and Kayipanggu (8). Kayipanggu was a renowned warrior, but he also had a reputation for being a hothead. When he heard what Monggwiya had to report, he was so incensed that he strode outside the men's house and began prancing back and forth with his spear raised. He then hurled the spear at the base of a breadfruit tree growing next to it. But instead of embedding itself in the trunk, the spear ricocheted off it and struck Monggwiya, who had followed him out of the building and was standing nearby. It hit him in the upper leg. Seeing Monggwiya fall, the other men rushed out of the building and hurled abuse at Kayipanggu for behaving so recklessly. Those with long experience of treating spear wounds immediately examined the young man and decided that that the bamboo blade had gone right through the muscle and lodged deep in a bone. They made several deep incisions with razor-sharp bamboo knives around the wound to let out the 'bad' blood and expose the spear point. But try as they might, they could not extract the tip.

They quickly concluded that they needed the help of the most experienced Yalaku surgeons, all of whom at that time were living at the tribe's other hamlet, Kowinumbu. They made a litter out of poles lashed together with lengths of split rattan and put Monggwiya on it. To punish Kayipanggu for his reckless behaviour they made him carry one end all the way to Kowinumbu. Several men took turns to carry the other. When they reached Kowinumbu the more experienced surgeons were able to extract the spear point, and in time Monggwiya recovered.

The Yalaku launch a revenge raid on the Ngala settlement at Korindu

Relatives of the three dead men decided to avenge the killings at Korindu as soon as possible. To this end they enlisted the support of a number of totemic kin and other allies from both the Nowiniyen and Motek tribes. The Ngala and Tumbuma meanwhile planned a major ceremony in the main men's house at Korindu to celebrate the killings. In preparation for this, they hunted and killed numerous wild pigs, smoked the meat to preserve it until it was required, and collected huge quantities of yams and other vegetables. The food was for the participants in the festivities.

The Yalaku war-party, together with their Nowiniyen and Motek allies, coincidentally arrived at Korindu at first light on the day of the ceremony. Although it was still well before sunrise, many of the Korindu men were already busy at the back of the men's house boiling the pork and preparing the vegetables.

The war-party on this occasion was jointly led by two of the most experienced Yalaku fighting men, Teyikwal (63) and Yuwayembi (67), both of YK clan. Teyikwal was at the front of the group and Yuwayembi further back. The warriors paused in the forest at the edge of the village. A huge palisade surrounded the settlement. This had only two small doors in it, on opposite sides, adjacent to the ends of two tracks.

While the members of the war-party were waiting for the signal to attack, they had dropped to their knees to keep a low profile and had placed their spears and shields on the ground. Suddenly a man named Hamakapowi, one of the Ngala's most celebrated fighting men, emerged from the small door directly opposite where they were waiting. Oblivious to the fact that there was a large group of enemy warriors only a few metres away, he set off down the track towards them to bathe in a nearby stream. The members of the war-party remained motionless and silent as he approached. Hamakapowi was carrying a black-palm fighting spear and was thrusting this jauntily into the air as he walked. When he came within spearing distance the men at the front of the war-party cautiously began climbing to their feet and picking up their weapons. But before they could get themselves into spear-throwing positions Hamakapowi spotted them. He had the advantage, as he was already standing and had his spear in a throwing position. Seeing Teyikwal at the front of the group, he took aim at him.

From his position further back, Yuwayembi could see that Hamakapowi had Teyikwal in his sights. To distract him, he let out a mighty roar, leaped to his feet and with his spear raised charged towards the Ngala warrior. When Hamakapowi saw this famous Yalaku fighter rushing at him, he thought better of trying to spear Teyikwal and turned on his heels and sprinted back to the palisade. Yuwayembi followed him, and was quickly joined by the

rest of the Yalaku war-party. In times of military conflict, it was customary to barricade a door in a palisade as soon as someone had passed through it. This is what the men inside the palisade had done on this occasion. As he approached the door Hamakapowi shouted to the men inside to open it, but Yuwayembi and the other pursuers caught up with him before he could climb through, and felled him with several spears, killing him.

Having heard Hamakapowi shouting, two of the settlement's other leading fighters – Longgimeli and Wanenggey – came up to the palisade and called to those outside, who they couldn't see, and asked if they were 'Honggwama', a Kwoma group with which the Ngala had fought many times in the recent past. Those outside replied that were not Honggwama but were Yalaku and Kirichembikiri (= Nowiniyen). Knowing that the Yalaku were less numerous and less powerful than the Honggwama, the two men inside proceeded to shout derisively at them, telling them they would be delighted to take them on in a fight.

The attackers did their best to break through the small door. But by now many Korindu men had climbed onto the raised walkway on the inner side of the palisade, and were hurling spears and other missiles down on them. Those outside protected themselves as best they could with their shields. Meanwhile, the women and children in the settlement fled into the forest through the door on the other side of the settlement. Realizing that it was too unsafe for them to keep trying to break through the door, the attackers withdrew and worked their way through the forest around to other side of the settlement. They were hoping to catch the fleeing women and children. But they found that the track leading into the forest on the other side of the settlement, which they presumed the women and children had taken, had been expertly booby-trapped with hundreds of pointed stakes sunk into the ground and covered with forest litter. The women and children had evidently escaped by another, well-camouflaged track. The two leaders of the Yalaku war-party concluded that they had little chance of finding anyone outside the palisaded settlement, and that breaking into it was now out of the question. They therefore beat a retreat. On that occasion the attackers had to be satisfied with killing only one person: Hamakapowi.

The Ngala and Tumbuma, with their Kaunga allies, launch a devastating counter-raid on the Yalaku settlement at Kowinumbu

Following this attack on Korindu, the Ngala and Tumbuma together immediately began planning a revenge raid on Kowinumbu, the larger of the two Yalaku hamlets. For this purpose, they were successful in secretly enlisting the support of a large number of their own totemic kin in the Nowiniyen tribe.

Acting on information their Nowiniyen allies secretly provided, they timed the revenge raid to coincide with a male-initiation ceremony the Yalaku were hosting at Kowinumbu, in which the Nowiniyen and Motek were also participating. The participants included the men who had secretly agreed to support the war-party from Korindu. Like their neighbours, the Kaunga held male-initiation ceremonies only every five years or so. Their practice was for all three of their communities: the Yalaku, Nowiniyen and Motek, to hold them jointly. The three communities took it in turn to sponsor the ceremony. During the ritual, which lasted several weeks, the parents of the boys participating would stay in the host community to provide their sons with the food they required on a daily basis. The Nowiniyen allies of the Ngala and Tumbuma successfully kept the plans for the attack hidden from their Yalaku hosts.

The purpose of such an initiation rite, Ayam stated, was to transform boys into men – to make them 'hard', as he put it, so they could become effective fighters in warfare, hunters and gardeners. Part of the process of 'hardening up' the initiates involved hazing them with switches and bundles of stinging nettles at the beginning of the long period of seclusion. The only inkling that the Yalaku hosts had that something might be amiss was the fact that a number of the Nowiniyen men helping to supervise the boys hazed their sons much more harshly than they did their own. Although they noticed this, they inferred nothing from it.

The attack on Kowinumbu took place one morning at first light. One of Ayam's own forebears, Muwikwapi Waspen (11), was doing sentry duty at the time on the edge of the village, and he was the first to be killed. As soon as the attackers charged, their Nowiniyen allies inside the initiation enclosure grabbed their adzes and began butchering as many of the Yalaku initiates as they could catch before they fled.

The attack was so successful that it quickly turned into a slaughter. In addition to killing many of the Yalaku initiates and the elderly men and women who were too slow to escape, the attackers captured the majority of the Yalaku women of reproductive age. They subsequently divided them up among themselves and their Nowiniyen allies. The Ngala and Tumbuma took their captives back to Korindu. Their Nowiniyen allies took theirs back to their settlement. When the attackers were satisfied that they had achieved their objective, they withdrew.

According to Ayam, this attack by a combined Ngala, Tumbuma and Nowiniyen force delivered a devastating blow to the Yalaku from which they took many years to recover. The leading Yalaku warriors of the day included Yuwayembi (67) and Teyikwal (63) of YK clan, both of whom had participated in the raid on Korindu; Tusiiwiil (171) of Korembikow clan, a group that by 1973 had become

extinct; Piyanombok (75) of Rama clan; and Mesipoko (165) of H2 clan.

Allies at Tongwinjamb help the Yalaku establish a new settlement at Kiiriikiitok and take revenge on the Nowiniyen

When the attackers withdrew, the members of the different Yalaku clans at both Kowinumbu and Kumanggey carefully assessed their losses. After discussing their options, they decided to abandon these two hamlets and build a new, consolidated tribal settlement to the south-west at a place named Kiiriikiitok (9, Figure 6.1). This was situated on the Asakwa River. Notwithstanding the earlier hostilities between the Yalaku and certain segments of the Tongwinjamb community, two Yalaku men decided to travel to the main Tongwinjamb settlement, at Mbayikwi, to seek the help of totemic kin and other allies there with getting this new settlement established.

The decision to create a new settlement at Kiiriikiitok was made at the height of the annual wet season – roughly October to March. That year the Sepik had risen to exceptionally high levels and its flood waters had inundated much of low-lying forest country between the Yimi River and the Washkuk Hills. Forest tracks that were normally dry were waist deep in water.

The two Yalaku men who decided to seek help from allies at Tongwinjamb were Kayipanggu (8) and Hapewi (13), both of Rama clan. Their main aim was to make contact with one of their own Rama kinsmen, Woranggen (12), who had been living for many years at Tongwinjamb under the protection of totemic kin, and had remained there even after the Yalaku killed the two Tongwinjamb men in revenge for the deaths of the two Yalaku girls for thieving. Kayipanggu and Hapewi walked as far as they could along the partially submerged track, but when they were still a kilometre or two from the Tongwinjamb settlement the water became too deep for them to go any further.

They found a tall wild fig tree and climbed it. Standing high up in its branches, they repeatedly blew on a bamboo trumpet they had brought with them. Woranggen soon heard it. Realizing that Yalaku men were sending the signal, Woranggen found a canoe and with another man paddled out into the forest along the inundated track. They soon located the two men sitting in the tree.

Woranggen informed them that he had heard from Apukili people visiting Tongwinjamb that a devastating attack had been carried out on the Yalaku at Kowinumbu by a combined Nowiniyen, Ngala and Tumbuma force, and had been led to believed that apart from the young women who had been captured, the entire Yalaku community had been wiped out. He was delighted, therefore, to discover that this was not the case and that most of the fighting men, and some others, had survived.

After helping Kayipanggu and Hapewi into the canoe, Woranggen took them back to his house. There the two visitors gave Woranggen and the other members of the same hamlet a full account of what had happened, and where the survivors were presently located. Woranggen and several of his totemic kin at Tongwinjamb immediately agreed to help the Yalaku take revenge on the Nowiniyen for their role in the attack. The Yalaku had regarded their participation as exceptionally treacherous. In the meantime, they agreed to help their kinsmen build a new settlement and to supply them with replacements for some of the many household utensils destroyed in the attack. These included net bags, cooking pots and sago-processing equipment. After loading the goods into the same canoe, Woranggen, along with a Tongwinjamb man named Nggumbutuku Nggiyimbey, took the two Yalaku men back to where the others were located. Like Woranggen, the Tongwinjamb man was keen to catch up with friends and relatives he thought had died during the fighting. He was especially keen to see his Yalaku 'friend' (*nawa*) Kayiniir (66), after learning that he was still alive.

***c.*1860**

The Yalaku, with Tongwinjamb allies, launch a successful revenge attack on the Nowiniyen at a hamlet at Awul

Once the settlement at Kiiriikiitok had been established, the leading Yalaku warriors began planning a revenge raid on the Nowiniyen who had supported the Ngala and Tumbuma in the attack on Kowinumbu. By then, several years had passed. Knowing that the Yalaku would eventually launch a revenge raid, the Nowiniyen men who had participated in the attack had left their tribe's main settlement and built a new hamlet for themselves further to the north at a site named Awul (B, Figure 6.1). As an added defensive measure, they constructed this on the far, or eastern, side of the Yimi River.

The Yalaku were aware that this segment of the Nowiniyen tribe had moved to a new site, but did not know precisely where. To discover this, the leader of the planned raid, Yuwayembi (67) of YK clan, made contact via intermediaries with a friend and long-standing Nowiniyen ally named Kalawen. Kalawen was a 'friend' (*nawa*) not just of Yuwayembi but of several of the other Yalaku leaders. For many years Kalawen had been living in an isolated section of forest, on land he owned, with members of his extended family. He was suffering from a large and crippling yaws ulcer on his leg that made it difficult for him to walk. The ulcer had developed shortly before the attack on the Yalaku at Kowinumbu. Kalawen believed that the men from the new hamlet at Awul that had participated in the attack had used sorcery to cripple him and effectively imprison him at his isolated bush house, and thus prevent him from learning of their plans. They knew that if he had got wind of them

he would have immediately warned his many Yalaku friends at Kowinumbu.

Deeply angered by the debilitating ulcer from which he was suffering, and the catastrophic damage a segment of his tribe had done to the Yalaku at Kowinumbu, Kalawen was eager to help his Yalaku friends take revenge on the men who had moved to Awul. When he received Yuwayembi's request for information about where these men had established their new hamlet, he sent his son, Yanggindu, to meet with Yuwayembi (67). He sent with him a large parcel of war magic in the form of cured tobacco wrapped in black taro leaves. This was an unambiguous sign that Kalawen concurred with Yuwayembi's plans.

At that time Yuwayembi was living with a group of his kinsmen in an isolated section of forest, well away from the main Yalaku settlement at Kiiriikiitok and from any of the main tracks that passed through the area. His compound was so well hidden that Yanggindu had great trouble locating it. When he decided that he was finally in the right section of forest, he began signalling to Yuwayembi by beating on the buttress roots of trees. Eventually, Yuwayembi heard the signals and sent a reply. When Yanggindu reached his house, he handed over the parcel of war magic and gave Yuwayembi the news he was waiting for.

Awul was in a region that few Yalaku men ever visited. Well before they launched their attack, therefore, Yuwayembi and several other men made a number of secret sorties into the area to familiarize themselves with the terrain and to determine the best method of approach. Once this had been done, Yuwayembi called the war-party together. This included a substantial group of men from Tongwinjamb, to whom Yuwayembi had sent Kalawen's parcel of war magic.

The distance to Awul required that the men depart the day before the attack. They bivouacked overnight, close to the abandoned settlement at Kowinumbu. Despite having abandoned this several years earlier, there were still many houses there in good condition that could have been used for shelter. The men nevertheless chose to stay outside the settlement, so as not to disturb, and potentially be attacked by, vengeful ghosts of the dead that might still be present. Instead, they crowded into a substantial garden house located on its outskirts. There, they fed on yams, bananas and other plant foods that were growing in abundance in an adjacent garden, even though it too had long been abandoned.

During that afternoon a scouting party approached Awul from the western side of the Yimi, to make sure that the people were still in residence. They were concerned that they might have been secretly warned by Yalaku or Tongwinjamb allies of the impending raid, and so decamped into the forest. When the scouting party approached the hamlet a white cockatoo perched high up in a nearby tree detected them and let out a raucous cry as it flew away. Throughout this region white cockatoos serve as early-warning systems, as their raucous cries alert people to foreign entities approaching, whether animal or human. On this occasion, one of the Yalaku women who had been captured at Kowinumbu heard the cockatoo. Wondering if it was a sign that a war-party from her former community was in the vicinity, she beat out a signal on the buttress root of a tree indicating who she was. The men heard it and realized that it was being sent by a woman named Worupeya. Following her capture, she had been given as a wife to a Nowiniyen warrior named Yembiyowi.

The scouting party made no reply so as not to give itself away. Learning that at least one of the Yalaku women who had been captured at Kowinumbu was at the hamlet, several of the Tongwinjamb men with the scouting party asked if everyone in the hamlet was a legitimate target. Their Yalaku guides told them that the plan was to recover all of the women who had been captured at Kowinumbu. However, all of the other women in the settlement, along with the men, were fair game. The scouting party then rejoined the main group.

During the night the members of the war-party engaged in 'beating the *tanget* [TP]', different men taking it in turn to slap bunches of cordyline (*tanget*) or other leaves on the ground and boast about who they would kill the following day. Many took the opportunity to hurl humorous and often obscene insults at the enemy. One Tongwinjamb participant denounced the men they intended to kill by saying 'Your [Nowiniyen] little spears [penises] might have satisfied the young girls at Kowinumbu [i.e. the women they had captured] but now they would see if they could satisfy their mothers'. The 'mothers' he was referring to were the warriors from Tongwinjamb, a much larger and more powerful community than the Yalaku.

Well before first light the following morning the war-party set off. For most of the year the Yimi is shallow and can be waded across. But the wet season had arrived and heavy rain had turned the river into a torrent. Fording it was therefore impossible. Still well before dawn, and so as not to make any noise, the war-party quietly dug out, rather than chop down, a tall black palm growing on the river's western bank. When it started to fall they directed it over the river. It was long enough to form a bridge. One of the men then dragged a long length of rattan across it. After this was anchored to trees on both sides the members of the war-party used it as a handrail while crossing the bridge.

When the group reached the outskirts of Awul it was still dark. The hamlet had been heavily fortified. In addition to a tall palisade of logs, the forest trees had been cleared for fifty metres or so around its perimeter to allow light to stimulate the growth of a dense barrier of thorn-covered rattans. Access was accordingly limited to the two paths that led to small doors on opposite sides of the palisade. Still under cover of darkness, and before the fighting began,

several members of the war-party silently, and with great difficulty, pulled the vines away from the wall to make a rough path around to the rear entrance. If need be, this could be used by a section of the war-party to launch a secondary attack from the opposite side, while the others continued the attack from the front.[39]

The residents were all still asleep when the attack was launched. The leading warriors forced their way through the front door and once inside the war-party went on a rampage. The Tongwinjamb participants, in particular, exacted a terrible revenge for the slaughter of their Yalaku allies. One of the first residents to be killed was a young woman named Wangginakwa. She was renowned among both the Nowiniyen and neighbouring groups for her beauty and generosity of spirit. Woranggen (12) speared her. He was the Yalaku man who had been living for many years at Tongwinjamb, but had come back to live with his tribesmen following the attack on Kowinumbu.

During the attack the Yalaku were able to locate and retrieve all but two of the women who had been abducted from Kowinumbu. The other two were staying with their husbands at a compound nearby in the forest. One of the two had been married to Yuwayembi, the leader of the war-party. When Yuwayembi couldn't find his former wife at Awul, the Yalaku women there told him where she would be. With a small group of warriors to back him up, he immediately set off to locate her. He soon found the compound.

Yuwayembi's former wife was named Wunyik. As occasionally happened when women were captured in warfare, Wunyik had decided that she preferred the man to whom she had been given to her former husband. When Yuwayembi and the other men arrived at the compound, they found Wunyik sitting outside her house beside a small cooking fire. Her new husband, Nyikilum, was still asleep inside. When Wunyik caught sight of Yuwayembi she immediately shouted to Nyikilum to warn him that her former husband was approaching. Nyikilum was well aware of Yuwayembi's reputation as a fighter and had no intention of trying to defend his new wife. He promptly appeared at the doorway, and after taking one look at the approaching warriors bolted into the forest. Wunyik made no attempt to escape.

When Yuwayembi reached the house, he angrily denounced his former wife for warning her husband of his approach, and accused her of enjoying sex with her Nowiniyen captor more than with him. It had been several years since this woman had been captured and in the meantime she had had a child with Nyikilum. One of the Tongwinjamb members of the war-party quickly caught the child and bludgeoned him to death with his adze, in front of its mother. Another Tongwinjamb man then grabbed the child living with the other Yalaku woman next door. This child was actually the son of her former Yalaku husband. When this woman was captured at Kowinumbu she had been able, highly unusually, to persuade her Nowiniyen captors to allow her to bring her son with her rather than kill him. This woman had been married to Yuwayembi's younger brother, Kasakawanyi (70). Yuwayembi recognized the boy and stopped the Tongwinjamb man from killing him. They took the boy and his mother back to the Yalaku settlement.

Following this successful revenge raid on the hamlet at Awul, the Tongwinjamb men who had participated in the attack invited the entire Yalaku tribe, for its own safety, to abandon their settlement at Kiiriikiitok and establish a new settlement close to their own, on the eastern side of the Washkuk Hills. This was at a site the Yalaku owned, named Siiva Reka (in Kwoma, 'Dry Coconuts'). It formed part of a much larger area of land the Yalaku owned in the same area, named Mbalay (10, Figure 6.1). Their allies made this offer despite the lingering ill will one segment of the Tongwinjamb tribe still bore the Yalaku as the result of the killing of two of their men in revenge for the killing of the two Yalaku girls.

The Yalaku launch a second raid on the Nowiniyen with Tongwinjamb help

Following the attack on Awul, its residents scattered and hid for a time at isolated bush houses in the same area. Later, their leaders persuaded them to come together and construct a new, consolidated settlement at a place named Kayanggwa (C, Fig 6.1). Shortly afterwards, the crippled Nowiniyen leader Kalawen, who had steered the Yalaku towards Awul, sent word to his Yalaku allies informing them where the people from Awul were now located. Assisted by the same Tongwinjamb allies the Yalaku launched a second attack on this group.

When the war-party reached the outskirts of Kayanggwa they encountered a man named Tokindu, a formidable warrior who was well known to them. He was seated high up on a platform he had constructed next to a giant ironwood tree that he was in the process of pollarding. The tree was close to the palisade around the new settlement and Tokindu was removing its top to allow light to stimulate the growth of thorny vines directly underneath it. As a precaution, in case of a sudden attack, he had taken a bundle of spears with him up on to the platform, along with a smouldering piece of firewood he was using to light his cigars. When the war-party arrived he was taking a break from the immensely time-consuming and difficult work of cutting through the trunk, and was sitting on the platform smoking.

39 I cannot say precisely how quickly rattans would grow to form an impenetrable barrier; it might have taken a year or more. It was the nail-like thorns on them, rather than the density of the vines as such, that created the barrier.

As soon as the approaching warriors detected him, one of the Tongwinjamb men in the war-party, named Kwayimandu, insisted that he knew Tokindu better than anyone else in the group and wanted the privilege of killing him. Kwayimandu had a much higher opinion of his own fighting abilities than anyone else. Raising his single spear into a throwing position, he ran towards the work platform. When Tokindu saw him, rather than try to escape, he picked up one of his own spears and prepared to defend himself. Kwayimandu managed to launch his weapon first, but it missed and stuck in the platform on which Tokindu was now standing. When Tokindu saw who had thrown the spear he began mocking his attacker, telling him he would teach him how to fight. With that, he jumped to the ground, spear in hand. But before he could throw it, Kwayimandu turned and fled back to where the rest of the war-party was waiting out of sight in the forest. The attackers now emerged in a body from their hiding place. Tokindu briefly stood and looked at them and then turned and rushed for the door in the palisade, shouting warnings at the same time to those inside that their settlement had come under attack.

The attackers managed to push their way through the door before Tokindu and others inside could barricade it with the heavy planks kept beside it for that purpose.[40] The attack was a success. Among those the Yalaku and their Tongwinjamb allies killed was a much-admired woman named Manambandi. She was famous for her unfailingly cheerful disposition, her lively conversation and her generosity with food.

When the attack was concluded, the war-party returned to the Washkuk Hills: the Tongwinjamb to their hilltop settlement and the Yalaku to their new settlement at Mbalay. One of the songs the Tongwinjamb participants composed to celebrate this attack commemorated this much-admired woman Manambandi. It was subsequently incorporated into the Kwoma cycle 'The song of the Kaunga' (in Kwoma, *Kawoga Hokwa*). As noted earlier, although this song cycle is composed in Kwoma, the Yalaku regarded it as forming as important a part of their cultural history as songs composed in their own language.

40 Tokindu survived this attack and went on to become one of the Nowiniyen tribe's most influential political leaders. See the final section of this chapter.

Song 3: The death in warfare of the Nowiniyen woman named Manambadi[41]

1 *Badalaka sijiina piwa.*
At Mbandala, constructing (*piwa*) a huge palisade (*sijii*).
2 *Kayagwak piirani liwa.*
At Kayanggwa, clearing forest for thorny vines (*piira*) to grow.
3 *Wagirawa, kisapi woku,*
Wanggirawa, the ancient hand drum,
4 *Badalaka tiiriiku sava.*
Cracked at Mbandala and set aside.
5 *Manabadi, kisapi woku,*
Manambandi, the ancient hand drum,
6 *Kayagwak tiiriiku sava.*
Cracked at Kayanggwa and set aside.

The song respectfully, and poignantly, likens the woman Manambandi to an ancient and highly prized hand drum (in Kwoma, *woku*), named Wanggirawa, that the Nowiniyen people once owned and for generations used as a source of music. But a Nowiniyen man, playing it high up on the palisade that he and his tribesmen were constructing at one of their former settlements, accidentally dropped and cracked it, rendering it useless. This was at a place named Mbandala.

The song also provides an illustration of the way Kwoma, like Yalaku, make use of parallelism as a stylistic device in historical songs. It consists of two parts, where one is a metaphor for the other. The two parts in this case overlap. One (lines 1, 3 and 4) describes how the hand drum Wanggirawa (line 3) was dropped and broken at the place named Mbandala (line 4) while defensive barriers were being constructed around the settlement there (line 1). The other (lines 2, 5 and 6) tells how the ancient 'hand drum' (i.e. woman) Manambandi (line 5) is dropped and cracked (i.e. speared and killed) at Kayanggwa (line 6) while work is being undertaken on defensive barriers around that settlement (line 2).

41 Ayam translated the song into TP as follows:
1 *Long Mbandala ol i putim banis long rot, long pait.*
2 *Long Kayanggwa ol i katim diwai long arere bilong ples, long mekim bus.*
3 *Wanggirawa, kundu bilong bipo yet,*
4 *Ol i brukim long Mbandala na putim.*
5 *Manambandi, kundu bilong bipo yet,*
6 *Ol i brukim long Kayanggwa na putim.*

***c.*1860**

The Nowiniyen take revenge for the attack on Kayanggwa by ambushing and killing two Yalaku men hunting in the forest; the Yalaku launch another attack on the Nowiniyen, this time at Mboch

With their Tongwinjamb allies now at their back, the Yalaku were too well defended at their new settlement at Mbalay for the Nowiniyen to try to attack them there in revenge for the raid on Kayanggwa. They adopted a strategy, therefore, of ambushing and killing individual Yalaku whenever they found them hunting or gardening in the forest. The main drawback of this strategy for the Nowiniyen was that it involved travelling long distances in search of potential victims and spending several nights sleeping rough in the forest, depending on how far they travelled.

The Nowiniyen eventually succeeded in killing two of a group of three Yalaku men they encountered in the forest, returning to Mbalay from an extended hunting trip to the north of the Washkuk Hills. The men were loaded down with large parcels of smoked pork. The two killed were Kisala (71) and Kasakawanyi (70). A third man, named Wachiipok, managed to escape. One of the Nowiniyen men who participated in these killings was Nyikilum, the same man who had been given Yuwayembi's wife following her capture at Kowinumbu, and whom Yuwayembi had subsequently retrieved during the raid on Awul.

The Nowiniyen were well aware that the Yalaku would attempt to avenge the deaths of these two men, not least because Kasakawanyi was the actual younger brother of Yuwayembi, who by now had emerged as his tribe's most influential leader.

Avenging their deaths, however, was not an easy matter, as the segment of the Nowiniyen community to which the killers belonged, fearing attack from a combined Yalaku and Tongwinjamb war-party, were mostly living in widely scattered and well-hidden bush houses. The only settlement of any size that members of this segment occupied was located on the far side of the Yimi River at a hamlet named Mboch (D, Figure 6.1). The people at Mboch were confident that they were too far from where the Yalaku were currently located for a war-party to attempt the journey. They had nevertheless taken the precaution of constructing a massive palisade around their settlement.

As it happened, Yuwayembi had no difficulty putting a war-party together to make the long journey. His key Nowiniyen ally, the crippled warrior named Kalawen, secretly informed them of the settlement's precise location. To enable them to cross the Yimi River without difficulty, Yuwayembi delayed the attack until the dry season. When it was launched, the Yalaku caught the people at Mboch completely by surprise. In addition to killing many of its residents they burnt the settlement to the ground.

***c.*1860–5**

The Nowiniyen make another revenge raid on the Yalaku but succeed only in having one of their leading warriors killed

The Nowiniyen men who survived the attack on Mboch, together with others members of the same segment of their tribe, immediately set about planning a revenge attack, but bided their time. This led many Yalaku to believe there was little or no risk of such an attack taking place, especially given that they had the support of Tongwinjamb allies living nearby. They therefore cautiously resumed hunting and gardening far to the north of their main settlement at Mbalay. Contrary to their expectations, however, the Nowiniyen not only successfully put together a substantial war-party but set out to confront the Yalaku head on at their main settlement.

Unfortunately for the Nowiniyen, the attack failed. When the war-party was approaching Mbalay, late in the afternoon the day before the attack was due to be launched, a Yalaku man named Kayiniir (66), who was staying at one of his garden houses several kilometres or so from the main settlement, caught sight of it moving through the forest. He promptly beat out a warning to the people at Mbalay on the buttress root of a tall tree. The members of the war-party also heard the signal and, realizing that they had lost the element of surprise, decided to withdraw.

Highly atypically for Yalaku warfare, that night Yuwayembi (67), his tribe's most formidable warrior, set off with a small group of men to pursue the Nowiniyen. He wanted to see if he could locate them resting somewhere in the forest during the night, before they continued their long journey home the following morning at first light. He knew the Nowiniyen would stop to rest only when they thought they were far enough from Mbalay to do so safely. To avoid being spotted by the lookouts the Nowiniyen would have posted on the track they were following, the Yalaku pursuers used their knowledge of the local terrain to take a detour through adjacent sago swamps. Late that night, they successfully caught up with the retreating Nowiniyen warriors.

Those warriors, confident that they were now far enough away from the Yalaku settlement to do so safely, had lit torches made from bundles of sago-palm leaves to illuminate the track. One of them was a celebrated fighter named Sokwanggira Tokindu. He was of Mboliyombo, not Nowiniyen, origin. As noted earlier, the Mboliyombo had ancestrally been located far to the east of the Yimi River in the vicinity of modern-day Sawos speakers, but devastating warfare with their Sawos neighbours had reduced their numbers to the point where they could no longer function as an independent political group. At the invitation of totemic kin and other allies among the Nowiniyen, they had taken refuge with that tribe. Sokwanggira and several other

Mboliyombo fighting men had decided to participate in the attack on the Yalaku at Mbalay.

When Yuwayembi and the other Yalaku men caught up with the Nowiniyen, they were resting. They approached them silently through a dense stand of sago-palms growing beside the track, and then halted while deciding what to do. Quite fortuitously, Sokwanggira walked over to within a few metres of where Yuwayembi was hiding, at the front of the war-party. He was holding a sago-frond torch that had almost burnt out and was looking for a dry branch he could drag down from one of the palms to make a new one. Finding one hanging within reach, he raised his torch in one hand and reached up with the other to tap the midrib to see if it was firm and not rotten. When he did so he exposed the side of his chest, the place that the Yalaku and other Sepik peoples regard as the most vulnerable part of the body. Seeing this from his hiding spot, Yuwayembi seized the opportunity and hurled his spear into Sokwanggira's side. Sokwanggira let out a mighty cry and fell to the ground. The Yalaku attackers quickly left the scene. Fearing that they might be surrounded, the entire Nowiniyen war-party dropped to the ground to reduce their chance of being hit by enemy spears. According to Ayam (only half seriously), they hit the ground so hard they made it shake as if there was an earthquake. But when no more spears were thrown, they scrambled to their feet and bolted into the surrounding forest.

When the Nowiniyen realized that they were not being pursued, they cautiously returned to look for their fallen comrade. They discovered that Sokwanggira was still alive but that the spear blade had embedded itself deeply in his chest and he was bleeding badly. When they examined the spear they recognized immediately, from the distinctive way the bamboo blade had been hafted to the shaft, that it belonged to Yuwayembi. Like many leading warriors, Yuwayembi had a unique way of hafting the blades to his fighting spears. Rather than try extract the spear point in the dark with the enemy potentially still nearby, they broke it off. With the blade still protruding from him, they placed Sokwanggira on the wooden shield he had been carrying and, after roughly lashing him to it with lengths of vine, hoisted him onto their shoulders and set off as fast as they could. Not wanting to make themselves visible to potential pursuers, they walked in the dark without the benefit of torches.

The Yalaku later learned from Nowiniyen allies that the war-party travelled without stopping all that night and only rested the following day, when they reached the hill Molipiir (11, Figure 6.1), where the Yalaku in the past had constructed many bush houses. Although currently abandoned, many of these houses were in good repair and there was an abundance of coconut palms and other trees with edible fruit. The men rapidly harvested and consumed some of the coconuts and other fruit. Not having received signals from any of the lookouts following behind that the Yalaku were in pursuit, they judged that they now had time to attend to Sokwanggira's wound. The most skilled of the surgeons among them made the customary deep cuts around the wound with bamboo knives to release the accumulated 'bad' blood, and expose the tip of the blade. They succeeded in extracting the blade, but by this time Sokwanggira had lost so much blood that he died.

Out of respect for his great stature as a warrior and political leader, the other members of the war-party decided not to leave to him where he was, on a makeshift burial platform in a tree (the fate of many warriors who died far from home during intertribal fighting), but to carry him back to the main Nowiniyen settlement. This would enable his Mboliyombo kinsmen to dispose of his corpse after an appropriate period of mourning. The journey took the rest of that day. Different members of the war-party took it in turn to carry the wooden shield to which his body was lashed.

Song 4: The death in warfare of the great Mboliyombo warrior named Sokwanggira[42]

1 *Boliyobo an ow yawa*,
A Mboliyombo war-party has arrived to fight,
2 *Jemija an ow yawa.*
A Njeminja war-party has arrived to fight.
3 *Malaka Sokwagira*,
The celebrated big man Sokwanggira,
4 *Poyi labuk piwa.*
Hit with a pig spear.
5 *Nyili, nyilik kiya yawa*.
Through the night, carried home through the night.
6 *Apo labuk piwa.*
Hit with a bird spear.
7 *Nyili, nyilik kiya yawa*.
Through the night, carried home through the night.
8 *Yadii, yadiik kiya yawa*.
Through the day, carried home through the day.

---

42 Ayam translated this song into TP as follows:

1 *Ol Mboliyombo i kam long mipela long pait.*
2 *Ol Njeminja i kam long mipela long pait*.
3 *Bikpela man Sokwanggira*,
4 *Ol i siutim long spia bilong pik*.
5 *Long nait, ol i karim long nait*.
6 *Ol i siutim long spia bilong pisin*.
7 *Long nait, ol i karim long nait*.
8 *Long de, ol i karim long de*.

The first time that Ayam and other Yalaku men performed this song they omitted the last line. Ayam and Kiriyas added it when they performed it again, several months later, while translating it.

When the Yalaku and their Tongwinjamb allies received news that Sokwanggira had died, a Tongwinjamb poet (whose name has not been preserved) composed a song in Kwoma (Song 4) to celebrate the kill. Like the previous one, this was subsequently added to the several hundred that made up the cycle 'The song of the Kaunga'.

Like other well-crafted historical songs, this one was admired for the way it highlights the sudden reversals in fortune that warriors and others can experience during intertribal fighting. It is composed from the point of view of the Yalaku who were the intended targets of the attack, though it does not identify them explicitly. As with the great majority of historical songs, both Kwoma and Yalaku, a knowledge of the context is required to understand it. The first two lines indicate that the singer and his community have suddenly become aware that an enemy war-party (*ow*) is approaching: 'coming our way' (*an yawa*), or, more literally, 'has arrived'. '*An*' in Kwoma is the first-person singular pronoun, 'I', but in songs it is commonly used to mean 'we' or 'us'.

Although the approaching war-party was composed principally of Nowiniyen fighters, the main purpose of the song was to celebrate the killing of the great Mboliyombo warrior Sokwanggira, who is named in line 3. In fact, the song implies that the approaching war-party consisted exclusively of men belonging to his tribe. In line 1 the enemy is identified exclusively as Mboliyombo. In line 2, its parallel, the enemy is identified as 'Njeminja'. This is a second name Kwoma use for the Mboliyombo people.

The remainder of the song (lines 3–8) switches to the actual killing of Sokwanggira. It humorously, if grimly, highlights the sudden reversal of fortune this great man experiences when the retreating war-party of which he is a member is least expecting to come under attack, notably at night. The fact that the counter-attack took place at night is indicated by the reference in line 4 to the 'pig spear' (*poyi labu*), a weapon hunters use principally at night while hunting pigs at sago blinds. Line 6, which parallels line 4, replaces 'pig spear' with 'bird spear' (*apo labu*). Unlike pig spears, which have a single blade, bird spears are multi-barbed. Bird spears are used exclusively during the day.

The prestige of the victim is indicated in line 3, where Sowkanggira is referred to (in Kwoma) as '*malaka*,' literally 'big man' or 'man of great influence'. Lines 5, 7 and 8 mockingly refer to the way other members of the war-party laboriously carry the victim home (*kiya yawa*), the journey taking the whole of one night (*nyili*) and the following day (*yadii*).

The first line also includes a clever pun on the name of the enemy war-party: 'Mboliyombo'. This name sounds like the Kwoma expression '*boli yabu*', a question that means 'which spear?' (*boli/boyi*, query word; *yabu*, spear). In Kwoma songs, as in Kaunga, 'spear' also serves as a metaphor for both an individual enemy warrior and a war-party. The first line therefore could alternatively be interpreted as a question asking: 'Which war-party has arrived to fight?' The second line answers it: 'A Njeminja [= Mboliyombo] war-party has arrived to fight.'

*c.*1865–70
The Nowiniyen take revenge for the attack on Mboch and the killing of Sokwanggira

In revenge for both the destruction of the hamlet at Mboch, and the killing of the great Mboliyombo warrior Sokwanggira, the Nowiniyen resumed their strategy of killing any Yalaku they could find hunting or working in the forest away from their main settlement.

One dry season (roughly May to October) a small Nowiniyen war-party spent several days unsuccessfully scouring a huge area of forest to the north of the Yalaku settlement at Mbalay in search of potential victims. Initially, they had no success. However, when they were about to call off their search they fortuitously encountered a large group of Yalaku women on the edge of a lagoon preparing to begin fishing with hand nets. The lagoon, named Menawacha Yatawanu, was close to the mountain spur at the base of which the main Yalaku main settlement at Mbalay was located. Being close to their main settlement, none of the men at Mbalay had thought it necessary to go with the women to stand watch in case of an attack.

The Nowiniyen party included a Ngala-speaking man from the Tumbuma tribe, one of the two groups based at Korindu that had undertaken the devastating attack on the Yalaku many years earlier at Kowinumbu. For reasons that Ayam did not explain, this Tumbuma man, named Woyimu, was living at the time with the Nowiniyen and had agreed to help hunt down potential Yalaku victims.[43]

From the track they were following, the Nowiniyen war-party could see the Yalaku women standing beside the lagoon preparing their nets. So as not to alarm them and cause them to flee before they could attack, the Nowiniyen members of the war-party remained in hiding. The Tumbuma man, Woyimu, then emerged from the forest and walked casually towards the women – as if he wanted to speak to them. The women recognized him, but were not alarmed by his presence because Woyimu had Yalaku affines, and they regarded him as a political ally rather than someone to be feared. The women were spread out along the shore. When Woyimu reached them, he stated that he was on his way to visit his Yalaku relatives at Mbalay, and asked whether they were currently at the settlement. The women told him they were and waved him on his way.

While he was passing the last of them, a woman he knew well named Sepembay, he began removing the bark wrapping around the shoulder of his spear. This revealed

43 In 1973 one of this man's sons, named Kumundu, by then elderly, was living with the Nowiniyen at Kumanjuwi village.

the white cockatoo and other feathers that men customarily attached to their spears before using them for hostile purposes. Woyimu later informed the Nowiniyen, who subsequently informed the Yalaku, that when Sepembay saw what he was doing she realized immediately that she and the other women were about to come under attack, and began screaming and running away. However, before she had gone far, Woyimu managed to hit her in the back with his spear and kill her.

The other members of the war-party were watching Woyimu closely from their hiding place. As soon as Sepembay screamed and started to run, they came out of hiding and rushed down to the water's edge. There they managed to kill every one of the women. The attackers included Nyikilum, one of the Nowiniyen man who had been involved not long earlier in the killing of the Yalaku man Kasakawanyi (70), the younger brother of the outstanding Yalaku leader Yuwayembi. As noted earlier, Nyikilum had also been temporarily married to Yuwayembi's wife Wunyik, who he and other Nowiniyen warriors had captured in the attack on the Yalaku settlement at Kowinumbu. By this time, Nyikilum had emerged as one of his tribe's major warriors and political leaders.

The lake in which the Yalaku women were intending to do their fishing was overlooked from the adjacent mountain on which the Tongwinjamb settlement was located. The women were close enough for both the Tongwinjamb and Yalaku to hear their screaming when they came under attack. As soon as they heard the commotion, men from both groups picked up their weapons and rushed across to the lagoon. But by the time they arrived the attackers had escaped. All they found were women lying dead on the shore.

The Nowiniyen war-party immediately set off for home. When they judged they were far enough away to do so safely, they paused briefly on the forest track to rest. While they were catching their breath, a dog suddenly appeared from the direction in which they were heading. The recognized it immediately as belonging to one of their own tribesmen, the Nowiniyen man named Yanggindu. He was the son of Kalawen, the long-time ally of the Yalaku who had been crippled during his later years by a large yaws ulcer on his leg. Yanggindu was also closely allied to the Yalaku personally, as he was married to a woman from their community. At the time, Yanggindu and his wife happened to be visiting her relatives at Mbalay. Although he was a member of the same tribe as the Nowiniyen men resting on the track, he was unaware that a war-party from his community was active in the area. When the members of the war-party encountered his dog, Yanggindu was returning from an extended hunting trip with his Yalaku brother-in-law, Apuk.

*

The dog was named Aruku. Recognizing it, the members of the Nowiniyen war-party knew that Yanggindu would not be far behind. They decided that this was too good an opportunity to pass up to take revenge against a member of their own community who, like his father Kalawen, had long been a close ally of the Yalaku, and who from time to time had provided them with information of great military value (such as where the members of their segment of their tribe were located), when the Yalaku had wished to attack them. The Nowiniyen men took cover and waited with spears raised. Soon Yanggindu and his brother-in-law Apuk appeared. Their hunting trip had been successful and both men were carrying large parcels of smoked pork on their shoulders. Each was also carrying several spears. Yanggindu was walking in front of his Yalaku brother-in-law. When the two came within spear range, the Nowiniyen warriors suddenly emerged from their hiding place. Realizing that they were about to come under attack, Apuk shouted to Yanggindu to step aside so that he could confront them, which he did. Spears were thrown back and forth and eventually Apuk was killed. For a time, Yanggindu continued to dodge the spears thrown at him, but when he twisted his body to deflect one it caught him in the lower back, the blade lodging solidly in bone. He fell to the ground.

When Yanggindu fell, the Nowiniyen came over to inspect him. They judged that his wound would prove to be fatal. However, instead of finishing him off on the spot, they decided to leave him where he was and let him die slowly and painfully. After picking up the smoked pork the two men had been carrying, they left for home.

The ambush of Yanggindu and his Yalaku brother-in-law took place immediately after the massacre of the Yalaku women beside the lagoon. While the Yalaku and Tongwinjamb men who had come to the women's aid were making stretchers to carry the bodies back to Mbalay, Yanggindu's dog suddenly emerged from the forest and came down to where they were standing. The men recognized it as belonging to Yanggindu, and could see that it was covered with blood. It had apparently been rolling around in the blood of its owner.

After examining the dog and determining that it wasn't wounded, they realized that something serious must have happened to its owner. Several of the men therefore set off to follow it back into the forest. The dog led them to where Yanggindu and Apuk were lying on the forest track. Yanggindu was still alive. The men made a rapid search of the surrounding forest and, after satisfying themselves that the killers had disappeared, constructed stretchers and carried both men back to the Yalaku settlement. The others carried the women home.

They carried Yanggindu to his brother-in-law's house, where he and his wife had been staying. There some of the community's most experienced surgeons cut deeply into the flesh around the wound, both to release the 'bad' blood

that had accumulated and to give access to the spear point. But the tip of the blade was too deeply embedded in bone to be extracted. With no other options open to them, they tied the protruding section of blade to one end of a long piece of bark twine and slung the other end over a beam from which they suspended a weight. Their hope was that the weight would slowly extract the blade. The experiment failed, and after spending several days and nights in great pain Yanggindu died.

The Yalaku take the fight once more to the Nowiniyen

The Yalaku immediately began planning to take revenge for both the massacre of the women by the lagoon and the deaths of Apuk and their Nowiniyen ally, Yanggindu. Rather than risk an all-out attack on one of the several hamlets from which the killers derived, they resorted to the same strategy the Nowiniyen had been using, and sent out small war-parties to pick off people they found working in the forest. Yuwayembi was one of the most active participants. On one occasion he and a small group of men spent several days scouring an area of forest the Nowiniyen owned, named Worasokwa. Despite their best efforts they could not find anyone, not even footprints they could follow. They decided finally to return home. While they were crossing one of the many streams that flow through this region, they noticed fragments of spent sago pith floating on the water. This was a sign that someone was processing sago further upstream. They followed the stream and soon found a Nowiniyen woman, named Miinda ('Pygmy Cassowary'), standing beside it washing sago. Her husband, a Nowiniyen man named Apimbopo, was with her, but had temporarily left to do something else in the forest. As soon as the war-party reached her the Yalaku man named Ndowapa felled her with his spear. Another Yalaku man, Piyanombok (75), drove in a second spear to make sure she was dead. Leaving her body where it lay the war-party left for home.

Yuwayembi's wife persuades her husband to use his influence to bring warfare with the Nowiniyen to an end

The journey home for Yuwayembi's war-party took two days. Early on the morning of the second day, before the men arrived back at their settlement, a large group of Yalaku and Tongwinjamb women went fishing together with hand nets in another of the large lagoons that flank the northern end of the Washkuk Hills. This lagoon was owned by the Tongwinjamb, but following their move to Mbalay its owners had given the Yalaku free access to it. The two groups of women fished in adjacent sections. On this occasion a large group of armed men accompanied them.

Fortuitously, the Yalaku women caught a far greater number of fish than the Tongwinjamb. At the end of the expedition, when the two groups were preparing to return home, the Tongwinjamb women saw how successful the Yalaku had been and began venting their spleen on them. They told them that they were sick of foreign women fishing in their lagoons and taking their fish. They reminded the Yalaku that they didn't own the lake but that it and the fish properly belonged to the Tongwinjamb. This was the first time any of the Tongwinjamb women had expressed their hostility to the presence of their Yalaku counterparts, and it came as a shock to the more senior of them, one of whom was Yuwayembi's wife.

Yuwayembi and the other members of his war-party arrived home later that day. When Yuwayembi reached his house and sat down to rest, his wife, Ambala, began aggressively berating him for what she called his addiction to warfare. She said that she and a large group of Yalaku women had gone fishing earlier that day with a group of Tongwinjamb women, and that the Tongwinjamb women had revealed for the first time the depth of their anger at having to share their resources with them. She accused her husband of only being interested in fighting. All he thought about, she said, was war. He was totally unconcerned about hunting and gathering and finding game animals and forest greens for his family. She told him that she and the other Yalaku women were now deeply ashamed at having fished for so long in Tongwinjamb waters and that it had now made the Tongwinjamb women very angry. She too was now angry, she told her husband. Instead of endlessly fighting, she said, he should use his influence to bring warfare with the Nowiniyen to an end. He could then get on with providing game and other food for his family, as every responsible husband should.

Yuwayembi at that time was at the height of his powers as a warrior and man of influence in his community. His wife's words, nevertheless, stung him badly and deeply shamed him. After reflecting on the matter, he came to a decision the same day that the long feud with the Nowiniyen should come to an end. That evening, when the other men had returned to their homes, he called a meeting in their men's house and announced that he had decided the fighting with the Nowiniyen had gone on long enough and must come to an immediate and permanent end.

After debating the matter with the other men well into the night, everyone finally agreed to abide by his decision. Ayam emphasized that Yuwayembi had no formal authority to impose his will on the other Yalaku men, but when a man of great influence publicly announced that he had come to a decision about some matter, others had to think very carefully before going against it. If they did, they risked being ostracized.

***c.*1870**

A peace settlement is arranged

Yuwayembi knew that to bring the fighting to an end, he had to persuade the Nowiniyen to accept his decision and, ideally, enter into a formal peace pact with his community.

To this end Yuwayembi asked for the help of a member of the Apukili tribe, named Mburunggay, who happened to be visiting relatives at the Tongwinjamb settlement at the time.[44] He requested that Mburunggay, when he went home, make the trip to the main Nowiniyen hamlet at Kumanjuwi and convey his decision to its leaders. In particular, he wanted him to speak directly to men such as Tokindu, Langginjuwim and Nyikilum. Nyikilum, as noted above, was one of those involved in the massacre of Yalaku women fishing in Menawacha Lagoon, as well as in the killing of both his fellow Nowiniyen tribesman, Yanggindu, and the latter's Yalaku brother-in-law, Apuk.[45] Yuwayembi instructed Mburunggay to tell the Nowiniyen leaders that he and the other Yalaku had decided that the long period of warfare between their two communities must come to an end. He asked Mburunggay to remind them that all of this warfare stemmed from their participation in the devastating attack on the Yalaku when they were living at Kowinumbu. He was to tell the Nowiniyen that enough people had died on both sides since then.

He also instructed Mburunggay to tell the Nowiniyen that from this day forwards no one in their community should fear attack from the Yalaku, and that the people hiding at isolated bush houses could safely resume all of their normal sago-processing and other activities during the day. Up till then, fearing ambush from the Yalaku, many Nowiniyen had been processing sago exclusively at night. He also instructed Mburunggay to tell the Nowiniyen that those who were hiding in the forest could safely return to their main settlement if they wished, as there was now no longer any danger of it coming under attack by the Yalaku. He even suggested that if the Nowiniyen chose to build a new settlement, there would be no need to surround it with a protective palisade.

Mburunggay was both astounded and delighted to hear what Yuwayembi had decided, and told him that he would depart immediately for the Nowiniyen settlement. Before he left, Yuwayembi gave him one of his adzes, of the type used to fell sago-palms. He asked him to give the adze to Tokindu, the most influential of the Nowiniyen leaders, and say that the gift was a personal guarantee from Yuwayembi that it was now safe for all members of his community to resume their normal lives.[46]

Mburunggay did as Yuwayembi had requested. When he reached the main Nowiniyen settlement at Kumanjuwi he asked Tokindu to convene a meeting in the men's house. When everyone had assembled, he presented him with the adze, and gave the assembled group a detailed account of what Yuwayembi had instructed him to say. He reported that Yuwayembi not only wanted to bring the long period of feuding between their two groups to an end, but also to enter into a formal peace pact. The adze was a token of Yuwayembi's good intentions.

After hearing what Mburunggay had to say, the Nowiniyen discussed the proposal for several days and eventually decided to accept the offer. To enter into a peace pact, however, the two sides needed to meet face to face. Via intermediaries, the Nowiniyen leaders invited the Yalaku to visit their settlement.

To facilitate the meeting, an elderly Yalaku man named Pakiya Manggimal, of Korembikow clan, the father of the leading younger warrior named Tusiiwiil (171), offered to act as an intermediary. He had affines among the Nowiniyen and despite the previous hostilities between the two groups had long divided his time peacefully between the Yalaku settlement at Mbalay, and Kumanjuwi, the residence of his Nowiniyen relatives. Of all the senior Yalaku men, he knew best the route to take, and offered to guide a delegation to Kumanjuwi.

At the time, the main Nowiniyen settlement consisted of two heavily fortified segments, each occupied by clans belonging to a single totemic group. Both were located close to a huge lagoon named Kiila. One hamlet was on the lagoon's edge and the other was on the low hill named Kumanjuwi – still the site of the main Nowiniyen settlement in 1973.

The journey took two days. When night fell on the first day the men slept rough in the forest at a place named Supay Monumbu.

The next morning Manggimal led the group along a forest track, the last part of which flanked Kiila Lagoon. While they were still some distance from Kumanjuwi, the men noticed through the forest trees a large group of Nowiniyen women wading in the lagoon, fishing with hand nets. They paused to review the situation. Manggimal informed them that the women were all from the fortified hamlet closest to the lagoon. Some of the men were in favour of rushing them and killing as many as possible, in retaliation for the deaths of their own women. They wanted to do this before entering into a peace pact, after which further killings would be impossible. Yuwayembi was not a party to these discussions. He was sitting on the edge of the forest gazing at the women in the distance. Before any action was taken, several of the Yalaku men came over to see if he would agree to this final act of vengeance. Yuwayembi rejected the idea emphatically, saying that he had made a decision and there was no changing it.

44 'Mburunggay' is an example of a personal name found in more than one language group. The Kwoma also use it as a man's name (see Figure 17.1).

45 Nyikilum had also been married briefly to one of Yuwayembi's former wives, Wunyik, who the Nowiniyen had captured in the attack on the Yalaku settlement at Kowinumbu (see above, 1860).

46 Tokindu was the man the Yalaku war-party had encountered pollarding a large forest tree when they attacked the Nowiniyen settlement at Kayanggwa (see above, *c.*1860).

Tusiiwiil, Manggimal's son, was one of those keen to attack the women. After hearing Yuwayembi's response he cut a stout stick and lashed it to his spear's shaft and blade. This would indicate to anyone who saw the spear that he had no hostile intent.

The Yalaku contingent was well aware that news of Yuwayembi's offer of peace might not have reached all members of the Nowiniyen community, many of whom were still hiding in widely scattered bush houses. Even if it had, people might suspect that it was a ruse designed to give the Yalaku access to one or other of their fortified settlements. They also knew that if the women in the lagoon saw them suddenly emerge from the forest they would panic, and potentially injure themselves trying to escape. They decided therefore to remain out of sight on the forest track until, when close enough, several could rush down into the water and seize individual women. They would immediately reassure them that they were in no danger and ask them to accompany the delegation to Kumanjuwi. When the people at Kumanjuwi saw the women, and that they were unharmed, they would know that the Yalaku delegation was not hostile.

While recounting this event, Ayam commented that during the early days of European contact in the Sepik, when patrol officers and armed native police were approaching a previously uncontacted village they would always try to find a member of the community fishing or gardening in the forest, so they could capture them and position them prominently at the front of the patrol. When people realized that the patrol had a member of their community with them and that they were unharmed, they would know that the officers had peaceful intentions. On this occasion, he said, the Yalaku delegation used the same tactic.

As expected, when the women caught sight of the fully armed Yalaku men emerging from the forest they panicked and tried to escape. But three men, Manggimal, his son Tusiiwiil, and Kayipanggu (8) dropped their weapons and charged into the water. Each managed to catch hold of one woman. The men quickly assured the women that they were in no danger, and that they only wanted them to accompany their party to Kumanjuwi.

When they realized that they were not about to be killed, the women calmed down and agreed to what the Yalaku men were suggesting. The woman Manggimal caught was named Wosakapi. She had the same name as the woman who was the first to be born after the Yalaku established their new settlement on the banks of the Woru Mbapa river, at the site they named 'Wosakapi'. The Yalaku had subsequently given the Nowiniyen permission to use this name for their own girl children.

When the delegation reached Kumanjuwi, with the three women clearly visible and unharmed at the front, they called to the men inside that their intentions were peaceful and they need have no fear of attack. A large group of fully armed Nowiniyen men behind the palisade opened the door and let them in, one by one. Because he was well known to the Nowiniyen, Manggimal entered first. Before doing so he handed his spear and his shield to his son Tusiiwiil. When he climbed through the door unarmed the men inside relaxed.

Once all of the Yalaku visitors were inside, the two groups sat down in the hamlet's main men's house and held a meeting. Everyone in the settlement participated, men and women. In the customary manner, men on both sides ceremoniously slapped lengths of rattan (*kanda*, TP) or bundles of cordyline leaves on the ground, to emphasize the points they were making. The meeting continued throughout the day and for most of the following night. When everyone who wanted to speak had made their contribution, the Nowiniyen leaders agreed to enter into a formal peace pact (*sar hawa; putim tambu*, TP). To bring this about, each side agreed to present the other the following morning with one of its totems, which a representative would eat mixed with food in front of the assembled people.

For the remainder of the night the visitors, in the company of their hosts, caught some sleep on the benches that lined the two sides of the building. Those not sleeping maintained a watch over their comrades, spears at the ready.

The next morning the Yalaku found and killed a snake of the variety named *hapak*, a totem of the Yalaku clans that belong to the Keyava division. They presented this to the Nowiniyen to cook and eat. The Nowiniyen reciprocated with one of their totemic entities.[47] By publicly consuming these, the two groups became 'one' in body and politically, and all further warfare between them was henceforth tabooed. No ceremonial objects were exchanged.

When the peace pact had been formally concluded, and while the participants on both sides were resting in the men's house, the Nowiniyen man named Apimbopo arrived at the settlement. He was the husband of the woman named Miinda ('Pygmy Cassowary'), whom the Yalaku war-party led by Yuwayembi had killed not long before, when they had found her in the forest washing sago beside a forest stream. Apimbopo had been in the forest for several days hunting wild fowl and crowned pigeons at a blind, and was unaware of what was happening.

When he arrived back at Kumanjuwi, and found members of the tribe who had only recently killed his wife sitting in the men's house interacting in a friendly manner with other members of his community, he was outraged and began shouting at the Kumanjuwi leaders. He demanded to know what Nyikilum, Tokindu and the other leading men were doing making peace with the Yalaku when his own

47 Ayam did not identify this object.

wife's body was still decomposing on the burial platform next to his house, and he had yet to avenge her death.

Concerned that Apimbopo might act rashly, the Yalaku visitors quickly picked up their spears and shields and prepared to defend themselves. The leaders on both sides, however, were confident that the peace pact would hold. Some of the Yalaku men even began to taunt Apimbopo, telling him that now was his opportunity to avenge his wife's death, if he dared. Even more provocatively, the Yalaku man named Ndowapa walked right up to him, looked him directly in the eye and told him that he was the man who had actually speared his wife. He then challenged Apimbopo to step outside the building, so as not offend the spirits that maintain the peace inside such structures, and try to kill him. He then added insult to the injury Apimbopo had already suffered through the loss of his wife, by telling him that if he wasn't willing to try to kill him there and then, he should console himself by going back to his house, climbing up on to his wife's burial platform, and having sex with her rotting body.

Ndowapa's taunt was so provocative that fighting could easily have broken out. To ensure that this did not happen, the Nowiniyen leaders quickly intervened and told Apimbopo that because peace had been formally entered into, it was now too late for him to take revenge for his wife's death. Apimbopo was beside himself with rage that a peace pact had been entered into while he was absent, and without his agreement. With no other options open to him, he stormed out of the village and spent the night in the forest sitting under a tree. The next morning the Yalaku left for home.

Following the establishment of this peace pact, minor clashes did take place between the two tribes, including some killings. However, these were initiated by individual men acting without the approval of their community's leaders, and following each incident the two sides agreed that the peace pact should remain intact. In fact, peace held between the two communities right up to the modern period, when warfare throughout the middle Sepik came to a permanent end.

Ayam indicated that outstanding indigenous leaders such as Yuwayembi, who had the influence to bring about such peace pacts, are known as '*nomapi du*', a term that literally means 'big man' (*nomapi*, big). Equivalent terms in TP, he said, were '*bikpela man*' ('big man') and '*bikpela man bilong pait*' ('war leader').

7

The beginnings of conflict with the Tongwinjamb Kwoma and warfare with other groups

***c.*1870**

The Yalaku precipitate a breach with Tongwinjamb when they refuse to cooperate ritually

When Ayam had completed his account of warfare with the Nowiniyen and how it was brought to an end, he shifted his focus to the beginnings of warfare with the Tongwinjamb Kwoma, as well as to the continuing conflict with the Apukili.

Warfare broke out with the Tongwinjamb in the second half of the nineteenth century. At the time the Yalaku had their main settlement at Mbalay (10, Figure 6.1) on the north-eastern edge of Washkuk Hills adjacent to the main Tongwinjamb settlement. The two communites were separated by no more than a few hundred metres of dense forest. During the period when the Yalaku were settled at Mbalay, they planted extensive groves of fruit trees, mainly coconut, breadfruit and fruit pandanus, as well as new sago stands in the swampy forest at the foot of the hills. These all still flourish today, but have since been claimed by the Tongwinjamb.

Prior to warfare breaking out, the Yalaku had been on good terms with the Tongwinjamb and were in closer contact with them than any other Kwoma-speaking tribe. Intermarriage was common. For a number of reasons, however, relations between the two groups gradually deteriorated. This led to the Yalaku abandoning their settlement and simultaneously establishing a new, long-term political alliance with the Hongwama Kwoma, a political group with which, up to that point, they had had only limited dealings.

The deterioration in relations with the Tongwinjamb began with an event for which, Ayam himself freely acknowledged, the Yalaku themselves were solely responsible. This involved a failure to cooperate with the Tongwinjamb ritually.

As indicated in the first chapter, each tribe in this region is a ritual as well as a political unit. This entails that its constituent clans cooperate ceremonially by timing the rituals they individually sponser so that they do not overlap. This enables all members of the tribe to participate in every ceremony its different clans perform. No such cooperation existed between tribes.

Although the Yalaku were never formally one of its subgroups, they effectively formed part of the Tongwinjamb community while they were located at Mbalay. As such, members of each of the other Tongwinjamb subgroups participated in the ceremonies the Yalaku performed, just as the Yalaku participated in those held in the tribe's other hamlets. Given their physical proximity, and the close relationship between them politically and militarily, the Tongwinjamb expected the same cooperation in ritual matters from the Yalaku as it did from their own members.

Around 1870, the members of the Tongwinjamb hamlet closest to the Yalaku settlement announced that they would soon be holding a performance of the Komomb ceremony, and invited members of all of the other Tongwinjamb hamlets, including the Yalaku, to partipate. The Komomb ritual involves playing on flutes and slit-gongs the 'calls' of hundreds of birds, animals and other entities owned by the totemic division to which the clan sponsoring the ritual belongs (Figure 7.1). The ceremony commonly lasted a full day and night. To be able to feed the expected participants, the men in this Tongwinjamb hamlet spent several weeks hunting pigs and other game animals, and harvesting yams and other vegetable foods.

On the day when the ceremony was due to begin, and the food was being cooked, a group of younger Yalaku men, without consulting their Tongwinjamb neighbours, suddenly began performing their own version of the same ceremony in their men's house. The sound of the drumming on the slit-gongs could be heard clearly throughout the entire Tongwinjamb settlement. Their neighbours were, predictably, outraged. In keeping with the convention that no two groups in the same tribe should hold ceremonies at the same time, they realized that they had no option but to cancel their own performance.

While the younger Yalaku men were enthusiastically playing on their slit-gongs and flutes, an older Yalaku man named Woranggen, who had lived with the Tongwinjamb for many years under the protection of totemic kin and other allies, wandered up the hill from Mbalay and strolled into the men's house in which the Tongwinjamb had been planning to hold their ceremony. Some of the men were

Figure 7.1 Palas (left) and Nalikiya of Bangwis village (Kwoma) in 1973, playing flutes in the forest near their village while a new set of Yena and Minja ceremonial figures were being carved (see Bowden 1983a). The sounds of the flutes are the 'voices' (singaut, TP) of the spirits depicted by the sculptures, which hover unseen around the worksite watching the progress of the carvings.

baking the yams they had intended to serve their guests on fires at the back of the building. Woranggen walked over to talk to them. When he approached, the men aggressively demanded to know who his tribesmen thought they were pre-empting their own performance of the same ritual. Woranggen was well aware that his younger Yalaku tribesmen had behaved in a deeply insulting manner but deflected their question by saying that he had not been involved in the decision-making.

Not satisfied with this response, the men angrily began pelting Woranggen with the half-cooked yams. They then began throwing burning pieces of firewood. Woranggen soon lost patience and, seizing a heavy black-palm fighting stick that someone had wedged behind the rafters at the rear of the men's house, began laying into his attackers. Men inside the building promptly joined in the attack on him. They knocked him to the ground and punched and kicked him. Eventually they calmed down and called off the attack. Their intention was only to hurt him, not kill him.

Woranggen got to his feet and after brushing himself off went back down to the Yalaku settlement. When he entered the men's house there, covered in cuts and bleeding profusely from his mouth and nose, the men stopped their ceremony and asked what had happened. He told them that he had been involved in a minor dispute up in the nearby Tongwinjamb men's house about the timing

of their ceremony, but that the matter had been resolved. Some of the younger men were in favour of marching up to the Tongwinjamb men's house there and then and taking revenge. Seriously concerned about what might happen if they did, older men prevailed on them not to do anything rash and to bring their performance to an end.

Although it was the Yalaku who had behaved deeply insultingly to their neighbours, the Tongwinjamb did not want open conflict with their allies. They were also aware that the beating Woranggen had received would create great ill-feeling unless expiated promptly. They therefore sent word to the Yalaku that they would continue to cook all of the food they had accumulated for their own ritual, and later that day bring it down to their men's house where the two communities could share it, and the Yalaku could complete their performance of the ceremony. At the appointed time the Tongwinjamb carried the food down to the Yalaku men's house, named Nyinggindu Siiva Reka. After laying it out on palm spathes at the rear of the building they invited everyone present to help themselves to a share. After the food had been consumed, the two groups sprinkled liberal quantities of powdered lime from their gourds over each other, a conventional gesture designed to bring a dispute to an end. The Tongwinjamb then stipulated that in future the Yalaku must never perform Komob or any other ritual at a time that would overlap with one of theirs. The Yalaku agreed and the two groups jointly completed the Yalaku version of the ritual.

The Yalaku kill a Motek man visiting Tongwinjamb, an act that has long-term political consequences

Not long after this dispute the Yalaku killed a Motek man who arrived at their settlement to visit affines. Ayam gave no explanation for why this killing took place, other than to say it was done at the behest of a prominent member of the Nowiniyen tribe. This man had sent a Yalaku ally, named Kalawen, war magic in the form of a spear and a parcel of betel nuts and tobacco wrapped in black taro leaves. The recipient and several of his kinsmen had accepted the challenge. After consuming a number of the betel nuts, and smoking some of the tobacco, they let others know that nothing would now stop them from carrying out the execution at the first opportunity. That opportunity had now arisen.

The Motek man was named Mbaranyamba. The main Motek settlement at the time was located at a place name Njambanggey.[48] Mbaranyamba's mother was a Yalaku woman who belonged to Rama clan, the clan to which the man Woranggen referred to above also belonged. All of the men of Rama clan of his mother's generation and below were therefore Mbaranyamba's *waw* ('MB'; see Figure 4.4). This close affinal tie to the Yalaku community should have meant that he was safe.

Mbaranyamba arrived at the Yalaku settlement with his younger brother Mbombonj. Their intention was to stay with their mother's brother for several days. When they arrived, they were informed that their uncle was in the forest processing sago with his wife. They set off to find them. After locating the couple, they spent the rest of the day helping them with their work. Kalawen, the receipient of the war magic, was a member of Korembikow clan and unrelated to Mbaranyamba. When he learned of Mbaranyamba's arrival, he let it be known that he was going to kill him as soon as he and his brother returned to the settlement. Several of the brothers' maternal kinsmen appealed to him not to do so, saying that the visitors were their 'sister's sons' (*rawa*) and that they owed them an absolute duty of care. They added that the Motek were an ancient people in the region, not recent intruders, that the Yalaku hitherto had been on good terms with them, and that to kill Mbaranyamba would bring their two groups into serious conflict. But Kalawen, Ayam indicated, having accepted the war magic, was not thinking 'rationally'. His own clansmen, moreover, had agreed to support him.

Realizing that Mbaranyamba and, potentially, his brother were at risk of being killed, as soon as they entered the settlement that afternoon members of Rama clan informed them of what Kalawen was planning and offered to escort them into the forest and send them home. They knew that if the two men were physically surrounded by a group of their maternal relatives no one would try to attack them, for fearing of accidentally killing a fellow tribesman.

But Mbaranyamba was in no mood to leave. He found several types of leaves that were among his clan's better-known totems, tied them to his spear and announed that he was prepared to defend himself. With his brother behind him, he then defiantly set off up the track towards his maternal uncle's house. The track passed the Yalaku men's house where the men who had threatened to kill him were waiting. Having heard of Kalawen's plans, a large group of other men had also gathered in the building to see what would happen.

While Mbaranyamba and his brother were walking past the front of the building, one of Kalawen's kinsmen, the Yalaku warrior named Tusiiwiil (171) of Korembikow clan, charged out of the structure and hurled his spear at Mbaranyamba, hitting him in the side. Kalawen followed him and hit Mbaranyamba with a second spear. Neither blow felled him. Despite the seriousness of his wounds, Mbaranyamba was strong enough to pull out both spears and actually hurl the one Kalawen had just thrown straight back at him. When Kalawen saw the spear coming he twisted his body to break its force, but it caught him firmly in the buttocks. Seeing that the spear had hit home, Mbaranyamba shouted derisively at Kalawen that 'a

48 Njambanggey is apparently a little to the north of Ambuken (see Figure 6.1).

Figure 7.2 Honggwama Kwoma and Yalaku women dancing at the front of the men's house at Washkuk village during a performance of the Minja ceremony, December 1972.

cassowary', referring to himself, 'has just ripped you with its powerful claws' ('*Muruk i save kurungutim yu*', TP). For the Yalaku, like the Kwoma, 'cassowary' is a euphemism for enemy warrior.

Fearing that Mbaranyamba might throw the other spear at him as well, the one Tusiiwiil had used, Kalawen turned and fled into the men's house with the spear still firmly embedded in his buttocks. In his rush, he leaped over a slit-gong positioned laterally at the front of the building. As he did so the heavy black-palm shaft struck the drum hard, producing a sound almost as loud as if it had been hit with a slit-gong beater. Once inside the building, and out of spear range, he twisted and turned in an attempt to get hold of the spear and extract it from his buttocks.

Although he had been speared twice, Mbaranyamba was strong enough to stay on his feet and walk haltingly away from the building. He headed down the track, with the intention of escaping into the sago swamp at the bottom of the hill. No one dared approach him as he passed their houses. However, when he was about to reach the edge of the settlement, Teyikwal (63), one of the tribe's leading warriors, rose from where he was sitting outside his house and speared him again, this time killing him.

Mbombonj had followed Mbaranyamba up the track, but when the first spear was thrown he bolted into the adjacent forest. Fearing that other Yalaku men would pursue him and kill him, a number of his Rama clan affines (*waw*), who were also in the men's house and saw what happened, took off after him and surrounded him to prevent him from being speared. They included Woranggen (12) and Kayipanggu Yepiyuwi (8). Working their way through the forest beside the settlement they took him to one of their houses, and there pushed him inside and barricaded the door. That night, under cover of darkness, they quietly escorted him out of the village and sent him on his way back to the Motek settlement at Njambanggey, which he reached safely.

Following the killing of Mbaranyamba, two Tongwinjamb men who had witnessed the event, but whose names have not been remembered, composed the following two songs in Kwoma to commemorate the killing. Both were incorporated into the cycle 'The Song of the Kaunga'. The Yalaku and other Kaunga soon heard and learned them when they participated in Kwoma rituals. Ayam and Kiriyas performed both at this point in the story.

Song 4 has the customary two parts. The first, lines 1–3, indicates in a humorous and elliptical manner that Mbaranyamba has already been killed. However, instead of stating this directly, it represents his Motek kinsmen as thinking he has become lost in the forest in the vicinity of two rivers (*pa*) – the Siisiimba and the Lumonyi – that flow through their territory. It tells how they have set out to find him and are walking beside the two rivers calling (*uwa tawa*) continuously to him, hoping to get a reply. Without saying so explicitly, the lines are likening him, contemptuously, to a child who has become lost.

Song 4: The spearing of the Motek man named Mbaranyamba

1 *Baranyaba Lumonyik uwa tawa.*
Calling to Mbaranyamba along the Lumonyi River.
2 *Siisiiba Pa uwa tawa.*
Calling along the Siisiimba River.
3 *Lumonyi Pa Siisiiba Pa uwa tawa.*
Calling along the Lumonyi and Siisiimba Rivers.
4 *Nyigidu na lowa,*
Strides uphill past Nyinggindu men's house,
5 *Yatiin kokole, kokole.*
Legs buckle, staggers.
6 *Kalawen, iita nedii diika siitiiwak,*
Kalawen, standing deep in the interior,
7 *Labu saboyiwa.*
Waves his spear gracefully from side to side.

The second part (lines 4–7) shifts the focus back to the men's house at Mbalay and alludes more directly to the killing. Line 4 refers to Mbaranyamba confidently striding uphill (*lowa*) past the men's house named Nyinggindu, on his way to his maternal uncle's house. Line 5 refers to his sudden reversal of fortune. It does not say explicitly that he has been speared – twice, first by Tusiiwiil and then by Kalawen. It does so indirectly, by referring to the way his legs (*yatii*) begin to buckle when the spears hit and cause him to him stagger (*kokole*). Lines 6 and 7 allude to the fact that Mbaranyamba has managed to extract the spear Kalawen threw and hurl it straight back at him, striking him with great force in the buttocks. Fearing that Mbaranyamba might throw a second spear he turns and sprints into the interior of the men's house (*iita nedii diika siitiiwak*). There, standing at a safe distance, he frantically twists from side to side a he tries to extract the spear (*labu*) from his rear. In the song his twisting and turning is humorously equated with the gentle twisting from side to side (*saboyiwa*) that women do with net bags held above their heads when dancing outside a men's house during a ceremony (Figure 7.2). Listeners laugh openly at the absurdity of the analogy.

Song 5: A second song commemorating the killing of the Motek man named Mbaranyamba

1 *Nyigidu Siiva Reka me buwu tawa.*
At Nyinggindu Siiva Reka slit-gongs (*me*) are sounding (*buwu tawa*).
2 *Suwubay Nagusuway me riita tawa.*
At Suwumbay Nanggusuway men's house slit-gongs reply.
3 *Boboj lowu kela.*
Mbombonj climbs the track crying.

4 *Baranyaba saka kela.*
Mbaranyamba descends the track crying.
5 *Nyigidu omun kwiwa.*
Nyinggindu is offered sacrificial flesh.
6 *Siiva Reka omun kwiwa.*
Siiva Reka is offered sacrificial flesh.

The second song (Song 5) begins, in line 1, by naming the Yalaku men's house at Mbalay, and thus identifies the place at which the killing took place. It gives both of its names: Nyinggindu and Siiva Reka.

Line 1 represents the men who have heard of Kalawen's threats and gathered in the men's house as drumming messages on the slit-gongs (*me*) to other members of the community, informing them that they should urgently join those who are already in the building, as no one can predict what might happen.

Line 2 indicates that the members of another of the Tongwinjamb hamlets, named Suwumbay Nanggusuway (after its men's house), have heard the signal and are indicating on their slit-gongs that they are on their way. Ayam emphasized that in reality the attack took place so quickly that there was no time to send any signals. The assertion that signals were sent back and forth is a humorous elaboration by the song's composer of what actually happened.

Lines 3 and 4 similarly elaborate on what actually happened by mockingly describing how Mbaranyamba and his brother walk along the track that passes the Yalaku men's house weeping (*kela*) with fear and rage at the treachery of their hosts. Line 3 represents the younger brother, Mbombonj, as weeping (*kela*) as he climbs uphill (*yowu*). Line 4, its parallel, represents his older brother as weeping as he walks downhill (*saka kela*). Listeners know that neither line is to be interpreted literally.

The last two lines depict the killing of Mbaranyamba as an offering (*kwiwa*) of sacrificial meat (*omu*) to the spirits that preside over the men's house. These are the spirits the owners of such a building traditionally fed, every time they performed a ceremony, with the 'aroma' of the food they cooked for the participants outside, at its rear. In return for being regularly 'fed' with the aroma of the ceremonial food, the many spirits that dwell in these buildings were thought to help guarantee the local community's prosperity, both politically and economically. Line 5 identifies the Yalaku men's house by one of its two names, Nyinggindu; and line 6 by its other, Siiva Reka.

I have no information about whether the Yalaku traditionally offered the flesh of enemies killed in warfare to the spirits that presided over men's houses – though they might have. However, they certainly believed that when an enemy was killed, either in warfare or through sorcery, the dead person's soul (*hach*) was captured by the community to which the killers belonged.

*c.*1870–5
Tongwinjamb launches an all-out attack on the nearby Awokapa Nggiley

The Motek lacked the military strength to avenge Mbaranyamba's killing by launching a raid directly on the Yalaku at their main settlement at Mbalay. Moreover, they were no longer able to call on sympathetic Nowiniyen allies for military assistance, as that tribe, as indicated in the previous chapter, had by this time entered into a peace pact with the Yalaku. They had no other option, therefore, but to bide their time and wait for a suitable opportunity to take action.

In the meantime, relations between the Yalaku and the Tongwinjamb continued to deteriorate. The next significant event occurred when the Tongwinjamb, for reasons that had nothing to do with the Yalaku, launched a major and devastating attack on the Kwoma-speaking Awokapa Nggiley tribe. To the great annoyance of the Tongwinjamb attackers, the Yalaku offered refuge to many of the survivors.

I have little information about the Awokapa Nggiley people, but in the nineteenth century they evidently comprised a sizable and independent political group located at the northern end of Washkuk Hills. Their main settlement was on a spur named Awokapa, after which the tribe took its name. 'Nggiley' is the name for one of the smaller Kwoma totemic divisions; its most well-known totems include the largest of the several varieties of monitor lizard (*gey*; see Bowden 2006:94–5) and the edible ground-dwelling spider termed (in Kwoma) *isagwa*. Most of the clans that composed the Awokapa community belonged to this totemic division. Today, other clans belonging to the same totemic division are scattered among the different Kwoma tribes. One is at Bangwis village, where it is known simply as 'Nggiley' (*Giley*). Like all major outbreaks of intertribal warfare, this attack was almost certainly a product of long-standing differences between the two groups.

Whatever the background, the attack was sparked by two incidents. One was the 'theft' by a relatively young Awokapa man of one of the several wives of a very prominent Tongwinjamb leader named Uwaya Manggapowa. Among the Kwoma, as elsewhere in the same region, a divorce exclusively takes place when a woman chooses to leave her husband, usually to take up residence immediately with another man in another tribe. I know of no case where a man asked, or tried to force, his wife to leave; nor would he want to, as he and his clan 'brothers' will have outlaid a substantial bride-wealth payment for the woman. The majority of divorces take place for reasons of 'incompatibility' soon after a marriage has commenced, before a bride-wealth payment has been made and any children have been born. The women most likely to leave are young co-wives who find that they are incompatible with more senior wives in the same household. In this case,

the woman was a junior wife married to a much older man and had not yet had any children of her own. She left her Tongwinjamb husband for an Awokapa man of her own age.

When a woman leaves her husband, both formerly and still today, she will do so without any warning. Traditionally, the only way an abandoned husband could hope to get his wife back was through force of arms, but this would entail warfare. In most cases, however angry the husband might be, a divorce is soon accepted as a fait accompli.

The abandoned husband on this occasion was an influential man. But what made the divorce unusual was that instead of remarrying into a physically distant community the woman took up residence with a man in a much smaller and militarily weaker group located close by, at the northern end of the Washkuk Hills.

The abandoned husband was so outraged at his wife's departure that he immediately began planning to take revenge. This included secretly sending several parcels of war magic to leading members of all of the neighbouring Kwoma tribes, and the Yalaku, in the hope that a substantial number of men from these communities would support him militarily – which they did.

The second event that reportedly precipitated the attack was an insult that an Awokapa husband levelled at his Tongwinjamb wife, named Mbalatok. Justifiably or not, her husband publicly accused her of being sexually loose and lazy. The woman was reportedly so shamed by these accusations that she smeared the white clay of mourning over her naked genitals, as well as her face and body, and crying loudly went back to her natal settlement, where she complained bitterly to her brother about what had happened. He and his clansmen were incensed at the shame her husband had brought on 'their' sister.

The attack on the Awokapa Nggiley led to great loss of life. Those who survived the fighting abandoned their settlement at Awokapa and went into hiding in the forest at different bush-houses they owned. Shortly after the attack, one of the leading Awokapa men, named Miriyamboy, secretly went to Tongwinjamb under cover of darkness to ask two politically powerful allies there, named Tutay and Chokapa, to provide the survivors with a place of refuge in a remote area of forest they owned. Their clans had not participated in the fighting. The Tongwinjamb men, however, declined on the grounds that they could not guarantee their safety. As an alternative, they suggested that they approach the Yalaku.

That same night Miriyamboy visited Mbalay and made the same request of three prominent members of Rama clan, who likewise had played no part in the attack. They were Woranggen (12), who for years had lived with the Tongwinjamb, Kayipanggu (8) and Hapewi (13). Unconcerned about the impact it would have on their relations with their Tongwinjamb neighbours and protectors, these men agreed to provide the Nggiley with refuge at isolated bush-houses they owned far away from the Tongwinjamb settlement. After being given some food to take with him, Miriyaboy returned to the forest to inform his tribesmen of what he had arranged.

The Tongwinjamb who had participated in the attack soon got wind of this arrangement. They openly expressed disgust at what they considered to be treachery on the part of their Yalaku neighbours, who they had long protected militarily, and made repeated trips to the Yalaku settlement at Mbalay to demand that the Yalaku 'hand over the unfinished part of their meal'. They told them they still had to 'break the bones and suck out the marrow' of what they had been eating (i.e. the Awokapa). According to Ayam, the Rama clan leaders stood firm and told the Tongwinjamb, in the metaphorical manner typical of Sepik political speech, that the Yalaku community was a 'capacious net bag that could easily be stretched to accommodate whatever was put into it'.

The Yalaku move their main settlement to Molipiir, midway between the Washkuk Hills and the Yimi River

Not to be deflected by the Yalaku's refusal to hand over the Awokapa they were protecting, the Tongwinjamb kept returning to Mbalay and demanding that they inform them of their whereabouts. Eventually the leaders of the different Yalaku clans decided that it was no longer safe for their community to remain at Mbalay and one day, without informing the Tongwinjamb of their plans, the entire tribe suddenly abandoned the settlement and moved to Molipiir (11, Figure 6.1), roughly midway between the northern end of the Washkuk Hills and the Yimi River. This was in the same general area as the two earlier hamlets, Kowinumbu and Kumanggey (8a and 8b, respectively, in Figure 6.1). But on this occasion the new settlement was built directly on the hill itself. Like the hill on which the modern village of Bangwis is located, Molipiir was low but steeply sided and, according to Ayam and Kiriyas, easily defended in the case of an attack. The Yalaku had long used Molipiir as a place to build bush houses, to which men would move with their families for extended periods to hunt, garden and process sago. The many existing bush houses there provided the people with shelter until they could build more permanent dwellings. When the Yalaku made the move, they took the Awokapa they were protecting with them.

Over the following years the Yalaku community as a whole prospered at Molipiir. It rapidly increased in size to the point where its different clans eventually established separate hamlets for themselves, each separated from the others by stretches of forest. Each hamlet had one or more men's houses. The principal men's house, and the one at which all rituals and community meetings were held, was named Tokimba.

The Awokapa families that moved to Molipiir cemented their relationship with their protectors by providing them with several women as wives. Miriyamboy alone, who had arranged for the Yalaku to take his group in, gave three daughters to men in different clans. The Yalaku, like Kwoma, metaphorically equate the gift of a woman as a wife to another clan with 'planting a coconut palm' in the wife-taker's community. A coconut palm is long-lived and provides people with food, fibre and other useful materials for many decades.

c.1875–80

Relations between the Yalaku and Tongwinjamb worsen when a senior Tongwinjamb man is mocked for his gluttony

The move to Molipiir had the effect of physically separating the Yalaku from the Tongwinjamb, and thus minimized the friction that interaction on a daily basis could potentially generate. But a series of events over several years led to the previously close relationship breaking down permanently. This led to the Yalaku turning to the Hongwama Kwoma for an equally powerful ally.

A superficially trivial event that nevertheless did nothing to improve relations was the open mockery of a very prominent Tongwinjamb man for gluttony when he and many other members of his community visited Molipiir to participate in a ceremony. Like other communities in this region, when the Yalaku performed ceremonies they invited interested participants from all of the surrounding tribes and language groups: Kaunga, Kwoma, Apukili and so on. Among the Tongwinjamb visitors to one of these ceremonies was a man named Pokoti Yelawi, an influential man but also a notorious glutton. The Tongwinjamb participants set off for Molipiir together. On their way they encountered a Yalaku man named Kirimbey Kayiniir travelling in the opposite direction. He informed them that he was going back to the now-abandoned Yalaku settlement at Mbalay to collect some of the betel nuts and betel peppers still growing there, so that the Yalaku could distribute them among their guests.

Pokoti, part of the group, asked the Yalaku man if his sister Hamindum and her husband Asawanj were at the settlement, as he was intending to visit them. Asawanj was one of the Awokapa refugees living with the Yalaku at Molipiir. Kirimbey told him that they were, but that right at that moment they might still be in the forest, where Asawanj had speared two huge pigs, a male and a female, that he was intending to contribute to the food to be served to the guests. Kirimbey mentioned that the female pig in particular had yielded a huge quantity of fatty pork: the ultimate luxury food for both the Yalaku and the Kwoma.

When Pokoti reached Molipiir, he found to his delight that his brother-in-law, Asawanj, had just returned from the forest, and went straight to his house. In this region it is the practice for individual men to offer relatives and other visitors from another tribe something to eat as soon as they arrive. In keeping with this convention, once Pokoti had taken a seat under the front porch of his house his brother-in-law brought him some food. This was wrapped in leaves and served in a coconut-shell bowl. When Pokoti enthusiastically unwrapped the parcel, expecting to find a portion of fatty pork, he discovered that it only contained baked beetle larvae. Beetle larvae are harvested from rotting vines and logs. They are nutritious and commonly eaten as a food, but they not rated as highly as fatty pork. Furthermore, instead of the several servings of freshly boiled sago that he had assumed would accompany the pork, he disovered that his brother-in-law had given him boiled *tulip* (TP) tree leaves (*Gnetum gnemon*). These leaves are nutritious and frequently eaten, but for a hungry man they are no substitute for hot, freshly boiled sago.

Instead of gracefully accepting the food, as he should have, Pokoti was so disgusted by what he had been given that he hurled the food on to the ground, breaking the bowl in which it had been served. He then angrily turned on his brother-in-law and told him that he had been expecting some of the fatty pork from the two pigs Kirimbey had referred to when he and the other Tongwinjamb had met him on the track on their way to Molipiir. After that, and without saying another word, he stood up and stalked off to the house of another man he knew, who he hoped would provide him with a meal of freshly boiled sago and fatty pork. Pokoti's spectacularly ungracious behaviour soon became the subject of much derisory comment throughout the Yalaku settlement.

Yalaku ceremonies, like their Kwoma equivalents, formally began mid-morning, after the final preparations had been made (see Bowden 1983a). After two hours or so of communal singing and dancing, a break would then be taken when the hosts would serve the participants a substantial meal. A second meal was often served the following morning, an hour or two after the ceremony had come to an end. On this occasion, pork from the two pigs Asawanj had killed was among the food served at both meals. The other main form of meat served on this occasion was flying fox.

After the second substantial meal had been served at the end of the ceremony, one of the leading members of Rama clan, Kayipanggu (8), decided to play a practical joke on Pokoti, to pay him back for the disgraceful way he had treated his brother-in-law. He collected up all the leftover bones and scraps of inedible skin from the pork and flying fox that had been served to the guests that morning, and rolled them up in a huge palm-spathe parcel. Pokoti at the time was elsewhere in the village. He then hung this from one of the rafters in the men's house, above one of the sleeping platforms that lined the sides of the building – and on which many of the men who had participated in

the ceremony were relaxing. Having left the huge parcel of leftovers in the men's house, Kayipanggu set off to find Pokoti. When he found him, he told him that he had left a parcel of freshly cooked boiled sago for him, hanging from one of the rafters in the men's house, and that if he wanted it, he had better take it into his possession quickly, before other men made off with it.

Delighted by the news, Pokoti hurried back to the men's house. In front of the other men in the building, all of whom were in on the joke, but said nothing, Pokoti climbed up on to the sleeping platform and took the parcel down. Those watching him noted that when he lifted the parcel down he was puzzled by how light it was, given that it was supposed to be full of boiled sago, which is mostly water. Beaming with pride, he nevertheless set it down on the sleeping platform and untied it. As he was doing so, he volubly and unctuously told the men watching how grateful he was to Kayipanggu for such an exceptionally generous gift. But when he opened it, he was shocked and embarrassed to find only inedible leftovers from the meal the men had shared earlier that morning. Confused, but apparently not realizing that he had been the subject of a practical joke, he pushed the contents aside but otherwise said nothing.

Kayipanggu had let Pokoti return to the men's house to collect his gift without him. But he soon followed. When he arrived, he found Pokoti sitting disconsolately on the sleeping platform. He decided to continue the joke by telling Pokoti that the parcel had obviously been stolen by other men who had been in the building, knew what it contained, and had replaced it with one that contained only inedible scraps. Keeping up the deception, he picked up a slit-gong beater and, feigning great anger, beat out a signal demanding that whoever had stolen Pokoti's gift return it immediately. Kayipanggu then pretended to listen intently for a reply. When he heard nothing, he pounded out the same message. Pokoti was completely taken in by the charade. Eventually, he advised Kayipanggu to stop signalling and forget about the theft. The food had been stolen, he told him, and there was nothing more they could do about it. Still without letting on that it had all been an elaborate joke, Kayipanggu loudly commiserated with Pokoti for his shocking loss and took him back to his house, where he served him a meal of freshly boiled sago and fatty pork.

If Pokoti realized that he had been the subject of a joke, he never admitted it openly. But his ungracious reaction to the food his brother-in-law had served was not only the subject of much derogatory comment at the time, but was also memorialized in a song one of his fellow Tongwinjamb tribesmen composed (Song 6). This was added not to the 'Song of the Kaunga' but to the cycle named the 'Nowki Song' (Kwoma: *Nokwi Hokwa*), one that all of the Kwoma-speaking tribes formerly performed during the Nokwi ceremony (see Bowden 1983a, 2011). This meant that it quickly became known to the entire Kwoma-speaking population. When Ayam and Kiriyas performed it at this point in the narrative they, and the other men listening, laughed out loud at the lyrics.

Song 6: a Kwoma-language song mocking an ill-mannered Tongwinjamb participant in a Yalaku ceremony

1 *Hoponokor men piwa,*
[The spirit] Hoponokor signals on a slit-gong,
2 *Sokwa hamawa.*
Get to their feet and set off.
3 *Nagalarukwa men piwa,*
[The water spirit] Nanggalarukwa signals on a slit-gong,
4 *Sokwa hamawa.*
Get to their feet and set off.
5 *Diigiipwa Kwariisu men waga siwa.*
[The Tongwinjamb spirit] Ndiinggiipwa Kwariisu listens intently to the call on the slit-gong.
6 *A sa eem, noku sa eem,*
At a place where food is served, a place where boiled sago is served,
7 *Bul owen laya sava.*
Beetle larvae are served.
8 *Kacha yi meyi, iwa.*
Looks over shoulder (*kacha yi meyi*), walks away (*iwa*).

The song does not name any of the actors. As with all Kwoma and Yalaku historical songs, a detailed knowledge of the events that led to its composition is required to identify them. The song nonetheless identifies them metaphorically, by reference to spirits their communities owned.

Line 1 describes how a well-known spirit associated with the Minja ceremony, named Hoponokor, beats out a signal (*piwa*) on a slit-gong (*me*) – by implication from Molipiir – announcing that a ceremony is about to begin. Unlike the Motek, the Yalaku did not possess the Minja ceremony, but in the context of this song the spirit Hoponokor is understood to stand for the Yalaku, as several of their clans belong to the totemic division that owns this spirit. This is the totemic division Kwoma call 'Tek'.

Line 2 indicates, elliptically, that men in the surrounding communities hear the announcement and immediately 'rise' (*sokwa*) or 'get to their feet' and set off for the ceremony. Ayam translated this line in TP both as '*kirap na wokabaut i kam*' and '*kirap wokabaut*', i.e. 'get up and set off'.

Line 3 parallels line 1 but replaces the name of the Minja spirit Hoponokor with that of a water spirit named Nanggalarukwa. The abode of this spirit is located in Yalaku territory, and hence stands for the Yalaku who are drumming the invitation.

Line 4 repeats line 2 and indicates that the various peoples to whom the invitation is being sent have left off

whatever they were doing ('stood up', 'got to their feet') and are already on their way.

Line 5 refers metaphorically to the Tongwinjamb glutton, Pokoti. It does so by identifying him with a spirit named Ndiinggiipwa Kwariisu, which his Tongwinjamb clan owned. The line refers to this spirit (i.e. Pokoti) as 'listening intently' (*waga siwa*) to the slit-gong (*me*) being played at Molipiir, and implies that he too has stopped whatever he was doing and set off.

The last three lines change both the focus and time frame. Without naming him, they refer to Pokoti's disgraceful reaction to the food his brother-in-law had generously served him.

Line 6 describes his brother-in-law's house, humorously, both as a 'place where food is served' (*eem*, place; *a*, an abbreviation of *aboboy*, food; *sa*, short for *sava*, serve, set down food) and 'a place where boiled sago [*noku*] is served'.

Lines 7 and 8 indicate that when the brother-in-law brings (*laya*) the beetle larvae (*bul ow*) and sets them down (*sava*) before Pokoti, his guest looks over his shoulder (*kacha yi meyi*) for another house where he might get something better to eat and discourteously stalks away (*iwa*). No mention is made of Pokoti throwing the food on the ground and smashing the coconut-shell bowl in which it was served.

A Yalaku man claims the credit for killing a young Tongwinjamb man through sorcery

Insults directed towards a prominent man such as Pokoti are remembered, especially when they are commemorated in songs. But another and much more serious event took place not long afterwards that proved to be immensely damaging to the Yalaku. This involved the Rama clan man named Woranggen indiscretely boasting that he had used sorcery to kill a young Tongwinjamb man. Woranggen was the Yalaku man referred to earlier who had spent many years living under the protection of totemic kin in the sorcery victim's tribe.

A young Tongwinjamb man named Saranggaw Wakiyowi suddenly became seriously ill. His father, Asanembii,[49] feared that someone had obtained some of his son's 'leavings' and had given them to a sorcerer who was 'cooking' them to make him ill. He therefore began visiting all of the surrounding tribes in the hope of finding the sorcerer, and persuading him to give up the leavings. If he could retrieve them, and prevent the sorcerer from manipulating them any further, he believed his son would be restored to good health. He visited the Yalaku at Molipiir, but the people there insisted that they were on good terms with the Tongwinjamb and that no one wished his son ill. Asanembii reportedly accepted their assurances.

He also failed to locate the leavings at any of the other communities he visited. On his way home, he heard a slit-gong being played at Tongwinjamb announcing that his son had died.

Shortly after this, the Yalaku man Woranggen, for reasons Ayam could not explain, let it be known that he had been responsible for the 'poisoning' of the young Tongwinjamb man. To celebrate the killing, Woranggen ostentatiously gave the victim's name to the front centre post in Tokimba, the main ceremonial men's house at Molipiir. This not only publicly signalled that the Yalaku were responsible for the death, but also that the spirits in this building were now in possession of his soul (*hach*).[50] When the dead man's father learned that the Yalaku had given his son's name to the main post in their men's house, he realized immediately that he had been duped when he visted Molipiir and began looking for an opportunity to take revenge.

The Yalaku participate in an assault on the Apukili to recover a woman 'stolen' from her Nowiniyen husband

The peace pact that the Yalaku had entered into with Nowiniyen prohibited further warfare between them. But it did not prohibit them from calling on each other for assistance when fighting with a third party.

Around this time the Yalaku became involved in major warfare with the Apukili, at the invitation of Nowiniyen allies. A Motek man named Yenggen 'stole' a married woman, Lokume, from a man named Halavi, who was living at the time with the Nowiniyen at a place named Mbandala.[51] Halavi was not Nowiniyen in origin but a member of the Ngala-speaking Tumbuma (Mowumowudu) tribe, the once powerful group that had by then been reduced through warfare to the point where it could no long defend itself and, along with the Ngala, had taken refuge with the Nowiniyen. When Yenggen absconded with the woman, the Motek had their main settlement at a place named Njambanggey. However, rather than take the woman back to that settlement he took her to the much more distant Apukili tribe's main settlement, then located at a place named Meer Kwopa, where he had totemic kin.[52] When the two arrived the Apukili were holding a male-initiation ceremony. All of their young boys were sequestered in a ritual enclosure.

As soon as Halavi discovered where Yenggen had taken his wife, he visited Molipiir and pleaded with the Yalaku to

49 In Kwoma this name literally means 'dog's fur' (*asa*, dog; *nebii*, fur, hair).

50 Although this men's house had long since fallen down, in 1973 its front centre post was reportedly still standing.

51 I have written 'stole' with inverted commas since the evidence suggests the woman was quite willing to leave her husband and take up with Yenggen.

52 In Kwoma 'Meer Kwopa' literally means 'a rotting [*kwopa*] *meer* tree'.

help get her back. He appealed specifically to members of Korembikow clan, a group to which his own clan was linked totemically. Korembikow was also the clan of one of the Yalaku's most formidable younger warriors, Tusiiwiil (171).

Halavi arrived at Molipiir covered with ashes from his kitchen fire, a sign of his grief at the loss of his wife. When he found Tuwusiil he dramatically dropped to his knees and put his arms around his legs. When Tusiiwiil asked what had happened, Halavi told him that the Motek man Yenggen had made off with his wife and taken her to the Apukili settlement at Meer Kwopa. Tusiiwiil decided on the spot to give Halavi the support he wanted, and reportedly bellowed contemptuously 'What's Meer Kwopa? It's nothing. Wait until tomorrow.'

Tusiiwiil quickly put together a war-party. The night, before setting off, the participants 'beat the tanget' (*paitim tanget*, TP) in the Korembikow men's house to boast about who they would kill in the ensuing action. The followind morning at dawn the men collected supplies of boiled sago and other food from their individual houses and set off on the long trip to the Apukili settlement.

When the war-party arrived, the parents of the boys undergoing the initiation rite were all in the forest finding the food their sons required during their long period of sequestration. The ceremony was nearing its conclusion and everyone was eagerly anticipating the communal celebrations that would take place when the boys emerged from seclusion. The only men of fighting age in the village were the two supervising the initiates. The others in the village were either young children or their grandparents babysitting them. The two men inside the initiatory enclosure were named Omo[53] and Winggawi. Omo was holding a small hand drum and playing it to himself softly.

When the war-party reached the outskirts of the settlement, its three leading warriors positioned themselves at the front. The oldest of the three, Teyikwal (63), was in the lead. Two brothers-in-law, Yuwayembi (67) and Tusiiwiil (171), were directly behind him.

The village was surrounded by a huge palisade. The war-party paused in the forest, out of sight, opposite one of its doors, while Teyikwal surveyed the situation. He was in no hurry to launch the attack. The door was barricaded. The members of the war-party could hear Omo playing the hand drum and singing. He, like all of the other Apukili, was well known to the attackers and they recognized his voice.

While Teyikwal was still considering his next move, Yuwayembi, frustrated at the lack of action, instructed him to step aside so that he could see if he could get through the door. Tuwusiil went with him and the two prised the door sufficiently open for Yuwayembi to squeeze through. The rest of the war-party immediately followed. Once inside they silently approached the enclosure where Omo was singing. Peering through cracks in the wall, they could see the two men and the large group of boys inside.

Yuwayembi led the charge. He was carrying several spears with shafts made, atypically, from *siyupu* palm. Spears made from this material were one of his hallmarks. Entering the ritual enclosure, he immediately hurled one of the weapons at Omo, hitting him. When the other man, Winggawi, realized that the settlement was under attack, he bolted for the door at the other end of the enclosure. Several members of the war-party set off after him. They managed to catch hold of him, but Winggawi had previously smeared his body and long braided hair with an oily tree sap, and so slipped through their fingers. Before he could escape, Yuwayembi nevertheless hit him hard with another of his spears, although not hard enough to stop him. Winggawi quickly broke the shaft off and with the bamboo blade still firmly lodged in his back successfully made his way out of the building and into the forest. Athough Yuwayembi had hit Omo hard with his first spear, he also survived and managed to escape into forest. The initiates were not so lucky. Nor were the young children and the elderly men and women babysitting them. They were slaughtered. According to Ayam, it was a bloodbath.

With no opposition in the settlement, the members of the war-party then ransacked the different dwelling houses, helping themselves to food, shell valuables, spears, cooked sago, arm-bands, axes and feather hair ornaments. Some even donned hair decorations and performed a short celebratory dance.

Despite his wound, Omo headed for the Yipa River, where he knew many people from his settlement would be fishing. He found them at a section named Hakanamey, a favourite fishing spot. The Motek man Yenggen and the woman he had abducted were fishing with them. He walked up to where Yenggen was resting on the bank, snatched up a handful of leaves and threw them at him. As he did so, he bellowed that these represented the number of Apukili children who had just been slaughtered.

The others immediately asked if the attackers were 'Kaunga', by which they meant the Yalaku. 'Only Kaunga', he replied.[54] They then asked if the attackers had given any explanation for the raid. He told them that when the war-party was leaving, Halavi had stood at the edge of the settlement and called both to Omo and Winggey, who he assumed would still be in the vicinity watching what was happening, saying that he had been looking for his wife Lokume. If they wanted to know who was responsible for the slaughter, they need look no further than Yenggen.

When Yenggen heard this, fearing that it was no longer safe for him to stay with the Apukili, he quickly found Lokume, who was fishing with women nearby, and

53 'Omo' is an abbreviation of 'Omoyombukapa.'

54 The Apukili, like the Kwoma, referred to the Yalaku as 'Kaunga.'

returned as quickly as he could to the Motek settlement at Njambanggey.

The Yalaku attack the Apukili a second time

Despite the catastrophic loss of the lives of children and older people during this raid, the Apukili still had their full complement of fighting men and all of their women of reproductive age. The leading Apukili men of the day included Manjiimbiira, Wuniyow and Wasawoyanggu. Their assessment of the situation was that they could swiftly recover. First, they set about greatly strengthening their settlement. They did this by building two more palisades around it, making three in all. They also cleared a swathe of forest around the outer palisade to allow a wall of thorn-covered rattans to grow. They built new dwelling houses to replace those the Yalaku had put to the torch, and fashioned an entirely new set of weapons – spears, fighting sticks, adzes and bows and arrows – to replace those the attackers had pillaged.

When they were confident that they had recovered their strength, they sent a challenge through intermediaries to the leading Yalaku men, who were surprised to be invited to attack them again. They sent this challenge to all of the leading Yalaku fighting men individually, including Tusiiwiil (171), Piyanombok (75), Kwoyasaman (147), Teyikwal (63) and Yuwayembi (67). In their challenge, they told the Yalaku that their fighting men were a different matter from the elderly and the children they had slaughtered during the first attack. They also taunted the Yalaku, saying that before they left home to meet them in combat each member of the war-party should singe the leg of one of his wooden stools. A singed leg, Ayam indicated, was a sign that the owner of the stool had been lost in battle. Mockingly, they also suggested that each man take the opportunity to enjoy good sex with his wife before leaving, as this would be his last chance to do so. Once they left for the Apukili settlement, they were implying, they would never return home.

When the Yalaku received this challenge, they immediately called on allies in the Nowiniyen and Motek tribes to join them. They had no difficult putting together a large war-party. On a prearranged day the participants met at Molipiir to prepare for the fight. That night the participants 'beat the *tanget*' and energetically boasted about who they would kill. The following morning they set off. It took a full day to get close to their target.

On the night of their arrival, the war-party stayed in the forest well out of sight and earshot of the intended victims. The next morning, but still an hour or two before first light, the men approached the Apukili settlement and, with great difficulty, silently pulled the thorny vines away from the outer palisade to make a passageway they could use to move from one door to the other. While they were doing this, they heard several women suddenly start keening. This was for a woman who had just died, the wife of Winggawi. Winggawi was one of the two men who had been supervising the initiates when the first attack took place. In the meantime, he had fully recovered from the wound he had received at Yuwayembi's hands. The combined Yalaku and Nowiniyen war-party continued to listen quietly to the keening while making ready to attack.

When there was enough light to see, but still well before the sun had risen, several men inside the settlement climbed coconut palms next to the deceased woman's house. This was to cut fronds to cover her body on the burial platform that was under construction. Her husband, Winggawi, who had smeared ashes from his kitchen hearth over his head and body as an expression of his grief, simultaneously picked up several of his spears and informed the others that he was leaving for the forest. With that, he unlocked, and climbed through, the doors in the two innermost palisades, opposite the waiting war-party. When he opened the door in the outermost wall and was in the process of stepping through, he suddenly caught sight of the men hiding on the edge of the forest. He knew immediately that this was a war-party waiting to attack.

Remaining calm, and without saying a word, he climbed back through the door and barricaded it with the heavy planks kept beside it for this purpose. He then quickly climbed back through the door in the second wall and barricaded that as well. When he reached innermost door, he let out a mighty cry to warn the others that their village was about to come under attack. Using a metaphor that he knew everyone would understand, he shouted that he had detected a 'rising moon' through the early morning mist and that the men needed to arm themselves without delay. He then quickly climbed through the innermost door and barricaded it also.

After being alerted to the presence of the war-party, one of the Apukili men began beating out a signal on a slit-gong to alert everyone else in the vicinity that an attack was under way. When the attackers heard the signal, they rushed forward and began breaking through the door in the outermost palisade. Members of both parties simultaneously began hurling abuse at each other.

A contingent of Apukili warriors had positioned themselves between the second and third palisades. As soon as the attackers broke through the outermost door they engaged them in hand-to-hand fighting with a variety of weapons: adzes, sticks, spears and bows and arrows. One of the Apukili defenders managed to hit the great warrior Yuwayembi with a spear but only wounded him slightly. Yuwayembi nevertheless dropped back in the traditional manner to allow another man to take his place.

While the fighting between the two outermost palisades was in progress, an Apukili woman named Wonyipokowi came up to the edge of the innermost wall and called by name to the two leading Yalaku warriors: Yuwayembi and Teyikwal. She told them to be patient. She said the women

inside were cooking greens and that when they were ready the Yalaku would be welcome to share their meal. The jibe, in metaphorical language the attackers understood clearly, was both derogatory and humorous. The woman was equating the 'greens' being cooking with the spears and other weapons the Apukili warriors were preparing, which the attackers would 'eat' if they broke through the innermost door. She then shouted contemptuously, 'We'll see you off.' The attackers replied, equally derisively, 'We're ready to try your food.'

The Apukili warriors successfully held off the attackers. The Yalaku man Mesipoko (165) was hit by an Apukili arrow, but the wound was not fatal. He fell back to the rear of the war-party. A Nowiniyen man named Apimbopo was also hit with an arrow. He likewise fell back to let another man take his place.

The hand-to-hand fighting continued well into the morning, but the attackers were unable to break through the second door. Their leaders now became concerned that if they were to avoid being trapped between the palisades they needed to adopt a new strategy. Using the rough path they had made around the outermost wall, several of the most experienced fighters, such as Ndowapa and Piyanombok, took a group of younger men around to the door at the rear of the settlement, to see if they could beak their way in there.[55] When they reached it they heard the voices of Apukili men inside preparing to come out, evidently with the intention of circling around the village through the forest and striking the attackers from behind.

The Yalaku men decided to wait in silence for the Apukili to emerge. The first to do so was the renowned Apukili warrior named Manjiimbiira. He passed through the two innermost doors, with a number of men immediately behind him, and proceeded to opening the outermost. To remove the planks blocking it, he had to put his shield and spears aside. When he had removed enough planks to make a sizeable opening, the Yalaku man Piyanombok quickly stepped forward and drove a spear through the gap, killing him on the spot. The attackers then pushed their way in and confronted the men behind Manjiimbiira.

A leading Apukili warrior named Wuniyow was among them, but Tusiiwiil (171) managed to fell him with one of the Apukili's own spears, the one that, on the other side of the settlement, had struck Yuwayembi, and Tusiiwiil had salvaged.

When Wuniyow fell, another outstanding Apukili warrior, named Wasawoyanggu, came to the fore. But the Yalaku man named Kayipanggu (8) managed to hit him with a spear and force him to withdraw. When these three outstanding Apukili fighting men – Manjiimbiira, Wuniyow and Wasawoyanggu – had either been killed or wounded, the men with them changed their plans and withdrew into the interior of the settlement. Shortly afterwards the Apukili on the other side of the settlement did the same. When the attackers finally broke through the two innermost doors they found the place completely deserted. Everyone, including the fighting men, had escaped into the forest through a series of additional, cleverly disguised openings in the palisades. Well aware that the opposing warriors would be regrouping in the nearby forest, and that they risked being ambushed if they pursued them, the Yalaku leaders ordered a retreat. The badly wounded men were carried home on their shields.

***c.*1880**

The Apukili abandon their settlement at Meer Kwopa and move west to the Maruwa River

Following this attack, the Apukili decided to abandon their settlement at Meer Kwopa and move far to the west – into a region they had occupied during a much earlier period in their history. Some took refuge with totemic kin and other relatives in the Kwoma-speaking Amaki and Kawaka tribes on branches of the Sanchi River. Others took refuge with allies even further west, in communities speaking the Yau dialect of the Mayo language on the Maruwa River (see Figure 6.1). Some chose to live in makeshift encampments in the forest. The latter, having left their own territory, had limited access to sago and for many months had to survive on flour leeched from the pith of wild *yera* palms. As previously noted (Chapter 3), this palm is processed in the same way as sago but the flour is considered greatly inferior in quality. According to Ayam, if it is eaten in large quantities it makes the mouth itch. Flour extracted from *yera* palms was supplemented with wild mushrooms and forest greens, such as leaves of the *yiipiira* tree (*Gnetum gnemon*; *tulip*, TP).

***c.*1880–5**

The Apukili return to their former territory and make peace with the Yalaku

In time, the Apukili informed the Yalaku through intermediaries that they wished to return to their home territory and make peace. To help broker this peace they brought with them some of the most influential men belonging to the Kwoma-speaking Amaki and Kawaka tribes, such as Yenggel[56] and Hokwalesa.

Hearing that the Apukili wanted to make peace, the Yalaku man Yuwayembi (67), who had been involved in both attacks on them and wounded in the second, sent a message to Wachiipok, one of the Apukili's most influential

55 The gaps between the three palisades were apparently also filled with thorn-covered vines, which meant the men had to move around the outermost wall.

56 This man Yenggel is not to be confused with the Motek man named Yenggen whose 'theft' of the woman Lokume led to conflict with the Apukili.

men, and suggested that he take his entire community to a site named Patakatowa (F, Figure 6.1), about a day's hard walk to the north of the Washkuk Hills, and establish a new settlement there. Yuwayembi's clan owned the land, but he had maternal relatives among the Apukili and indicated that they could use it for as long as they wished. The offer was accepted.[57]

To mark this peace settlement, Wachiipok and a large group of other Apukili men brought a domesticated pig he owned, named Woraka, to the Yalaku settlement at Molipiir. There, he killed the pig with a sago-felling adze and gave it to the Yalaku to cook at the rear of their men's house, Tokimba. He also gave the Yalaku a pair of flutes that represented a spirit named Pukuchir. He presented the flutes to Yuwayembi inside Tokimba. The Apukili then placed a net bag over the head of a young girl they had brought with them, to prevent her from seeing the secret flutes, and took her inside the men's house. Her name was Maparakwa. The Yalaku did the same with one of their girls, named Yepimangga. There the girls were aspersed with water. They were told that this was the spirit Pukuchir 'washing' away any lingering resentments between the two communities. Ayam commented that this was one of many techniques the Yalaku and their neighbours used to establish formal peace pacts. To help cement the alliance, each girl was expected, when she matured, to marry into the other tribe. All of the participants then shared a sumptuous meal of boiled pork and pork-flavoured vegetable soup.

In addition to providing the Apukili with a site for a new settlement, the Yalaku also gave them the right to exploit the economic resources in its vicinity, including the large and immensely valuable sago stands named Yemben, Walawiya and Takawiya. Ayam commented that the few men of Apukili origin remaining today continue to make use of these resources, but that the Yalaku still own them and, in principle, could take them back if they so decided.

Although the Apukili entered into a peace pact with the Yalaku, they did not do so with either the Motek or the Nowiniyen. For reasons that Ayam did not explain, or know, contingents from both of these tribes soon launched two raids in quick succession on the Apukili at their new settlement at Patakatowa. This could have been in revenge for deaths or serious injuries the two groups had suffered during earlier conflict. Both raids, however, were failures, as the Apukili became aware of the presence of the war-parties before they could launch their attacks. On both occasions, when the attackers realized that their presence had been detected and they had lost the element of surprise, their leaders ordered a retreat.

Without the knowledge or approval of other leading members of their community, two Yalaku men took part in both of these failed raids on the Apukili. This was in direct violation of the peace pact the two tribes had recently established. They were Mesipoko (165) and Kapay (123). Kapay was a generation younger than the men who had participated in the earlier attacks on the Apukili. Following the deaths of men such as Yuwayembi (67), Teyikwal (63) and Tusiiwiil (171), and before warfare in this region came to a permanent end, he became the Yalaku tribe's last major warrior and traditional political leader. He died around 1940 (see Chapter 9). The participation of these two men in the two attacks on the Apukili, even though both were unsuccessful, precipitated a rapid breakdown in the peace settlement and led to the Apukili taking devastating reprisals against the Yalaku.

During the second of these two raids, the war-party came within a kilometre or so of the Apukili settlement before its presence was detected and its leaders ordered a withdrawal. A group of Apukili women were washing sago on the banks of the Mbapa river, the long-standing boundary between Yalaku and Apukili territory. Two of the leading Apukili warriors, Wachiipok and Mokot, were sitting high up on an adjacent hill watching over them. From their vantage point the two men detected the war-party approaching and shouted a warning to the women, who fled back to their settlement and gave the alarm. As it happened, the Yalaku man Kapay was at the front of the war-party, and the two Apukili lookouts recognized him. They were reportedly deeply shocked to see him there, partly because of the peace pact their two tribes had established and partly because Kapay was a 'friend' (*nawa*) of one of these two men. 'Friends' are supposed to be lifelong political allies who will warn each other of impending raids on their respective settlements, and refrain from participating in them.

Wachiipok was in fact so incensed by the presence of two Yalaku men in the war-party that he made a secret trip into Yalaku country to visit Yuwayembi, still his community's dominant political figure. This was to determine whether Kapay and Mesipoko had been acting with his approval, or that of other influential members of his group. He met with Yuwayembi at the latter's isolated bush house. Yuwayembi assured him the two men had acted on their own initiative and that the Yalaku wanted the peace settlement to remain intact. Notwithstanding his assurances, the participation of the two Yalaku men in the war-party led to the majority of the Apukili concluding that the peace pact was meaningless. This was soon to have major repercussions for both groups.

57 This is the site at which some of the few remaining Apukili in 2008 were hoping to re-establish their community. For the previous several decades these men had been living at Tongwinjamb.

Figure 7.3 A Bangwis village (Kwoma) pig-skin shield (height c. 150 cm) with repairs at the top, 2006. Crocodile-skin shields had the same form.

Figure 7.4 A Bangwis village man holding pig-skin shield after the manner in which they were carried during warfare, 2008. It has numerous repairs and major decay at the bottom. The man shows how it was used to protect the body while still enabling a spear to be thrown. Though not easily visible, he is brandishing a spear in his right hand. Height c. 150 cm. This shield was formerly owned by Mokot of Bangwis (Figure 10.1), one of the Honggwama tribe's most celebrated warriors during the first half of the twentieth century and a major ally of the Yalaku in military matters (see Chapter 10). Mokot was the father of the man holding the shield.

***c.*1885**

The Apukili and Tongwinjamb launch an attack on the Nowiniyen, which fails

In retaliation for the two attempted raids on their settlement at Patakatowa by the Motek and the Nowiniyen, the Apukili launched a revenge attack on the Nowiniyen with the assistance of long-standing Tongwinjamb allies. This attack also failed. A Nowiniyen man working in the forest detected the presence of the war-party and drummed a warning on the flanged buttress root of a forest tree to his home settlement. The approaching warriors also heard it and, realizing they had lost the element of surprise, decided to turn back.

Atypically for such circumstances, a group of Nowiniyen men decided to follow the war-party, not to confront it head-on, but to ambush any of its members who might fall behind on the long journey home. They were successful in killing a young Tongwinjamb man named Mbotiikawus.[58]

Mbotiikawus had been carrying a large crocodile-skin shield (Figures 7.3 and 7.4). Like many other shields of the same kind, this had been constructed out of the dried skins of several small crocodiles. Thinking he was safe, Mbotiikawus had been walking some distance behind the other members of the group. The Nowiniyen pursuers managed to cut him off. When he caught sight of them, he left the track and sprinted into the dense undergrowth. To make his escape easier, he threw his shield to one side. He soon came across a low-lying horizontal section of a giant rattan vine covered in dense foliage and crawled underneath. Without knowing where he was, the Nowiniyen pursuers jumped on to the same horizontal section of vine and used it as a walkway. Their combined weight caused it to pummel the man hiding underneath. Eventually one of the Nowiniyen men, named Yakwandu, spotted feathers Mbotiikawus was wearing in his hair protruding from the foliage, and after alerting the others speared and killed him.

Some time later a Yalaku man hunting in the same part of the forest found the crocodile-skin shield the Tongwinjamb man had discarded and took it home. This shield had been made only a year or two earlier by another Tongwinjamb man, whose wife, Hoporeka, had caught one the several small crocodiles whose skins he had used to make it. She had caught the crocodile inadvertently in a hand net when fishing in a lagoon. Her husband had made the shield shortly before he and a large group of other Tongwinjamb men visited the Yalaku settlement at Molipiir to participate in a ceremony. Named Siilumu, this was a secret men's ritual that focused on a female spirit of the same name.[59] As a contribution to the food required for the ceremony, the Tongwinjamb man took the meat of the crocodile his wife had just caught and gave it to his hosts to cook.

Not long after Mbotiikawus was killed, another group of Tongwinjamb men visiting Molipiir discovered by chance that one of the Yalaku men had the shield their tribesman had discarded. They accused the Yalaku, unjustifiably, of participating in the killing of Mbotiikawus and consequently of acting treacherously towards the Tongwinjamb, their long-time political ally. They even reminded the Yalaku men that not long earlier, when they had held the Siilumu ceremony, they had actually consumed the flesh of one of the crocodiles whose skin had been used to help make the shield. The Yalaku protested strenuously that they had not been involved in the killing, and that one of their men had simply come across the shield in the forest. Their Tongwinjamb visitors were not convinced.

The Apukili and Tongwinjamb launch a second unsuccessful attack on the Nowiniyen

Following the failure of their first combined attack on the Nowiniyen, the Apukili and Tongwinjamb jointly launched a second raid. The Tongwinjamb participants on this occasion were determined not just to assist an ally, but also to avenge the death of their tribesman, Mbotiikawus. Their target, for a second time, was the people living at a hamlet named Howiyanumbu.

Coincidentally, the major Yalaku warrior named Teyikwal (63) was hunting in a section of forest named Romonyi through which the war-party had passed earlier the same day. From the numerous footprints, and the direction in which they were pointing, Teyikwal realized immediately that a very large war-party from Tongwinjamb had passed that way and was heading towards the Nowiniyen hamlet at Howiyanumbu. He had totemic kin and affines there, and was clearly aware of how much damage such a large war-party could do. He hurried back to Molipiir to inform other Yalaku what he had found.

On hearing the news, another of the Yalaku's outstanding warriors, the much younger man named Tusiiwiil (171), set off to take the news to the Nowiniyen hamlet before it came under attack. He also had close relatives living there. He took with him his two sons as well as several Nowiniyen men from the same hamlet, who had been visiting Molipiir.

As chance would have it, this second attempt by the combined Apukili and Tongwinjamb war-party to attack the Nowiniyen also had to be called off at the last minute. While the war-party was making its final approach, a Nowiniyen man named Mesikapa happened to be working in the forest close to the path it was taking. He was chopping pith out of a sago palm and got something in his eye that made it itch intensely. He interpreted this as a sign that something serious was amiss. Although he had not

58 In Kwoma, this name literally means 'nest [*wus*] made of *botiika* shrub leaves'.

59 For an account of a Kwoma men's secret ceremony that similarly focused on a female spirit, see Bowden 1983a and 2011.

Figure 7.5 Joseph Wanggamokway of Bangwis village showing how a pig-skin shield is held, 2008. This is the same shield as in Figure 7.4. A crocodile-skin shield was held in the same manner. Yalaku and Kwoma fighting men used both skin and wooden shields. The man in the photograph inherited this shield from his father, Mokot, who used it when he led a contingent of Bangwis village warriors to fight alongside the Yalaku in the 1940s (see Chapter 10). The man holding the shield worked for the PNG government's Department of Health as a native medical officer (dokta boi, TP) for thirty-six years, from 1960 to 1996.

seen the war-party, he shouted a warning to the people in the nearby hamlet that they might be about to come under attack. He shouted, 'Enemy; enemy; enemy; an enemy war-party is approaching.'

The members of the war-party had similarly not seen Mesikapa, but when they heard him shouting they realized that they had lost the element of surprise and turned back. Shortly afterwards the Yalaku man Tusiiwiil and his companions arrived at Howiyanumbu and informed the people there of the footprints Teyikwal had found. This confirmed that a war-party was in the area.

On their way home the Apukili and Tongwinjamb attack the Yalaku at Molipiir

The attackers were incensed that their second attempt to launch a raid on the Nowiniyen also had to be called off. However, instead of going directly home, both the Tongwinjamb and Apukili members of the war-party agreed that this was a good opportunity to take revenge on the Yalaku for earlier offences against both their groups. The Tongwinjamb had two deaths to avenge. One was the killing by sorcery of the young man named Sarangggaw, a death for which the Yalaku had effective taken responsibility by naming the front centre post in Tokimba men's house after the victim (see p. 96). The other was the killing by the Nowiniyen of the young man Mbotiikawus. This was a death in which they believed the Yalaku were implicated (see p. 102), given that they had found the victim's crocodile-skin shield in their possession. The Apukili were keen to avenge the participation of the Yalaku men Mesipoko and Kapay in the two raids by the Motek and Nowiniyen on their settlement at Patakatowa – even though both had proved to be failures (see pp. 100 and 102).

Since its founding, the Yalaku settlement at Molipiir had never come under attack. The Yalaku community, furthermore, had grown substantially in size since moving to Molipiir, and its different clans occupied different hamlets, each separated from the others by tracts of forest. Each hamlet, furthermore, was surrounded by its own palisade and each had its own men's house. The largest hamlet was the one that contained the men's house Tokimba. This building was located at the edge of hamlet, close to the palisade that surrounded both it and the adjacent dwelling houses.

The combined Tongwinjamb and Apukili war-party made the Tokimba hamlet their target. Their plan was to kill as many people as quickly as possible and then beat a retreat, before men in the neighbouring hamlets became aware of what was happening and came to their aid.

The fighting force entered the forest region around Molipiir late in the afternoon. Still several kilometres away, they found an empty bush house and made the decision to stay there until first light the following morning, when they would make their final approach. They helped themselves to yams and other food growing in an adjacent well-stocked garden. Soon after nightfall it began to rain very heavily. The members of the war-party knew that everyone at Molipiir would have retreated to their houses once the rain began, and most would soon be asleep. Rather than staying where they were, they decided to use the cover of the heavy rain, and the darkness, to approach the hamlet and position themselves next to the palisade adjacent to Tokimba men's house. They knew there was a door there that gave the men using the building access to a public toilet in the adjacent forest.

When they reached the palisade and peered through gaps between the posts, they found that the men's house was empty. To their surprise, they also found that because the palisade had been standing for some years the bases of many of the posts were rotten. Using their bone daggers, one of the implements of warfare, they silently dug out several of the decayed posts, making a gap large enough for the men to crawl through. Once inside, they silently entered the men's house and sat down to wait until there was sufficient light to attack.

Both the Apukili and Tongwinjamb members of the war-party had decided to make two men in particular their primary targets. One was Tusiiwiil (171), one of the hamlet's most influential men. The other was Kapay (123), the young warrior who had treacherously taken part in the two earlier raids on the Apukili, in violation of the peace pact that was still nominally in place between them and the Yalaku. The Apukili fighters included Wachiipok. He was one his tribe's most celebrated older warriors and the man who had actually concluded the peace pact on its behalf with Yuwayembi, the most influential of the Yalaku leaders. During their approach to Molipiir, Wachiipok had indicated that he wanted the privilege of killing Kapay.

Every member of the war-party had previously visited the hamlet, either to visit relatives or participate in ceremonies, and they knew precisely where Tusiiwiil's and Kapay's houses were located. They were not aware, however, that Tusiiwiil had left the previous day for the Nowiniyen hamlet at Howiyanumbu – to warn the people there that a large war-party was approaching, and to help defend it. When the attack on Howiyanumhu failed to materialize, Tusiiwiil had decided to stay on for a few days with relatives.

While they were waiting in the men's house, one of the Tongwinjamb men accidentally knocked one of the slit-gongs with the edge of his wooden shield. The drum was a large and skilfully crafted instrument, and consequently had a far-carrying, deeply reverberant sound.[60] Although only lightly struck, the noise it emitted was loud enough to be heard over the rain by Tusiiwiil's wife, Siikiiliindi, who

60 Technically, slit-gongs are not drums but gongs, as they lack tympanums.

was still awake in her house. When she heard the noise, she called loudly to Tusiiwiil's younger brother, Woyipa, whose house was next door. She told him to go up to the men's house and see what had caused the drum to sound. She added that if her husband had been at home, he would certainly have done so. Several of the other members of the same hamlet heard her calling, but Woyipa was in a deep sleep and made no response.

At first light, the members of the war-party moved quietly out of the men's house and down the hill towards the houses of Tusiiwiil and Kapay. The rain had stopped but a thick fog was blanketing the village and helped provide cover. While they were getting into position, an Awokapa tribe man named Owilambu – one of those to whom the Yalaku had given refuge years earlier – emerged from his house to relieve himself. While standing next to a banana tree he caught sight through the thick fog of men moving towards Tusiiwiil's house. He could see that they were holding spears and shields, and were lavishly festooned with flowers of the *pinegi* palm, a conventional sign that they were about to launch an attack.

To make sure he wasn't imagining things, Owilambu called loudly to the men and demanded to know what they were doing. The attackers up to this point were unaware that Owilambu had seen them, but when he called out, they all turned towards him. Owilabu immediately shouted a warning to his fellow residents: 'Enemy, enemy, enemy; the enemy is here.'

As soon as they heard this, people began rushing out of their houses and fleeing towards the nearest door in the palisade, where they made their escape into the surrounding forest. The young warrior Kapay and his family were among those who managed to escape.

The moment Owilambu shouted his warning, the men at the front of the war-party burst into Tusiiwiil's house. They were hugely disappointed to discover it contained only his wife and a young daughter. They promptly speared and killed both. When Tusiiwiil's younger brother, Woyipa, emerged from his house, spear in hand, the Apukili warrior Wachiipok hit him hard with a spear. This felled but did not immediately kill him. Others then entered his house and killed his wife and several children.

After spearing everyone they found in Tusiiwiil's and Woyipa's houses, and discovering that Kapay had escaped, many of the younger members of the war-party wanted to carry out a search for any other members of the hamlet who might be hiding in the different houses. But their leaders stopped them, saying that it was important that they made their escape before the men in the neighbouring hamlets, having heard the shouting and screaming, arrived on the scene. However, before leaving, the attackers hurried back to the Tokimba men's house. There, Asanembii, the father of the young Tongwinjamb man whose death the Yalaku had celebrated by giving his name to the building's front post, dramatically put his foot against the post and called to his son's ghost. He shouted, 'Saranggaw Wakiyowi! I'm here to take you back to Tongwinjamb. Come down. We're leaving now.' Confident that he had now recovered his son's ghost from where it had been trapped, Asanembii thrust a smouldering piece of firewood into the dry sago-leaf thatch and set the building alight. As the flames engulfed it, the war-party made an orderly retreat.

Although Tuwusiil's younger brother, Woyipa, had been badly wounded he was still alive and strong enough to call to the departing warriors. When they heard him calling, they stopped to listen to what he had to say. Woyipa addressed Wachiipok individually. He was the Apukili warrior who had speared him. He told him that he might get away with what he had done on this occasion, but from now on the Yalaku would keep a close watch on every one of the forest paths they knew the Apukili used. He said that there had been a peace pact between their two tribes, but that Wachiipok had now certainly destroyed it. In future, he warned him, none of his people could safely use any forest track.

After hearing him call this warning, several of the men in the war-party wanted to go back to Woyipa's house to finish him off, saying that he was clearly only wounded and might survive. But Wachiipok, who had speared him, was sufficiently experienced in warfare to know that Woyipa could not long survive his injuries, and told them that 'Pukuchir has already made off with his soul.' By this he meant that the spirit named Pukuchir, represented by the two flutes the Apukili had given the Yalaku when they established their peace pact, had now withdrawn his protective role and would see to it that Woyipa would die. Woyipa was still alive when other Yalaku men finally came to his aid. They found him slumped on the ground outside his house. They carried him inside, but he soon expired.

The dry sago-palm-leaf fronds used to thatch men's houses are highly flammable, and once lit cannot be extinguished. Several of the main hardwood posts in Tokimba nevertheless survived the fire, as did the slit-gongs. Although badly singed, the drums were still usable.

*c.*1885–90
The Yalaku take revenge against the Apukili

When news of this attack on the Yalaku reached Tusiiwiil at the Nowiniyen hamlet, where he was staying, he immediately returned home. After placing his wife's body on a burial platform, he put the body of his young daughter into a net bag and, accompanied by his two sons who had returned with him, carried it back to Howiyanumbu. When he reached the edge of the hamlet, he hung the girl's body in the net bag on a branch, next to the track. He did this, he informed the people in the settlement, so that whenever they passed the putrefying corpse they would smell it and be reminded of the obligation they owed him for coming

to their aid when he believed an attack on their hamlet was imminent, and for not being at home to defend his own family.

Tusiiwiil then set off in search of a totemic brother named Ambin. He was the leader of the Mboliyombo, one of the diverse group of peoples living under the protection of the Nowiniyen. As already noted, this once powerful Sawos-speaking group had been radically reduced in numbers in its original home territory during the second half of the nineteenth century, through warfare with other Sawos-speaking peoples. No longer capable of defending itself, its members had taken refuge with the Nowiniyen. Ambin's group occupied a separate hamlet within the larger Nowiniyen settlement.

When Tusiiwiil found Ambin, he told him that he wanted his help to take revenge against the Apukili who had killed his wife and daughter and his younger brother and his family. Ambin agreed without hesitation. With a number of other Nowiniyen men, he travelled back to Molipiir with Tusiiwiil to plan the attack.

The Apukili were well aware that the Yalaku would attempt to take revenge for their participation in the attack on Molipiir and, for their own safety, decided to abandon their settlement at Patakatowa and move further away from the Yalaku to the north, to a site named Apinow (G, Figure 6.1). This was the location of one of their earlier settlements, and many coconut palms and other fruit trees were readily available there. The settlement took its name from the hill on which it was located. This was adjacent to an immense sago stand, as well as to an area of open grassland. When they moved, each family took yam tubers, banana cuttings, mature coconuts, sugar cane and other crops from Patakatowa to plant at the new site.

The revenge raid that Tusiiwiil organized must have taken place relatively soon after the attack on Molipiir, as the Apukili had not yet had time to make slit-gongs for their new men's house. Instead, when they held ceremonies, they beat on thin planks of wood cut from flanged buttress roots of forest trees laid over holes dug in the earth floor. The holes served as sound chambers. When the planks were pounded with wooden beaters they produced sounds very similar to that of slit-gongs.

When the time arrived to launch the attack, it took Tusiiwiil's war-party a full day of hard walking to get within striking distance of the new Apukili settlement. Late in the afternoon, still several kilometres away, the men found an exceptionally large Apukili garden house full of yam tubers that its owners had brought with them from Patakatowa, and were preparing to plant. They made this their base for the night. The first men to enter the building found a Yena-ceremony figure stored there. As noted, the Apukili are believed to have originated the Yena, Minja and Nokwi ceremonies, and other peoples, such as Kwoma and Mayo speakers, subsequently purchased from them the right to perform their own versions. The Motek also had versions of these rituals, but the Yalaku and Nowiniyen did not. Yalaku and Nowiniyen men were nevertheless regular participants in these rituals, when the Apukili and other neighbouring groups performed them, and were respectful of the conventions that surrounded the handling of the sculptures displayed in them.

When the first men to enter the building found the Yena figure, they recognized it immediately for what it was. Not wanting to 'irritate' the spirit it depicted, and potentially have it retaliate by bringing them bad luck, they instructed the members of the war-party who were not entitled to participate in the Yena ceremony to wait outside until they had removed it to a nearby firewood store. That night the members of the war-party feasted both on the food they found in the house and that they harvested from a nearby garden.

The following morning the war-party set off while it was still dark. Just before first light, and while they were still some distance away, they heard the Apukili playing their makeshift slit-gongs. This indicated that they were performing a ceremony. One of the attackers, a Nowiniyen man named Mesikapa, told the others that he owned land nearby, knew the territory, and would do a quick reconnaissance of potential approaches. This was the same man who had unwittingly alerted the Nowiniyen people at Howiyanumbu to the presence of the Tongwinjamb and Apukili war-party when he got something in his eye that made it itch badly. Mesikapa and several other men approached the settlement under cover of the dense forest. After deciding on the best method of approach they reported back to the main party.

The settlement was surrounded by a palisade of tall logs. The area around the palisade had been cleared of trees and was covered with a dense wall of thorny vines. When the war-party reached the outer edge of this wall of vines a flock of white cockatoos (*wama*) perched in a nearby tree spotted them, and screeched loudly as they took to flight.

At that moment, one of the Apukili men inside the settlement climbed a coconut palm to get green nuts to drink. Named Sukutay, this man had not only participated in the attack on Molipiir, but was also the warrior who had actually speared Tusiiwiil's wife, and hence had obtained the credit for her kill. Hearing the cockatoos screeching, he was aware that this might indicate that a Yalaku war-party was approaching. He paused halfway up the palm. Half-jokingly, he called out loudly to an imagined Yalaku war-party outside, telling Tusiiwiil that he need not be concerned about his wife's welfare, whose soul he had personally captured through the act of killing her, as he was about to get some coconuts for her to drink.

The comment was humorous but it was also highly provocative. Tusiiwiil heard it and was so outraged that he wanted to launch the attack immediately. Not all of the

men, however, were in position, and the others prevailed upon him to wait.

Sukutay continued to climb the coconut palm and when he was high enough to see over the palisade he was stunned to discover that there was in fact a war-party waiting on the edge of forest, and that Tusiiwiil was at its head. He promptly slid down the trunk and shouted a warning to his fellow residents that they were about to come under attack. Their presence having been detected, the attackers rushed towards the palisade. But by the time they had broken down the heavily fortified door and climbed through, they found that the entire community once again had escaped, through other openings, into the surrounding forest.

Finding the place empty, the war-party decided to retreat before their opponents could organize themselves and launch a counter-attack. Many of the men were nevertheless reluctant to leave the region without making a single kill. While retreating through the forest, and under the guidance of Mesikapa and several of the other Nowiniyen men who also owned land in the area, and were consequently familiar with the locations of the different Apukili bush houses, they scoured the forest on both sides of the track. Eventually they found a woman named Mbaratow at an isolated garden house. She had her two young sons with her. They promptly killed all three. To add insult to injury, they badly mutilated the woman's face with their stone adzes and rammed a smouldering piece of firewood from her kitchen hearth into her vagina. In an added act of contempt, several men dried green tobacco leaves on the burning end of the protruding piece of wood. They then rolled them in banana leaves to make cigars they could smoke on their way home. Then they left.

The Apukili and Tongwinjamb organize a revenge raid

When the Yalaku returned to Molipiir, they celebrated the killing of the woman Mbaratow and her two boys with singing and dancing in the burnt-out remains of Tokimba men's house. They simultaneously advertised their success by repeatedly sending signals for all the surrounding groups to hear. The signalling was done on the drum owned by Tusiiwiil, the leader of the war-party. The instrument was named Wonyi Songgiila.

Immediately after this raid, Wachiipok,[61] one of the most influential of the Apukili leaders, began planning a counter-attack on the Yalaku. It was Wachiipok who had speared and killed Tusiiwiil's younger brother, Woyipa, during the earlier attack on Molipiir. Wachiipok travelled to Tongwinjamb to enlist the support of allies there. He also visited, and obtained the support of, a substantial number of men belonging to the Kwoma-speaking Wurambanj tribe, as well as the Amaki, one of the Kwoma-speaking Nukuma tribes to the north of the Washkuk Hills.[62]

Members of one of the Tongwinjamb clans who agreed to give him support, coincidentally, had just received a parcel of war magic from a Yalaku man named Yanenggela. He was inviting them, treacherously, to launch a raid against the same group of his own tribesmen who had just conducted the raid against the Apukili. Most of them, like Tusiiwiil, were residents of the Tokimba hamlet.

Yanenggela had been prompted to commit this act of treachery against his own tribe by the attempt of a Yalaku man named Kayiniir Nggiyimbey, from the Tokimba hamlet, to marry by force a Tongwinjamb woman named Maparakwa. She had been married to one of Yanenggela's clan brothers, who had recently died. During the period of mourning, Maparakawa had been staying with Yanenggela, under his protection, while she was deciding where she would remarry. Kayiniir had encountered the woman in the forest on her own, when she was on her way to process sago, and had physically tried to drag her off to one of his bush houses. She had fought back, biting him several times, and forcing him to let her go.

Yanenggela's wife, Asasow, was also a Tongwinjamb woman. On one of her routine visits to her home community, Yanenggela had sent the war magic with her to her brother, a man named Kwopa Sokwa. Purely fortuitously, the arrival of the parcel of war magic coincided with Wachiipok's visit. Wachiipok's sudden appearance gave its recipients the opportunity they needed to take revenge for the mistreatment of their 'sister' Maparakwa.

Ayam gave few details of the subsequent raid, except to say that it was devastatingly successful. He also said that it was a significant factor in his tribe's decline in population in the period immediately before the advent of Europeans in the Sepik. Those killed included major warriors and clan leaders, such as Tokindu (146?), Kwoyasaman (147) and Nyakay (14). Most of the killings were carried out by the Tongwinjamb members of the war-party.

*c.*1890
The Yalaku initiate a political alliance with the Honggwama tribe

Ayam emphasized that this second attack on the Tokimba hamlet at Molipiir demonstrated to the Yalaku once and for all that their peace pact with the Apukili had come to an end. It also demonstrated that their long-standing alliance with Tongwinjamb was now also a thing of the past. Well aware that they could come under attack again from both the Tongwinjamb and Apukili, the various Yalaku clan leaders decided to abandoned Molipiir and establish a new settlement further to the south at a site named

61 In Kwoma, this name literally means 'breadfruit tree [*wachii*] vine [*pok*(*o*)]'.

62 Their village name, 'Urambanj', is the government spelling of this tribal name; for its location, see Figure 6.1.

Nyinggi (12, Figure 6.1).[63] This brought them much closer physically to the Honggwama, a group with which the Yalaku had never conflicted militarily and to which it would now turn for the political support in dealing with third parties it had previously obtained from the Tongwinjamb. Over the following decades this new relationship with the Honggwama developed into a formal alliance that has persisted to this day. The Honggwama at that time had their main settlement close to the northern end of the Washkuk Hills, on its eastern side.

The Yalaku and Honggwama were not completely unrelated. For well over a century they had periodically intermarried, and there were also strong totemic ties between the two tribes. The two Yalaku clans named Hambora 1 and Hambora 2 shared many of the same totems as the Honggwama 'Tek' clans, and its other clans, including Rama and Yalaku Keyava, shared many totems with the Honggwama tribe's two 'Keyava' clans: Amachey and Wapiyupu. There was also an important link historically between the two groups, as Mbam, the founding ancestor of Amachey clan, had originally been a member of the Yalaku tribe (see Chapter 3). He was one of the spirits in human form who emerged from the underworld with Waspen, the spirit forebear of Rama clan.

The Tongwinjamb kill the Yalaku man Piyanombok

Following the move to Nyinggi, and notwithstanding the loss of a number of their most important fighting men, the members of the clans formerly based at Tokimba hamlet immediately began planning revenge raids against their Tongwinjamb and Apukili attackers. The opportunity to take action, successfully, against the Tongwinjamb arose fortuitously. For reasons that had nothing to do with the Yalaku, a Tongwinjamb war-party launched an attack on a group of Awokapa families living at a site on the eastern side of the Washkuk Hills named Nggandawaya (H, Figure 6.1). Although not the target of the attack, both Yalaku and Honggwama people were caught up in the fighting and killed.

This raid had its origins in the earlier devastating attack by the Tongwinjamb on the Awokapa Nggiley, when that tribe was located at the site named Awokapa at the northern end of the Washkuk Hills (see pp. 92–3 above). Following that attack, the surviving Awokapa scattered. As already noted, many took refuge with the Yalaku. But some moved to the place named Nggandawaya, further to the south in the Washkuk range. This site was actually owned by clans belonging to the Hongwama tribe, whose leaders had offered it to the Awokapa as a place of temporary refuge. The Tongwinjamb, however, were determined to drive the Awokapa out of the region altogether, and this attack was a further attempt to do so.

63 'Nyinggi' is an abbreviation of 'Nyingginyipiir'.

Coincidentally, when the Tongwinjamb launched the raid a prominent Yalaku man named Piyanombok (75) was visiting relatives at Nggandawaya. His Tongwinjamb wife, Maparakwa, was with him.[64] Three members of the Honggwama tribe, a woman and her two unmarried daughters, were also visiting Nggandawaya at the time, and were actually staying with Piyanombok. This woman, named Hoporeka, had been married to a Honggwama man belonging to Nowil clan, one of the tribe's two largest and most powerful groups. She had recently been widowed. While still in mourning, she had gone to stay with Piyanombok and had taken her two daughters with her. Piyanombok was her deceased husband's 'mother's brother' (*waw*). He was therefore a man she knew well from the many visits he had paid her and her husband over the course of her marriage. She was also of Honggwama origin.

Although the Awokapa living at the site were the exclusive target of the raid, Hoporeka and her daughters, and Piyanombok and his Tongwinjamb wife, were also killed. Their killing brought the Yalaku and Honggwama together militarily for the first time. As Ayam put it, 'our blood was spilled together at Nggandawaya'.

*c.*1890–5
The Yalaku and Honggwama together take revenge on a party of Tongwinjamb processing sago

When the Honggwama learned that three members of their tribe – Hoporeka and her daughters – had been killed at Nggandawaya, they immediately began planning a revenge raid against the Tongwinjamb clans involved. The Yalaku sent word that they also wished to participate in the raid, both to avenge the killing of Piyanombok and his wife, and the earlier attack on their hamlet at Molipiir (see pp. 104–5). The Honggwama leaders were successful in persuading a significant number of allies belong to the Wurambanj and Kowariyasi tribes to take part as well. Segments of both of these tribes had long-standing and unresolved grudges of their own against the Tongwinjamb.

When the Tongwinjamb attackers learned that a Honggwama woman and her two daughters were among those killed at Nggandaway, they knew that their kinsmen would strike back. In anticipation of this, they immediately constructed a huge palisade around the men's house in the hamlet from which the bulk of them derived. This was the hamlet Yawukwam, named after its men's house. Once completed, the men slept inside the palisade at night in the men's house, where they kept a large store of weapons. Their wives and children continued to sleep in their domestic dwellings outside. During the day women from the hamlet only ventured into the forest to process

64 This was the woman named Maparakwa referred to earlier – see p. 107. She married Piyanombok following the death of her previous Yalaku husband.

sago, fish or work in gardens if they were accompanied by a substantial contingent of armed men.

The Honggwama leaders decided that Yawukwam was too well fortified to attack. They chose, therefore, to wait for the opportunity to ambush its residents when they were working in the forest, well away from their main settlement. Eventually, allies in the Wurambanj tribe, Tongwinjamb's nearest neighbour, sent word that a large party of Tongwinjamb women had been processing sago for several days in a section of forest named Wurumbey Tuku. This was close to the boundary between their territory and that of the Tongwinjamb. They recommended this as a suitable place for an ambush.

The ambush proved to be even more successful than anticipated and resulted in the deaths of many Tongwinjamb men as well as women. One of the Tongwinjamb women killed was heavily pregnant. When she was speared, and lay dying on the forest floor, she gave birth. One of the attackers heard the infant crying and killed it.

From the attackers' perspective, the ambush was so successful that the leading warriors, after making the initial kills, stood aside so that younger men who had not yet killed in warfare could have the opportunity to do so. This instantly gave them the prized ability to cultivate yams.

Many of the attackers sustained injuries, but none was killed. A Yalaku man named Wasawoyanggu was hit in the chest with a spear, but men skilled in the art of treating spear wounds managed to extract the blade, and he survived. The leader of the war-party was a Honggwama man named Eyimba. He narrowly escaped death when a spear thrown at close quarters, by a Tongwinjamb man named Kopatuk, was deflected by a bailer shell he had tied as an ornament to the front of his pig-skin shield. The spear otherwise would have gone straight though the shield and hit him in the face. Eyimba later attributed his lucky escape to the sudden intervention of the female Nokwi spirit named Nankwi, of which he was the custodian (see Figure 9.2; see also Bowden 2011). Such spirits are thought to accompany their owners into battle and intervene on their behalf if need be, such as by deflecting spears away from them.

The Yalaku launch a separate attack on the Tongwinjamb at the hamlet named Yawukwam

Some time after this successful forest ambush, two of the Yalaku's leading warriors decided to organize a separate, head-on attack on the Tongwinjamb hamlet at Yawukwam. The decision proved to be a major mistake, politically and militarily, as it cost the Yalaku the lives of their two leading warriors: the brothers-in-law Tusiiwiil of Korembikow clan and Yuwayembi of YK clan.

To help launch this second attack, the Yalaku obtained the support of a substantial contingent of Nowiniyen men from the hamlet of Howiyanumbu, the target of the two earlier, failed attacks by a combined Tongwinjamb and Apukili war-party (see pp. 102, 104).

They also obtained the support of a substantial number of the Honggwama men who had participated in the attack on the Tongwinjamb sago-processers. But at the last minute, when the Yalaku and Nowiniyen war-party was on its way and close to Tongwinjamb, their Honggwama allies sent a message urging them to call off the raid, as they judged it too risky. Tusiiwiil and Yuwayembi, the joint Yalaku leaders of the war-party, received the message but fatefully decided that because they and their Nowiniyen supporters had almost reached their target they would press ahead.

The war-party reached the edge of Yawukwam hamlet just before daybreak. The majority of the men inside the palisade were still asleep. While waiting on the edge of the forest for sufficient light to attack, a woman named Warakwasa emerged from her house outside the palisade. When she did so, she caught sight of the waiting warriors and immediately shouted a warning to the men still inside the palisade that they had come under attack. Highly unusually for a woman, instead of fleeing, she grabbed one of the spears her husband kept at the front of their house, brandished it like a man and shouted defiantly at the members of the war-party. Realizing that she was within spear-throwing range, Ayam's father, Waspen, who was still only a young man, seized the opportunity to make his first kill and hurled a spear at her. It hit her just above the pelvis. She collapsed and soon died. Their presence having been detected, the war-party now rushed towards the palisade. On the way Waspen recovered his spear.

When the attackers reached the nearest door in the palisade, one of the men inside, named Apondu, called to them and mockingly enquired about their intentions. The Yalaku leaders replied equally derisively. Apondu then threw a piece of burning firewood over the palisade, a symbolic act indicating that those inside were more than ready to defend their settlement rather than try to escape.

While Tuwusiil and several other men were trying to force open the door, one of Apondu's clan brothers, named Mawukwos, who was standing on the walkway on the inner side of the palisade, looked over the wall. Seeing that Tusiiwiil had briefly put his shield aside so that he could break the door open, Mawukwos promptly threw a spear and hit him in the upper leg. Tusiiwiil fell. Yuwayembi, his brother-in-law, immediately moved forward. When Apondu looked over the palisade for a second time, Yuwayembi managed to hit him hard with a spear. The attackers successfully forced their way through the door. Once inside, Yuwayembi found Apondu, seriously wounded, still on the walkway, where he had dropped to his knees. He hit him with a second spear, killing him.

The majority of the defenders had grouped together in front of their men's house. Volleys of spears were thrown

back and forth. These resulted in many minor injuries but no deaths. In the meantime, men inside the building were signalling on the slit-gongs for assistance from neighbouring hamlets. Aware of the signals, and fearing that they would soon be overwhelmed by the new arrivals, Yuwayembi made the decision to retreat.

Yuwayembi had suffered a leg wound but could still walk. Tusiiwiil, on the other hand, had been speared several times by men standing on the walkway, and was lying on the ground, badly wounded. With the enemy in pursuit Yuwayembi and the other members of the war-party decided to leave Tusiiwiil where he was and retreat into the surrounding forest. But before they had gone far, Yuwayembi announced that he was going back. Tusiiwiil, he said, was his wife's brother, he had fought alongside him many times in the past, and he would not be able to bear his wife's recriminations if he abandoned him. After instructing the other members of the war-party to continue their retreat, he turned back to confront the enemy as best he could. That was the last the Yalaku saw of him, or Tusiiwiil. They were the greatest of the surviving warriors of their generation. Younger men now took over the leadership roles.

Yalaku makes a second attack on the Tongwinjamb, on this occasion on the hamlet named Mbayikwi

Sometime later the Yalaku launched a second attack on the Tongwinjamb. The target on this occasion was not Yawukwam, but another hamlet named Mbayikwi, located in low-lying country some distance to the north of the main Tongwinjamb settlement. As at Yawukwam, the men's house at Mbayikwi, named Asawor, was surrounded by a tall palisade.

The Yalaku received significant assistance on this occasion from a contingent of warriors from Avatip, the nearest of the three Manambu-speaking tribes on the Sepik River. The Yalaku had many totemic kin and longstanding trading partners at Avatip, and men from both communities frequently visited each other's settlements. Ayam gave no reason for the contingent of Avatip fighters agreeing to join the attack on Mbayikwi, except to say that the Avatip had separately clashed many times previously with the Tongwinjamb. These clashes had principally taken the form of ambushes, by one side or the other, during markets at trading sites around the edges of the Washkuk Hills. On this occasion, the Avatip warriors travelled up the Screw River and, guided by Yalaku men, walked across to the pre-arranged meeting site.

When the combined Yalaku and Avatip war-party was approaching Mbayikwi, the men could hear from the drumming on slit-gongs that a ceremony was underway. By the time they reached the outskirts of the hamlet, just before dawn, the ceremony had come to an end and the participants were dispersing to their different houses to sleep.

From the cover of the forest, they could see that a Tongwinjamb man, named Nggiyimbey, was doing sentry duty on the edge of the settlement. He was well known personally to the attackers, both to the Yalaku and the Avatip. They could also see that another man, named Sowanggor, was sitting in front of his house cooking some food for himself before turning in. He was grating coconut to eat with boiled sago. To provide extra light, he had propped a burning coconut frond torch on a hearthstone next to where he was sitting. Suddenly, Sowanggor heard a noise coming from the direction in which the war-party was approaching. Not seeing anyone, he suspected that a wandering ghost had made the noise while looking for food. To discourage the ghost from approaching any further, he called to it, half humorously, and told it not to bother visiting his house, as he was not eating anything special, only grated coconut. To prevent the ghost from seeing the food he was preparing, he stubbed out the lit torch on the ground.

Having extinguished the torch the members of the war-party could no longer see him as clearly as before, but the leading men decided that this was too good an opportunity to miss to make a kill. One of them quickly emerged from the trees and hurled a spear. It missed Sowanggor's torso, at which it had been aimed, but struck him on the arm. As soon as he was hit, Sowanggor bellowed the alarm: '*pichawa, pichawa, pichawa*' (in Kwoma, 'a spearing, a spearing, a spearing').

When the few men who were still in the ceremonial house heard the warning, they promptly emerged through the door in the palisade and ran down to Sowanggor's house to investigate. The first to arrive was a man named Sokwin. Several of the attackers hit him simultaneously with their spears, killing him instantly. A man named Kami then appeared. He too was hit but only slightly wounded. He sprinted into forest and took cover under the mass of buttress roots around the base of a giant pandanus tree. Some of the attackers followed and soon discovered where he was hiding. But try as they might, they could not get a clear shot at him through the mass of roots. They had to be content with gashing him a number of times with the points of their spears.

Another Tongwinjamb man, named Tayiwor, briefly confronted the war-party. But after throwing his one spear, he too disappeared into the forest. Several members of the war-party gave chase but were unable to locate him. They later learned that he had taken cover under a pile of forest litter.

Men in other Tongwinjamb hamlets in the same area heard the warning cry that Sowanggor had given, but only indistinctly. They called back asking for more information. Sowanggor by this time had also fled into the forest for safety. Pretending to be a Tongwinjamb, one of the Yalaku men shouted back, in Kwoma, that it was a false alarm and

that Sowanggor had called out when he thought he was coming under attack from a band of wandering ghosts. The ruse worked. One of the men, named Nggumbutombo,[65] called back to say that he thought they might be coming under attack from the Honggwama, since he had heard from allies in that tribe that an attack was imminent. Continuing to speak in Kwoma, the Yalaku man reiterated that it was a false alarm and that he and the other members of his hamlet did not need to do anything. The war-party then made its escape. Sokwin was the only Tongwinjamb killed on this occasion.

Fighting with the Sawos-speaking tribe named Mowi

Not long after this attack on the Tongwinjamb at Mbayikwi, the few remaining members of the Mboliyombo tribe, all of whom were living under the protection of the Nowiniyen, came under attack from one of their old enemies. These were a people named Mowi, who were located to the east of the Amaku River. At the time, the Mboliyombo were living at the former Yalaku settlement named Kowinumbu (8a, Figure 6.1). This site, as already noted, was actually owned by one of the Nowiniyen clans.

A group of Nowiniyen men had been living for some years with the Mowi and apparently now identified more with them than their former Nowiniyen tribesmen. One day several of them arrived unannounced at Howiyanumbu, the largest of the several Nowiniyen hamlets. The leader of this hamlet was a celebrated warrior named Hasawa. Finding the settlement almost empty of men of fighting age, the visitors asked where they had all gone. Two elderly women, one the mother of Tusiiwiil, who had died in the attack on the Tongwinjamb hamlet Yawukwam, told them that Hasawa and the others were away participating with a Yalaku war-party in an attack on the Apukili.[66] They said that the attack would have taken place by then and that they were waiting for the returning war-party to send a signal on slit-gongs at the old Yalaku settlement at Molipiir to indicate that it had been a success. The war-party, they informed the visitors, would be back in a day or two. After listening to what the women had to say, the men accepted some green coconuts to drink and left.

Ayam stated that he did not know why the Mowi launched the raid against the Mboliyombo, but assumed it was in revenge for some past injury they had received at their hands. The visitors from Mowi would have been on a reconnaissance trip to determine the lie of the land.

The attack on the Mboliyombo took place, at Kowinumbu, shortly after this visit. The war-party included Sawos-speaking men from Jama village, located today twenty kilometres or so to the north of the modern trading post at Pagwi on the Sepik. The attack was successful. As soon as the fighting started the Mboliyombo who could do so fled to a nearby Nowiniyen hamlet named Aruk.[67]

Fearing that the Mowi might come looking for those who had escaped to their settlement, the entire Aruk population took cover in the forest. According to Ayam, their fear was well founded, as the Mowi practised a different style of warfare from the Kaunga. Instead of retreating once the main objective of a raid had been achieved, the Mowi would relentlessly pursue those who had escaped and gone into hiding.

On this occasion, this is exactly what they did. Purely coincidentally, the Yalaku man named Woranggen was visiting Aruk, where he had relatives. He was the man who had lived safely for many years with the Tongwinjamb under the protection of totemic kin there, but had returned to live with his tribesmen when relations with that group soured. When news of the Mowi attack on Kowinumbu reached him and the others at Aruk, Woranggen took cover in the forest with the rest of its residents – including those who had just arrived from Kowinumbu.

Woranggen took cover with one of his Aruk 'sons', a man named Yapayeka. Initially, the two hid near the hamlet. But knowing that the Mowi were in the habit of pursuing their victims, even into areas of forest that were unfamiliar to them, Yapayeka suggested that they both move further away. Woranggen, fatefully, dismissed his 'son's' concerns and told him that because he was well known in the region, including to the Mowi, he had nothing to fear. Yapayeka responded by telling Woranggen that if he wanted to stay where he was he could do so, but that he was leaving. This man Yapayeka was known for having a very large lump on one of his legs.

Rather than staying in one spot Woranggen moved slowly through the forest, listening for the sounds of people who might be nearby. Suddenly, he disturbed a wild fowl. According to Ayam, these large ground-dwelling megapods can fly and when they do the flapping of their wings makes a very distinctive sound. As soon as the bird took to the air a group of Mowi warriors who were close by, but unaware of Woranggen's presence, heard the noise. Assuming that something had startled the bird they decided to investigate.

65 In Kwoma, this name literally means 'stump [*tobo*] of a *gubu* tree.'

66 Ayam did not specify which attack this was.

67 The group Ayam referred to as 'Mowi' is possibly the one that occupies a village listed in the *Village Directory* for 1968 (p. 74) as 'Moi', and which forms part of the Sepik Plains Census Division. The linguist Donald Layock (1973:25) lists the occupants of this village as speakers of the Western Wosera dialect of Abelam, rather than Sawos, as Ayam suggested. It is equally possible that the people Ayam referred to occupied another village with a very similar name: 'Maiwi'. Laycock (1973:27) indicates that the members of this village form part of the Sawos language group (see also the *Village Directory* 1968:74). Google Earth identifies a village named Moi in the area where Ayam's account suggests it should be. The co-ordinates are 3° 57'18.32" S and 142° 53' 36.30" E.

They soon found Woranggen and unceremoniously speared him. His 'son' Yapayeka later found his body, and informed his Yalaku kinsmen.

Nowiniyen, Yalaku and Motek undertake a revenge raid on the Sawos group named Mowi

Following this attack, the Mboliyombo men who had survived the fighting immediately began organizing a revenge raid. They put together a war-party that included a contingent of Tumbuma, one of the two once-powerful Ngala-speaking tribes that by now were also living under the protection of the Nowiniyen. The Tumbuma leader was a celebrated fighting man named Ambin. Ambin in turn enlisted the support of men from Aruk, the Nowiniyen hamlet that had been caught up in the earlier attack, as well as a substantial contingent of Motek tribesmen. He also persuaded several outstanding fighters belonging to Yalaku's Rama clan join him. This was the group to which the Yalaku man Woranggen had belonged. The Yalaku agreed to participate to avenge the Woranggen's death.

The Rama clan participants included one of Ayam's clan 'FF' (*tumbuna*), named Kayipanggu (8), and a man named Yuwiyaku. Ayam's father, Waspen, had also been keen to participate but was incapacitated by a large yaws ulcer that had recently appeared on one of his legs.

According to Ayam, one Mowi practice that was quite different from that of the Yalaku and other Kaunga was to keep large stores of weapons outside their main settlement. If a village came under attack, the men would defend it if they could, but if not retreat into the forest, collect the weapons stored in bush houses and then try to encircle the enemy and attack from the rear. They were also known for pursuing retreating war-parties.

On this occasion, the Kaunga war-party successfully fought its way into the Mowi settlement and torched many of its buildings. The men then retreated. On their way home they rested briefly on the edge of a large area of grassland and then resumed their retreat through the adjacent forest.

Before they had gone far, they suddenly encountered a large party of Mowi warriors on the track ahead of them. The Yalaku and their allies were eventually able to fight them off but only after suffering heavy casualties. The dead included a very prominent Mboliyombo warrior named Worandu, and the two Rama clan men referred to above: Yuwiyaku and Kayipanggu (8).

Ayam reported that his father, Waspen, was incensed when he received news of the loss of two of his clan's leading members. As an expression of his grief, he smeared his face and body with white clay, gave up eating boiled sago and stopped washing and cutting his hair.

Sometime later, while Waspen was still very visibly in mourning, a Yalaku woman named Nyawaka stopped to speak to him when she was passing his house. She brusquely chided him for what she regarded as his excessive display of grief and told him to put an end to it. Even more pointedly, she told him that he and his kinsmen only had themselves to blame for the deaths of the two men he was mourning. This woman was a member of the now defunct Yalaku clan named Korembikow, the group to which the great Yalaku warrior named Tusiiwiiil had belonged. With unusual candour, she reminded Waspen that when Tuwusiil died during the attack on the Tongwinjamb hamlet Yawukwam, an attack in which Waspen himself had participated, the Tongwinjamb men who killed Tusiiwiil belonged to the same totemic division to which Waspen belonged. The woman told him that when other Korembikow men learned that totemic allies of Waspen's clan had killed their greatest warrior, they decided to take revenge. They could not do so directly, since their clan and Rama were members of the same tribe. But they did so indirectly, by encouraging the Tumbuma leader Ambin to persuade senior Rama men to participate in the attack on the Mowi, in the hope that they would be killed. To this end, they sent Ambin a parcel of war magic with instructions to pass it on to Waspen's clan – to encourage some of its members to join his war-party. The deaths of his kinsmen, the woman told Waspen, were exactly what the Korembikow men had hoped for.

Ayam remarked that his father was deeply shocked to hear what this woman had to say, and immediately began wondering how he could take revenge against Korembikow clan. Open warfare was out of the question, but sometime later, though exactly how long is unclear, an event took place for which Waspen and the other members of his clan were not responsible but which nonetheless met with their unqualified approval. This involved a devastating ambush on a Yalaku trading party, consisting principally of members of Korembikow clan, by a war-party from Avatip village on the Sepik. This took place at a market site on the Yimi River. Ayam indicated that this was another of the events that significantly weakened his community and helped reduce it in size to what it was in 1973.

The Avatip undertake a devastating attack on a group of Yalaku clans at a trading site on the Yimi River

As indicated in Chapter 5, the Avatip people on the Sepik have long traded with the different Kaunga groups at market sites on and near the Yimi and Amaku rivers, and continue to do so today. They reach these sites in flotillas of canoes; the Kaunga reach them on foot. Like all other tribes in this region, Avatip is composed of different clans and totemic groups that have complex and often conflicting ties to neighbouring groups.

The main Yalaku settlement at the time, at Nyinggi, was divided into three main segments, each of which was located in a separate hamlet. The largest, to which Waspen's clan belonged, was located at the hamlet named Nyinggi (= Nyingginyipiir), after which the settlement as a whole took its name. The second largest, to which Korembikow clan

Figure 7.6 A kiipa tree (in centre of the photograph) growing on the edge of Napu Lagoon on the western side of the Washkuk Hills, 2006.

belonged, was named Katawinggey. For reasons Ayam did not explain, one segment of the Avatip tribe arranged to treacherously attack members of the Katawinggey hamlet during a communal market.

Ambushes at market sites were typically undertaken when the attackers had no other ready means of gaining access to the enemy. On this occasion, a large number of Yalaku women from Katawinggey hamlet accepted an invitation to meet women from Avatip. A number of Mboliyombo women living at Kowinumbu, the settlement that had not long earlier come under attack from the Mowi, also arranged to participate. None of the women on either side were aware that an ambush was being planned.

The market site was on the edge of a large lagoon adjacent to the Yimi River. The trading area itself was relatively clear of vegetation, but the bank on each side of it was covered with dense growths of wild sugar cane and other tall reeds. The Avatip men planning the ambush travelled to the market site during the night and hid their canoes and themselves among the tall reeds. The Avatip traders arrived several hours later, well after the sun was up.

A number of armed Yalaku men went with their women to the market but had no reason to expect that anything untoward would occur. Two of these men were the brothers-in-law, Kapay (123) of YN2 clan, the man who was rapidly emerging as one of his tribe's most influential leaders, and Mesipoko (165) of H2 clan. The latter was married to one of Kapay's clan 'sisters'. At the trading site the two men sat down together some distance from the shore to watch the Yalaku women lay out their sago and other goods.

The Avatip traders arrived a little later in several canoes. They brought with them a group of young Yalaku men who had been on an extended visit to their village, where they had been staying with personal trading partners. These included the men Wanyinggi, Tonmeri, Waniyaw, Yendivi and Siipiimeri. Having been away for several weeks, they were looking forward to returning home. To celebrate doing so they had lavishly decorated their hair with flowers and brightly coloured leaves.

Mesipoko (165), one of the two Yalaku men mentioned above, was the father of one of them: Tonmeri (167). When the Avatip traders beached their canoes, Tonmeri leapt out of his, went straight up to where his father was sitting with Kapay, and playfully admonished him for not coming down to the shore to greet him. He assured the two men that they had nothing to be concerned about, as the trading party was made up largely of women. But the two older men, who had long ago learned to be cautious, insisted on staying where they were.

At a signal from one of the older women the trading commenced. An Avatip woman would offer one of the Yalaku women a fish or other product and indicate which lump of sago or other item she wanted in return. If the Yalaku woman agreed, she would hand it over.

After watching the proceedings for a while Mesipoko decided to wander into the nearby forest to collect edible leaves off a vine the Yalaku call *kwanyibeya*. Kapay decided to get a better view of the surroundings by climbing a tall *kiipa* tree growing nearby (Figure 7.6).

While Kapay was standing on a branch high up in the tree, the Avatip war-party suddenly emerged from the tall reeds, surrounded the Yalaku and began attacking them with spears and adzes. The first Yalaku to die was a man named Chonggor. He was a personal trading partner and close political ally of one of Avatip's most influential men. To prevent his Avatip ally from alerting him to the planned raid, the members of the war-party had successfully shut him out of all of their discussions.

The Avatip killed a series of men and women in quick succession. One was a much-admired young woman named Apokwalamboy. She was the wife of a Yalaku man named Pakiya (possibly 172), a member of Korembikow clan, the group to which the great Yalaku warrior Tusiiwiil (171) had belonged. An Avatip man named Nggumanj felled her with a blow to the back of her head with a heavy stone adze. Every time they felled a man or woman the Avatip killers expertly decapitated them and threw the head into a canoe to take home as a trophy. As they did so, they would let out the customary cry of triumph.

One of the attackers tried to kill Pakiya, Apokwalamboy's husband. However, he was fortunate to have a bundle of spears on his shoulder, and when his attacker tried to bring down a heavy adze on his head, Pakiya ducked and it harmlessly struck the spears. Pakiya's father-in-law, named Hopuyaw (possibly 5), was with him. One of the Avatip attackers managed to hit him with an arrow, but Hopuyaw saw it coming and was agile enough to twist and blunt its force. These two men, son-in-law and father-in-law, respectively, were two of the few Yalaku men to survive the attack.

Kapay, standing in the tree, and Mesipoko, absent in the forest, were caught completely off guard. By the time Kapay had climbed down from the tree, and Mesipok had returned from the forest after hearing the shouting, the attack was over and the Avatip warriors were back in their canoes paddling away, out of reach.

Ayam reported that when his father learned how many members of Korembikow clan had been killed in this attack he was greatly pleased. For him, this avenged the deaths of the two kinsmen he had been mourning. Ayam indicated that he was not born at the time (*c.*1890–5) but had discussed the attack in detail with his father when he was an adult. His father, he said, was his chief instructor in his community's history.

8

Continuing warfare with neighbours, and the rise of Kapay as a military leader

***c.*1895–1900**

A sexual liaison involving the wife of a leading Yalaku man precipitates major warfare

Following the devastating ambush by Avatip raiders of a trading party on the Yimi River described in the last chapter, the leaders of the different Yalaku clans agreed to move their community, for its own safety, from Nyinggi back to their old settlement at Molipiir (11, Figure 6.1). Over time, life returned to normal and the Yalaku, like their neighbours, resumed holding ceremonies to which qualified members of all of the surrounding communities were invited.

Still well before Europeans had established themselves in the middle Sepik, the Nowiniyen held a ceremony at a hamlet named Mbandala (K, Figure 6.1) in which many Yalaku men and women participated. Ceremonies are the occasion when the greatest numbers of people come together. They give people the opportunity to catch up with friends and relatives, and for the unmarried to meet potential spouses. Not uncommonly, they are also the occasion for extramarital liaisons.

The Yalaku participants included Kisala, an influential member of YK clan, and his wife, a Yalaku woman of YN2 clan named Kwinjakos. During the ceremony Kwinjakos met up with Ambin, the celebrated warrior and leader of the Tumbuma, one of the two small Ngala-speaking groups living under the protection of the Nowiniyen (see Chapters 6 and 7). The two quietly left the ceremony and spent several days together at one of Ambin's bush-houses at a site named Kumanggey.

When the ceremony ended and Kisala was ready to return home, he searched for his wife among the different houses at Mbandala, thinking she might be visiting one of her female friends. When he could not find her, he visited each of the other Nowiniyen hamlets. Still unable to locate her, he travelled across to Njambanggey, the Motek tribe's main settlement, where he met with no more success. Everywhere he went people denied having any knowledge of his wife's whereabouts. In fact, people soon got wind of where the couple were, but not wanting to provoke Kisala into violence, they said nothing. Deciding that there was nothing more he could do for the time being, Kisala returned to Molipiir. However, he also began hearing rumours that his wife was with Ambin at his bush-house. Then, a day or two later, Kwinjakos suddenly turned up at Molipiir.

When she arrived Kisala demanded to know where she had been. Kwinjakos casually brushed off his question and said that she had been travelling around visiting different female friends. Kisala feigned indifference and merely commented, 'Oh, is that true?' In reality he was outraged by his wife's behaviour but he also knew, like all husbands, that he had to be extremely circumspect about how he treated her. In this society all wives, by definition, are other men's 'sisters', and if their husbands seriously mistreat them, they will either divorce them or pass some of their leavings to a brother to take revenge on their behalf through sorcery (see Bowden 1987). In addition, Kwinjakos was the clan 'sister' of the rising Yalaku political leader and warrior Kapay (123), a man whose feelings, and whose close relatives, were to be respected.

Kisala, however, had no intention of allowing Ambin's dalliance with his wife to go unpunished. He therefore secretly met with a friend (*nawa*) and renowned warrior named Piikalaya, who belonged to the Mboliyombo tribe. Like the group to which Ambin belonged, the Sawos-speaking Mboliyombo were another of the once powerful and independent political groups that had been reduced through warfare to the point where it could no longer function independently, and whose members were now living under the protection of the Nowiniyen. They occupied a separate hamlet within the larger Nowiniyen tribal settlement. Kisala gave Piikalaya a parcel of war magic. He told him that he wanted the hamlet at which Ambin was based to 'burn', and explained why.

Kisala approached Piikalaya for help because he knew that he and other Mboliyombo men had long-standing grudges of their own against Ambin's group, and were looking for an excuse to take revenge. Receiving Kisala's war magic provided them with it. For his part, Piikalaya insisted that if any of the Tumbuma or other people living at Ambin's hamlet fled for protection to the Yalaku at Molipiir

after the attack, Kisala must use his influence to deny them refuge. Having delivered the war magic Kisala returned home.

To help ensure that his attack on Ambin's Ngala-speaking group was successful, Piikalaya made use of his own extensive contacts among neighbouring communities on the eastern side of the Yimi River to recruit support, including among two groups Ayam identified as the Wanenggwa and Winggeyepa. After rendezvousing at a prearranged site, Piikalaya led a successful attack on Ambim's hamlet at Mbandala. Ambin survived and fled into the forest.

In addition to Ambin's group, Mbandala was also the home of a sizable group of indigenous Nowiniyen people, led by a renowned warrior named Hasawa. Although they were not targeted, following the attack Hasawa and the other members of his group abandoned Mbandala and went to Molipiir to seek refuge with the Yalaku. In keeping with his agreement with Piikalaya, Kisala fiercely opposed Hasawa's request and brusquely accused him of being well aware of Ambin's affair with his wife, but of saying nothing to protect him. His told Hasawa that his wife's behaviour was so scandalous that it had polluted his house and everything in it. He had become aware of this, he told him, when he had thrown the ashes from his kitchen fire into the stream that ran past his house. The ashes poisoned all of its fish, which floated dead to the surface.

Failing to find refuge at Molipiir, Hasawa took his group to the Motek settlement. Its leaders gave him permission to establish a new hamlet on its outskirts, at a site named Mbendembiri.

c.1900–5

Hasawa takes revenge on Kisala for refusing to provide refuge

Hasawa was deeply angered by Kisala's opposition to his request for refuge at Molipiir, and despite the formal peace pact that existed between the Nowiniyen and Yalaku tribes quickly organized a war-party to take revenge.

When he had assembled enough men, he set off for Kisala's hamlet at Molipiir. When they were getting close, they came across a bush-house at which a Yalaku man named Kalawen and his wife Mbwimbwi were staying. This couple, Ayam noted, were his maternal grandparents. Although dawn had only just broken, Mbwimbwi was standing outside the house when the war-party suddenly appeared out of the forest. Holding her nerve, she called to Hasawa, who was at the front of the group, and asked if he was leading a war-party. He replied he was, but that he was not interested in her or her husband, only Kisala. He advised that the two make themselves scarce, to avoid being inadvertently caught up in the fighting.

When the warriors reached Molipiir they headed straight for Kisala's house. Anticipating that Hasawa might take retaliatory action against him, Kisala had constructed a huge palisade around it. Several members of the hamlet who were already up and about when the war-party arrived gave the alarm. Kisala immediately emerged from his house and began barricading the door in the palisade. But before he could do so, Hasawa, standing outside, managed to hit him with a spear. The injury was not fatal and Kisala managed pull the weapon out. His intention was to throw it straight back at Hasawa, but while extracting it he broke the blade, rendering it useless.

Kisala then reached for a bone dagger he had suspended from his neck on his back (see Figure 8.1). He discovered that the cord supporting it had broken and the dagger had fallen off somewhere. As a substitute, he grabbed a length of bamboo, breaking off a section to use as a thrusting implement. But Hasawa had by now climbed through the opening in the palisade and physically threw himself at Kisala, catching hold of him by the leg. When Kisala began stabbing him with the bamboo pole, Hasawa called to his son-in-law, Miinday, who was close behind, to come to his aid. Miinday climbed through the opening in the palisade and hit Kisala hard with a spear, killing him instantly.

By the time other members of his hamlet had come to Kisala's defence it was too late to save him. After a short and intense exchange of spears with other residents, Hasawa gave the signal to retreat.

Despite the brevity of this attack, it had serious repercussions for the Yalaku tribe as a whole. In addition to losing Kisala, one of the tribe's important fighting men and political leaders, it resulted in the deaths of several other very prominent Yalaku men and one woman. The men included Manggimonggel (127?) and Yanenggela. The woman was Yowembwiya, the wife of Teyikwal (63).

A few weeks before this attack took place, a Nowiniyen man named Rekawati had travelled to Molipiir with his Yalaku wife, Holonggitakwa, to spend time with her parents. The latter lived in the same hamlet as Kisala. Rekawati was unaware that Hasawa was planning an attack on the hamlet he and his wife were visiting. They survived the fighting, as did his wife's parents, but one of his wife's clan 'fathers' was killed. This was the man named Yanenggela referred to above.

As soon as Hasawa's war-party left, and fearing that one of the Yalaku might take revenge on him for Hasawa's actions, Rekawati and his wife packed up their few personal effects and set off for home. They followed

Figure 8.1 Ambunyiki of Nowil clan, Bangwis village (Kwoma), showing how both Kwoma and Yalaku men traditionally wore bone daggers hanging from the neck on the back, 1986. The dagger shown was made from one of the leg bones of Ambunyiki's late father, Hames.

the same track as the retreating war-party, and were not far behind. Holonggitakwa, for her part, was outraged by what had happened, and in particular by Hasawa's killing of her 'father' Yanenggela. While she and her husband were walking along the track she began to keen loudly. Hasawa and the other members of the war-party were close enough to hear her. When they were far enough away from Molipiir to do so safely, he brought the war-party to a temporary halt and waited for her. When she and her husband caught up with them, Hasawa told her that he had no quarrel with her, or her family, and that his dispute with the Yalaku had now been settled. He also told her that he understood she would want to mourn her 'father's' death.

The words that Holonggitakwa had spontaneously used in her keening had so impressed the men in the war-party that later one of them, whose name has not been preserved, turned them into a lament. The Nowiniyen later 'shared' the lament with the people at Molipiir, the victims of the attack. Ayam and Kiriyas performed it at this point in the narrative (Song 8).

The lament is composed from the perspective of the person whose grief it expresses. It does not identify the person nor name any of the victims. It nevertheless gives powerful expression to the singer's grief by describing how her home: 'My Molipiir' (line 2), has become a wasteland where the occupants have been killed and the houses (*kay*) are no longer the abodes of living humans, only ghosts of the dead.[68] The devastation had been so great, the song indicates, that not even birds (*wapi*) could be heard singing in the surrounding forest (lines 3 and 5). In reality, as listeners to the song would know, the entire population of Molipiir was not wiped out, nor was its wildlife. The hyperbole is simply an expression of the depth of the singer's anger at what had happened.

Song 8: A lament (howi) commemorating the deaths that followed an attack on the Yalaku settlement at Molipiir

1 *Molipiir, kay tu yiika, gaba na wiya.*
At Molipiir the houses are empty, abodes only of ghosts.
2 *Wuni Molipiir, kay tu yiika, maj na wiya.*
At my Molipiir the houses are empty, abodes only of ghosts.
3 *Wapi yiika, gaba, maj na wiya.*
No birdsong, abodes only of ghosts.
4 *Wuni Molipiir, kay tu yiika, maj na wiya.*
At my Molipiir the houses are empty, abodes only of ghosts.
5 *Wapi yiika, maj na wiya.*
No birdsong, abodes only of ghosts.

The Yalaku term for 'ghost' is *maj*. The composer uses both this term (lines 2 and 4) and, for variation, the parallel Kwoma term, *gaba*, 'ghost' (lines 1 and 3). *Kay* and *wiya* are different Yalaku terms for 'house'. 'House' in this context is equivalent to 'hamlet' or 'settlement'.

Hasawa's attack seems to have taken place around 1905, as Ayam stated that the woman Holonggitakwa, whose keening inspired the composition of the song, was still alive when I first visited Yelogu in 1973. She was living at the Motek tribe's settlement at Ambuken on the Yimi River with one of her adult sons. She was probably in her late eighties or even nineties, not an exceptional age for women in this region. Her husband Rekawati had died some years earlier.

*c.*1905–10
Kisala's totemic kin in the Motek tribe take revenge against Hasawa

Hasawa's killing of Kisala was hugely controversial among the members of both the Nowiniyen and Yalaku tribes, as it was a blatant breach of the peace pact between the two groups. Senior members of both groups, however, decided that as Hasawa's attack did not have the approval of the other Nowiniyen clans, and was directed at one man personally rather than the Yalaku more generally, the peace pact should hold. The Yalaku consequently took no action.

However, totemic kin of Kisala who belonged to the Motek tribe were less forgiving. They were incensed that Hasawa, to whom their tribe had given refuge, would turn on one of their kinsmen. When they heard that an attack had taken place, two elderly Motek men, Awiyombo and Kwalambu, visited Hasawa's hamlet to find out precisely who had been killed. Hasawa listed the dead individually. After these two Motek men had heard who had died, they publicly denounced him and pointedly warned him not to be too triumphal in the way he and his kinsmen celebrated the kills.[69]

These two Motek men subsequently decided to take their own revenge on Hasawa and his band of warriors, but indirectly. They secretly requested that Motek women with relatives in Hasawa's group try to obtain leavings that they could use in sorcery. Not long afterwards, an epidemic swept through the Motek settlement that caused many deaths. Hasawa himself eventually succumbed to it. When he too became ill and realized he was about to die, he told

68 The term *wuni* in lines 2 and 4 is the first-person singular pronoun 'I', but both Ayam and Kiriyas glossed it (in TP) in this context as the possessive 'my' ('*bilong mi*') (Aikhenvald 2020:228). The singer is clearly identifying herself with her natal community at Molipiir. The term '*tu*' in lines 1, 2 and 4 is probably a variant pronunciation of the word I spell '*du*', which means man, person, human. Hence the expression '*kay tu*' in the song probably literally means 'houses and people'.

69 Ayam remarked in passing that a son of one of these two Motek men was still alive in 1973 and living at the Motek settlement at Ambuken. His name was Ndiyemu.

his kinsmen that the Nowiniyen tribe was no longer strong enough to defend itself against its many enemies and that, despite what he had done, they should live in peace with the Yalaku. The days of raids of the kind he had conducted, he told them, were over.

c.1910–15

The Yalaku move to Tepi; the Apukili are located at the old Yalaku settlement of Wosakapi

Sometime after Hasawa's attack, the Yalaku community as a whole decided to abandoned Molipiir for a second time and move their main settlement to a place named Tepi (13, Figure 6.1). The Apukili at this time were living nearby at Wosakapi, the site of one of the earliest Yalaku settlements (see p. 67).

While the Yalaku were located at Tepi, a woman named Yinggimaya, who was married to the Yalaku man Sumunyi, had an illicit sexual encounter with the leading Apukili warrior named Wachiipok. While visiting the Apukili settlement at Wosakapi, the woman sought out Wachiipok for the purpose of having sex. She found him up a tree searching for a suitable piece of wood to make into a handle for a new adze. When she told him what she wanted, he climbed down and complied. The woman then went back to her settlement at Tepi.

Rumours of what had happened soon began to circulate. When Wachiipok realized that the sexual encounter had become the subject of widespread comment, he set out to diffuse the situation by selecting two of his most important shell valuables. Both were old, had proper names and had their own histories. He took them over to the Yalaku settlement at Tepi.

On his way, he found that a Yalaku man named Takawor had constructed a new bush-house next to the track he was using, and had tied leaves across the track to taboo anyone from using it. When Wachiipok found the path blocked, he asked Takawor pointedly why he hadn't built his house further away from the track, as he owned many other suitable sites in the area. Takawor told him that he wanted to protect the large sago stand he owned adjacent to it. Wachiipok was a major warrior and not a man to be trifled with. He told Takawor that he was going to continue to use the track and that if he tried to stop him he would have a fight on his hands. Takawor let him pass.

Wachiipok was not intending to meet directly with the husband of the woman with whom he had had the sexual encounter, in case tempers flared and fighting broke out. So he took the two shell valuables to Kapakeli (128), who lived in a different hamlet in the same settlement. Kapakeli, Ayam noted, was the father of Kiriyas (130), the man who was sitting next to him while he was narrating this history. Wachiipok asked Kapakeli to send his two wives, named Mukwiyet and Wayinep, with the two valuables to Sumunyi to see if he would accept them in settlement of the matter. They did so and Sumunyi said that he that he would. Wachiipok then went back to Wosakapi.

c.1910–20

Apukili launch attack on the Yalaku at Tepi with the help of Tongwinjamb

While the Yalaku were located at Tepi the Apukili, led by the same great warrior Wachiipok, undertook a devastating raid on them, resulting in the death of a large number of women and children. Ayam gave no reason for the attack, or any details, except to say that the Apukili were assisted by a sizable contingent of warriors from Tongwinjamb. Nor did he connect it with Wachiipok's brief encounter with the woman Yinggimaya. This attack, Ayam reported, was another of the blows that greatly weakened the Yalaku as an independent group.

The Yalaku abandon Tepi

Following this attack, the entire Yalaku community went into hiding in the surrounding swamp country where people were forced to live in conditions of great privation for several weeks. While in hiding, they received reports from Apukili and Tongwinjamb allies that the men who had conducted the raid were still actively searching for them. This meant that there was no prospect of returning to Tepi in the short term. While living rough in the forest, people periodically made trips back to their former settlement at Molipiir to collect coconuts and other food still available there. The Apukili, Ayam reported, were relentless in their pursuit of the Yalaku. Whenever they found people working in the forest alone, or in small groups, they killed them.

On one occasion a group of Apukili men went in search of several Yalaku families they had heard were living in a section of swamp country named Kiyar. Eventually, they found two men processing sago. One of them, named Hopuyaw, had felled a palm and was sitting on the trunk eating the raw cabbage cut from its top. Sago cabbage is a favourite food throughout this region. Hopuyaw was with a man named Kelanamba, one of the Awokapa people who had taken refuge with the Yalaku many years earlier following Tongwinjamb's destruction of their community at Awokapa. Kelanamba was chopping the pith out of a palm some distance from where Hopuyaw was resting. The Apukili heard the pounding of his adze and went to investigate. Taking him by surprise, they speared him. Hopuyaw heard the shouting, realized what was happening and quickly made his escape.

The Yalaku retaliate with a successful attack on the Apukili at Wosakapi

In the face of these unrelenting attacks, the leaders of the different Yalaku clans took the entire community even further away from Tepi into another area of densely forested swamp country. Eventually, Ayam reported, the

different leaders decided that they should 'stop acting like frightened women' and strike back. This was despite the fact that it would be difficult to put a war-party together, given that the community's men were scattered over a huge area of forest, and that it would also be difficult to contact the potential allies in other tribes whose assistance they would need.

Nevertheless, they were able to bring together enough men to attack the Apukili settlement at Wosakapi. Wachiipok was still his tribe's leading warrior. He had his house some distance away from the other residents, high up on the end of a ridge. The location gave him a commanding view over the surrounding forest and gardens.

The Yalaku war-party reached the outskirts of Wosakapi early one morning, when it was just getting light. Wachiipok had been in the forest the previous night hunting pigs at a sago blind, and had only just returned to his house. He was sitting outside, relaxing. The location of Wachiipok's house was well known to the attackers, so they approached from a direction he could not observe. The raid was successful and resulted in the deaths of three men, two women and a child.

Unexpectedly, however, the Yalaku also lost two men in this raid. Both, according to Ayam, were killed as the result of poor judgment on their part. One, named Yakwandu (possibly 68), foolishly confronted a renowned Apukili fighter named Pakiya without anyone behind him to serve as a back-up. He managed to throw a spear, but did so from too great a distance and Pakiya had no difficulty dodging it. The spear stuck in the ground. Pakiya immediately pulled it out and, running at Yakwandu, hurled it straight back at him. It hit Yakwandu with great force, killing him on the spot.

The other man to die was one of Yakwandu's clan 'brothers' named Honjin. When the Yalaku war-party launched the attack, Honjin, along with the other men, began ransacking the dwellings from which the occupants had fled. To do so, the men split up and dispersed throughout the settlement. Wachiipok, up at his ridgetop house, only became aware that an attack was underway when he heard men shouting and women screaming. He immediately picked up several of the spears he kept in readiness at the front of his house, and ran down the hill into the main settlement to help defend it. By then the attackers had begun to ransack the houses. He heard a noise coming from a dwelling that Honjin had entered. Suspecting that it was one of the attackers, he called to him in Kaunga, a language he spoke fluently, and asked who was inside. Thinking the person calling was one of the war-party, Honjin carelessly identified himself. Without pausing, Wachiipok stepped inside and speared him.

Ayam emphasized that none of the other members of the war-party witnessed the killing of these two Yalaku men, but that they later received reports of what had happened from Apuikili contacts. Not being aware at the time of what had happened to these two men, the other members of the war-party had no option but to leave without them.

Several members of the war-party had seen Wachiipok coming down from his hilltop house. Knowing that killing such a celebrated warrior would bring them great renown, they began debating among themselves who should be given the opportunity to spear him. A man named Wasawoyanggu insisted that he be given the right. However, the outstanding Yalaku fighter Mesipoko (165?) demanded that he be given the chance. Wasawoyanggu was nevertheless insistent that he have the privilege and Mesipoko agreed to stand aside.

Wachiipok was working his way from house to house looking for members of the attacking party. When he came within spearing range, Wasawoyanggu stepped out from behind one of the houses and hurled his spear at him. Foolishly, he had made a poor choice of the type of spear to use. He threw a lightweight one with a bamboo shaft rather than a heavier one with a black-palm shaft. Although it struck Wachiipok, it was too light to do him serious harm. When it hit, Wachiipok let out a tremendous roar to inform his tribesmen that he had come under attack and urgently needed their support. The Yalaku men confronting Wachiipok decided that there was no time to try to bring him down with another spear, and quickly retreated into the forest.

The rise of Kapay as one the Yalaku's leading fighting men and political leaders

Despite the success of this attack on the Apukili at Wosakapi, the Yalaku clan leaders collectively decided that it would be far too dangerous for their community to return to Tepi. They therefore moved the entire tribe further to the south. For reasons that Ayam did not explain, the members of the different clans established widely scattered hamlets on land they individually owned, rather than a consolidated settlement. There was no single men's house, furthermore, in which the community's men could meet on a regular basis to discuss matters of common concern, or perform ceremonies. Ayam correlated the tribe's residential fragmentation during this period with a serious breakdown in moral behaviour. Many men and women, for instance, felt free to conduct indiscreet sexual liaisons. These created great ill-feeling between the families, and clans, involved. One woman whose indiscreet sexual behaviour had major social implications was Kwinjakos. This was the same woman whose open sexual liaison with the Tumbuma leader Ambin had set off the chain of events that led to the killing of her husband Kisala (p. 116).

Deeply concerned about Kwinjakos' indiscreet sexual behaviour and the conflict it was creating within their community, two Yalaku men, Manggimal and Pakiya (both of Korembikow clan) went to Tongwinjamb to obtain from allies there some of the poisonous white powder termed *kapa* that the Kwoma exclusively are believed to own. They

intended to use this to secretly poison her. The Yalaku, Ayam commented, have never had their own supplies of this type of poison and refer to it by its Kwoma term. The two successfully obtained a supply and brought it back with a large quantity of cured tobacco – the ostensible purpose of their trip to the Washkuk Hills. When they had the opportunity, they gave some of the tobacco laced with the poison to Kwinjakos. Soon after smoking the tobacco she became seriously ill and died. At the time she was married to a Yalaku man named Nawaku.[70]

When Kwinjakos died, her husband announced her death in the customary manner on a slit-gong and laid out her body on the earth floor of his house to enable relatives and others to come and pay their respects. The following morning he and his clansmen constructed a platform in a nearby tree and placed her body on it to decay.

A week or two later several of her clan brothers paid a visit. They climbed a ladder propped against the burial platform to examine the corpse. After removing the sago-palm branches covering the body, they found what they regarded as unambiguous evidence that she had been the victim of *kapa* poisoning. This was in the form a white viscous substance being exuded from her mouth and nose. One of these men was Kapay (123), one of the tribe's rising political leaders.

Kapay was outraged at his 'sister's' death. Although not an actual sibling, he was the clan 'brother' who had held primary exchange rights in her, and her marriages had been a major source of wealth for him (see Chapter 4). Her death cut off this source of wealth.

Knowing that *kapa* poison was something that only the Kwoma controlled, Kapay quickly concluded that the people responsible for his sister's poisoning were the two Yalaku men who had recently visited Tongwinjamb, ostensibly to obtain a supply of cured tobacco. Both belonged to the Tek totemic division – not his own Keyava division – and Kapay assumed that it was a member of the sizable Tek division at Tongwinjamb who had supplied them with the poison.

Like many men of influence traditionally, Kapay was both admired and feared – personally and politically. He was a fighter of great physical courage, but was also headstrong and capable of acting in ways that potentially conflicted with the interests of other members of his tribe, and could even put them at risk militarily. A prime example of this was his participation in the two raids led by Nowiniyen fighters on the Apukili described earlier (pp. 102, 104). This was despite the existence of a formal peace pact between the Apukili and the Yalaku at the time.

Kapay decided to take revenge against both the Yalaku men he blamed for his sister's death and the unidentified members of the Tek division at Tongwinjamb who had supplied them with the poison that had killed her. First, he secretly requested, via an intermediary, that three of his personal Tongwinjamb allies take action against the two Yalaku men responsible. He could not take direct action against them himself, as they were members of his tribe. He therefore invited his Tongwinjamb allies either to 'poison' the men with sorcery, or kill them if they encountered them on their own in the forest. These allies were two 'friends' (*nawa*), named Mawukwos and Wimey, and a 'MB' (*waw*) named Membangg Naniyas. Kapay was related to the latter through his mother, who was of Tongwinjamb Kwoma origin. Kapay's wife, Awasow, was also a Tongwinjamb woman. Knowing that if she paid a visit to Tongwinjamb to visit one of her clan brothers no one would think twice about it, he asked her to deliver a parcel of war magic to his friend Mawukwos.

All three allies accepted the challenge and sent separate tokens of their acceptance back to him with his wife. His friend Wimey sent two coconuts, one green and one mature. The green coconut, he told Awasow, was for Kapay to plant; its growth would symbolize the continuing prosperity that Kapay would enjoy by virtue of his personal political ties to Tongwinjamb. The mature or 'dry' coconut, in contrast, was a well-understood sign for an unavenged killing, notably the unavenged death of his sister Kwinjakos. His *waw* ('MB') Membangg sent a shell forehead decoration of a kind worn exclusively by both Kwoma and Yalaku men who had killed in warfare.

Kapay simultaneously and secretly put together a war-party of his own kinsmen to take revenge against the Tongwinjamb he believed had supplied the poison used to kill his sister. These Tongwinjamb men, all members of the Tek division, were currently living at a substantial hamlet some distance to the north of the main Tongwinjamb settlement, at a place named Watiyombu (J, Figure 6.1). Apart from those directly involved, no other Yalaku were aware of what Kapay was planning.

Watiyombu was in a region in which the Yalaku themselves owned vast tracts of forest and where many men actively maintained bush-houses. To help disguise his intentions, Kapay arranged for his wife and those of several of the other members of the war-party to go to Watiyombu the day before that of the planned attack and stay with friends overnight. The women were to tell their friends at Watiyombu that they and their husbands, who would arrive the following day, were planning to spend several weeks hunting and foraging on land they owned in the same region. Kapay knew that when the women arrived before the men the Tongwinjamb would not suspect that anything was amiss. Kapay kept his real intentions secret from the women.

70 For an analysis of Kwoma sorcery beliefs see Bowden 1987. This analysis would apply equally well to the Yalaku.

While Kapay was finalizing his plans, his wife's Tongwinjamb brother, named Kwopa,[71] decided to reciprocate his sister's recent visit and suddenly appeared, unannounced, at Kapay's isolated forest compound.

In what Ayam himself described as a shameless violation of the cultural norm that brothers-in-law protect each other, regardless of the wider relations between their two clans or tribes, Kapay treacherously decided that because his brother-in-law belonged to the same totemic division at Tongwinjamb as the men he believed had supplied the poison used to kill his sister, he should be killed as well. Kapay had no intention of killing Kwopa personally. Instead, he arranged for several members of his clan who were not participating in the planned raid on Watiyombu to kill him as soon as he left. He told these men that when he returned from the raid, and found that his brother-in-law had been killed, he would make a great display of being outraged for his wife's benefit, but would otherwise do nothing.

When Kwopa arrived at Kapay's isolated forest compound, Kapay told him, mendaciously, that he and his wife and a number of other members of his clan were about to leave for a few days of hunting and foraging far to the north, but that he was welcome to stay at his house and wait for their return. Fearing that Kwopa might be nervous about staying at his house on his own, and return to Tongwinjamb, he assured him he had nothing to concerned about.

Kapay's plan for Kwopa to be killed as soon as he departed for Watiyombu had to be temporarily put on hold when another Yalaku man, named Teyikwal, who knew that Kapay was to be absent for some time, came over to his forest compound and insisted that Kwopa stay with him while Kapay was away. The men that Kapay had secretly arranged to kill his brother-in-law, therefore, had to bide their time.

Kapay leads an attack on the Tongwinjamb settlement at Watiyombu

On the way to Watiyombu, the war-party briefly stopped at a Yalaku hamlet named Mbanjanwangg. This was occupied by members of the two Hambora clans (H1 and H2). Both belonged to the Tek totemic division, the same as that of the Tongwinjamb men who Kapay was proposing to kill. Kapay informed the men there that he was intending to attack Watiyombu, but kept the real purpose of the raid secret. He told them, deceptively, that it had two main purposes. One was to avenge the deaths the Yalaku had suffered when a combined Tongwinjamb and Apukili force had attacked the Yalaku at Molipiir, when Kisala and other leading men had been killed (p. 116). The other was to avenge deaths the Yalaku had suffered when the Apukili and their Tongwinjamb allies had attacked their settlement at Tepi (p. 119). Persuaded that the cause was just, several of the Hambora men decided to join the war-party. These including Mesipoko (165) of H2 clan. He was married to one of Kapay's clan sisters.

The most influential member of the two clans at this hamlet was a renowned warrior named Wayananggi (148) of H1 clan. When Kapay's war-party arrived Wayananggi was absent, having left earlier the same day to visit his 'Tek' totemic kinsmen Kwopa, who he had learned was visiting from Tongwinjamb, and staying with Teyikwal.

When Wayananggi arrived at Teyikwal's house he and Kwopa greeted each other, in a customary sign of friendship, by throwing their net bags at each other's feet and silently rubbing each other's jaws with one hand. They then sat down to talk. When Kwopa opened his net bag to take out some betel nut to chew, he found that in throwing his net bag at Wayananggi's feet he had broken a large and valuable shell ring he was carrying. For the Yalaku, to break a shell valuable is ominous and a sign that a significant misfortune could befall its owner. Wayananggi later told other members of his clan that when he saw that Kwopa had broken the valuable he began to fear for his life, but not wishing to cause him alarm, declined to advise him to return to Tongwinjamb immediately.

Wayananggi returned to his own hamlet later the same day. When he learned that a war-party with Kapay in the lead had passed by a little earlier and was heading for Watiyombu, he and a small group of his kinsmen set off to try to stop him. Wayananggi was of the view that if the attack went ahead, it would, for an indefinite period, make it unsafe for Yalaku men to use the land they owned in the same area for hunting and foraging. In their absence, he feared, the Tongwinjamb would take over their resources. He was also concerned to protect his fellow Tek totemic kin living at Watiyombu.

Wayananggi caught up with Kapay while the war-party was resting on the banks of a stream named Asapa, a branch of the much larger Wupa River. As soon as he arrived, he denounced Kapay for his reckless indifference to the implications the attack would have for the many Yalaku people who owned land in the same area. Adopting a traditional debating style, he held his spear aloft in his hand and strode back and forth, thrusting the spear into the air to emphasize the points he was making.

Kapay listened to what Wayananggi had to say, but in the end told him that having come this far he had no intention of turning back. Still supported by the other members of the war-party, he continued on his way.

Kapay's wife and the other women travelling with her reached Watiyombu that same day and dispersed among the houses of their husband's friends and relatives. Several Yalaku men, whom Kapay had secretly informed of his plans, had accompanied them. He had arranged that as soon as the attack was launched at first light the following

71 This man's full name was Kwopa Sokwa.

morning, they should turn on their Tongwinjamb hosts. One of these men was Papanggu. He was with his wife Womboy.

When the war-party was getting close to Watiyombu, it paused while Kapay and a man named Somboyap Suruk, the husband of another of his clan sisters, approached under cover of the forest to determine the best method of approach. After carefully inspecting the hamlet from a distance, and discussing various options, they returned to where the others were waiting. That night, well out of earshot of their targets, the war-party bivouacked in the forest and spent the night in ceremonial boasting about who they would kill the following day. The following morning when it was light enough to see, the men travelled the remaining distance. They were careful to keep off the main track to avoid being spotted by anyone from Watiyombu that might give the alarm.

From the edge of the forest surrounding the settlement, the members of the war-party could see a Tongwinjamb man named Kwambiya sitting outside his house. He had been in the forest all night hunting pigs at a sago blind and was resting beside a small fire before turning in. He had his young son, named Wolichey, sitting on his knee and was telling him about his night's hunting. He had a young wife named Naparuwe.

When Kapay gave the signal to attack, the Yalaku man named Papanggu, who had preceded them to the settlement, heard the commotion, came out of the house in which he was staying and without saying a word speared the first resident he encountered. This was a woman named Kapatombo Woyenduway. She died immediately. As he drove the spear into her he let out a cry of triumph. He then joined Kapay and the other members of the war-party, and with them ran from house to house spearing people randomly. When Kapay decided the attack had been a success he gave the signal to retreat. They collected their wives and disappeared into the forest.

The first Tongwinjamb man killed on this occasion was Pamiiki Halaven. When he saw the Yalaku approaching he began shouting warnings to the others in the hamlet. While he was doing so, several of the attackers simultaneously brought him down with their spears.

Two Tongwinjamb women are captured as wives

This successful attack resulted in the capture of two women married, at that time, to Tongwinjamb men. One was the young woman named Naparuwe mentioned above. Her husband, Kwambiya, died in the fighting. Kapay took her as his second wife. The other was named Hoporeka. Mesipoko of H2 clan claimed her. He had joined the war-party when it passed through the Yalaku hamlet at Mbanjanwangg.

In addition to killing Naparuwe's husband, Kwambiya, the members of the war-party wanted to kill her young son as well. But she pleaded with Kapay to allow her to take him with her. Highly atypically for Yalaku warfare, he agreed. However, he was acting treacherously. He secretly told two of the men with him to kill the boy after they returned home, but to make it look as if they were acting without his approval.

Kapay's kinsmen kill the Tongwinjamb visitor Kwopa

When the members of the war-party returned to their scattered homes, Kapay took Naparuwe and her young son back to his isolated forest compound. When Kwopa, his Tongwinjamb brother-in-law, heard that he had returned, he joined him at Kapay's house. Kapay was surprised to find that he was still alive. He therefore arranged with the men who had previously agreed to kill him to do so the next time he and his two wives were away from his house. He told them that when he was preparing to leave he would signal to them on his personal slit-gong.

A day or two later, the men heard the signal and quietly approached Kapay's house. So as not to alarm Kwopa and risk him escaping, they approached from behind the dwelling. The house had two doors, one at the front and one at the back. Kwopa was sitting outside at the front, stitching sections of a cured cassowary pelt together to make a feather headdress. This was a type of ornament worn exclusively by men of the highest status during rituals. Both the front and back doors were open. One of the men, named Pakiya, quietly entered the house through the back door. The others took up their positions on the two sides of the house, still out of sight. Kwopa was completely unaware of their presence.

As soon as he was inside, Pakiya hurled a spear at Kwopa through the open door at the other end of the dwelling, hitting him hard in the back. Wounded, but still mobile, Kwopa scrambled to his feet and made for the forest. The men waiting outside quickly caught up with him and brought him down with several spears. After confirming he was dead, they dragged his body into the forest and dumped it there. They then returned to their houses.

Yalaku men kill the young son of Kapay's captured wife Naparuwe

Immediately after Kwopa had been killed, Kapay fulfilled his promise to two of the members of the war-party who had participated in the attack on Watiyombu, that they could now kill his new wife's young son. He arranged for them to follow Naparuwe and his first wife Awasow into the forest the next time the two went out together to process sago. They were to kill the boy there. He would send a signal on his slit-gong to let them know when they had left.

When the men received the signal, they followed the two women out to their work site. As soon as they arrived the women realized what was about to happen and struggled desperately to protect the boy. Awasow, who was unaware of what Kapay had planned, furiously attacked the

men with her black-palm digging stick. But the two men had no difficulty wrenching the boy away from his young mother and killed him, in front of her, with blows from their adzes. Kapay had secretly arranged with the men that when his two wives returned home and reported what had happened, he would feign outrage in the same way as he had when Kwopa was killed. But they were to ignore him. It would all be a charade, designed to convince his two wives that he was not complicit in the boy's killing.

Kapay kills another man in revenge for the poisoning of his sister Kwinjakos

Kapay killed one more Tongwinjamb man in revenge for the poisoning of his sister Kwinjakos. This killing was not planned. It happened when Kapay encountered the man by chance at a Yalaku ceremony.

Sometime after the killing of both his brother-in-law Kwopa and his new wife's young son, Kapay paid a visit to one of the widely dispersed Yalaku hamlets. Its residents were celebrating the opening of a new small men's house. This hamlet, named Hopokwow, was occupied by members of the tribe's Tek totemic division.

The owners of the men's house were celebrating its opening with a performance of the Komomb ceremony. As indicated earlier, this involves playing on slit-gongs and flutes the 'calls' of dozens of totemic animals and plants owned by the clans performing the ceremony. At the time, Kapay and his two wives, Awasow and Naparuwe, were living at a bush-house at a place named Karakow.

Learning that the people at Hopokwow were about to open their new men's house, two Tongwinjamb men decided to pay a visit. Both were members of the Tek totemic division, the group at Tongwinjamb that Kapay believed had provided the poison used to kill his sister Kwinjakos. The two Tongwinjamb men were Nokuwar Kulamb and Njinoku.

When he heard the drums being played, Kapay set off from his bush-house to see what was happening. He arrived to discover that the participants were helping themselves, without his permission, to green coconuts from palms he owned, and had planted at the site many years earlier. Outraged by what they were doing, he strode into the men's house, stopped the ceremony and accused the assembled participants of stealing his goods. Although they had been caught red-handed the men nevertheless rejected the accusation, and told him that their own groves of coconuts were too far from the men's house to get enough to drink while the ceremony was underway. They also reminded Kapay that he had an abundance of green coconuts where he was living.

Knowing how volatile and dangerous Kapay could be, they then tried to mollify him by asserting, untruthfully, that none of the men had actually climbed his palms but had merely picked up fruit that a flock of white cockatoos had severed and let fall to the ground. Rather than let them go to waste they had decided to use them as a source of drink.

Unpersuaded by what they had said, Kapay nevertheless strode out of the building. The ceremony resumed. Once outside, he climbed one of his palms to get a ripe coconut to eat, and to collect coconut bast to use as a sieve the next time he and his wives were washing sago. While sitting at the base of the palm, scraping out the white flesh, the two Tongwinjamb men named above arrived to participate in the ceremony. They greeted him as they walked past. Kapay remained sitting under the palm. After finishing eating the coconut, he calmly picked up his spear and entered the building through the same small gap in the sago-palm screen at its front that the two Tongwinjamb men had used. Once inside he walked up to one of them, Nokuwar Kulamb, and drove his spear into him, killing him. When Njinoku, the other visitor, saw what was happening, and fearing that Kapay would kill him as well, he sprinted outside and headed for the forest. Kapay went after him. But before he could throw his spear, which he had extracted from the body of his first victim, a Yalaku totemic kinsman named Sumunyi ran after the fleeing man and jumped on his back to form a shield. Sumunyi knew that as long as he was covering Njinoku's back Kapay would not try to spear him, in case he killed a member of his own tribe. With his Yalaku kinsman clinging to his back Njinoku made good his escape. Ayam commented that Njinoku was an immensely strong man and that even with Sumunyi riding on his back he hardly slowed down. When the two men were at a safe distance, Sumunyi dropped to the ground and Njinoku returned to Tongwinjamb.

The Tongwinjamb eventually took revenge for all of the deaths for which Kapay was responsible: 1) Nokuwar Kulamb at the opening of the Yalaku men's house; 2) his brother-in-law Kwopa; and 3) those who died in the attack on Watiyombu. But they had to wait for the opportunity to arise.

9

The destruction of the Awokapa tribe and the death of Kapay

***c.*1920**

A dispute over an alleged case of adultery precipitates conflict with the Awokapa political group

Sometime after the events described above, but in what can be securely dated as the first half of the 1920s, a major dispute occurred between the members of the Yalaku tribe's two major totemic groups: the Keyava and the Tek. This dispute had immensely destructive long-term consequences for both groups, as well as for the Awokapa people who had been living with the Yalaku for many years.

The Tek totemic groups consisted of the two Hambora clans (H1 and H2). The Keyava consisted of Rama clan, Yalaku Keyava and the two clans named Yombu Nyininggu. At this time the different Yalaku clans were still scattered among widely dispersed hamlets. Several of the larger hamlets had their own small men's houses, such as the one referred to in the previous chapter (p. 124), but there was no one common ceremonial house where all of the community's men could meet on a regular basis. The Awokapa families living with the Yalaku were similarly not located in one place but widely scattered among the different hamlets.

The dispute in question was precipitated by two events. One was an alleged adulterous relationship between one of the Keyava division's leading men, named Teyiwkal, and the wife, Mepiyowar, of a man belonging to the Tek division. The second was the death of Teyikwal's son, named Wunjen, allegedly through sorcery. Teyikwal believed that the 'poisoning' of his son was an act of revenge carried out by the husband of the woman with whom he, Teyikwal, was allegedly having the affair; the husband was named Njuwim.[72]

For some time before Wunjen's death, Njuwim had suspected not only that Teyikwal was having an affair with his wife, but that she was also involved with another Yalaku man, named Nyakaw, the son of the leading warrior Kapay (123).

Njuwim made no secret of his belief that that both Teyikwal and Nyakaw were having an illicit sexual relationship with his wife. Teyikwal, for his part, was outraged at the innuendo and one day, backed by a large group of men from his own totemic division, including Kapay, travelled over to the hamlet where Njuwin was based and confronted him in front of the settlement's small men's house. Accusations and denials flew back and forth. Hearing the commotion, Njuwim's kinsmen quickly arrived to support him. These included Wayananggi, a renowned warrior and the most influential leader of the Tek clans.

Tempers soon rose to the point where Wayananggi threw a spear at Kapay, hitting him in the lower arm. The spear was intended only to wound, not kill. Kapay promptly hurled a spear back at Wayananggi, also hitting him in the lower arm. Not wanting the dispute to become deadly, cooler heads intervened and persuaded the disputants to set their spears aside and settle their differences with heavy black-palm sticks, the non-lethal implement traditionally used in the most serious intra-tribal disputes. Kapay and Wayananggi agreed. In the ensuing melee Wayananggi landed a heavy blow on Teyikwal's head that knocked him to the ground. The latter's kinsmen responded by landing several equally heavy blows on Wayananggi's head, not only knocking him to the ground but leaving him unconscious.

Fearing that Wayananggi might have been killed, the onlookers decided to bring the fight to an end. Employing the customary gesture designed to stop violence, they smashed the tops off their lime gourds and threw large quantities of lime powder over those who were still brawling. Eventually the disputants agreed to part.

To everyone's relief, including those who had attacked him, Wayananggi was not dead and his kinsmen soon revived him with sips of water. But he had sustained a serious head injury. His supporters carried him into the adjacent men's house. There, a visiting Awokapa tribe man treated his wounds. Known for his skills as a surgeon, this Awokapa man, Yombonngos, shaved Wayananggi's head with a bamboo razor and made deep incisions in the

72 The Yalaku, like the neighbouring Kwoma, traditionally believed that there was no such thing as a 'natural' death and that all deaths other than those resulting from overt physical violence, as in warfare, were the result sorcery. This belief is still widely held today.

scalp around his wounds to let out the 'bad blood'. In time the injured man recovered. Yombonggos was one of the Awokapa men who had survived the devastating attack on their tribe by the Tongwinjamb several decades earlier (see pp. 92–3).

This violent confrontation between the Yalaku community's two major totemic groups did not put an end to Njuwim's suspicions about his wife's adultery. He resolved to take revenge against both Teyikwal and Kapay's son, Nyakaw, secretly through sorcery. According to Ayam, Njuwim and his kinsmen tried hard to obtain leavings of both men. They failed, but were successful in obtaining some of Teyikwal's only son, Wunjen. Njuwim passed these to Wayananggi, the man who had been injured in the fight with Teyikwal. He passed them in turn to the Awokapa man, Yombonggos, who had treated him for his head injury. The latter was instructed to take them back to the Wurambanj Kwoma, a community with which he was personally closely allied, and there give them to one of its many adepts at sorcery, so he could 'poison' Wunjen. The leavings consisted of flying-fox bones left over from a meal.

As requested, Yombonggos secretly took the leavings to the Wurambanj tribe and there delivered them to a man living at a hamlet named Hambandum. The recipient promptly 'cooked' the leavings. Not long afterwards, Teyikwal's son, Wunjen, became seriously ill and died. When he died, Teyikwal immediately suspected Njuwim of supplying a sorcerer with his son's leavings.

Following his son's death, Teyikwal made the obligatory death or 'head' payment to his son's *waw* ('MB') at Yalaku (see Chapter 4). To make one of the other obligatory payments that follow a death, Teyikwal travelled to Tongwinjamb; the recipient was one of his own *waw* ('MB'; either a MB, MBS or MBSS etc.). This man belonged to the same clan as Teyikwal's mother, a Kwoma woman.[73]

While visiting Tongwinjamb, Teyikwal's *waw* told him that he had heard that his son's leavings had been 'cooked' at the Wurambanj hamlet of Hambandum (L, Figure 6.1), and that it was the Awokapa man Yombonggos who had been the source of the leavings. On hearing this, Teyikwal made an immediate decision to put a war-party together to take revenge against Yombonggos. This decision set in train a series of events that had major destructive consequences for the Awokapa.

73 In addition to a 'head' payment for the deceased, Kwoma also have a series of other inter-clan payments that are made obligatorily when someone dies (see Bowden 1988). It is possible that these were also a feature of Yalaku death payments. Teyikwal's visit to Tongwinjamb suggests they were. However, I have no specific information relating to them, and thus made no reference to them in the account of Yalaku death payments in Chapter 4.

Teyikwal leads an attack on the main Awokapa settlement at Hambandum

Following the attack by the Tongwinjamb on the Awokapa several decades earlier (see pp. 92–3), when they had their main settlement at the northern end of the Washkuk Hills, a number of Awokapa men, including Yombonggos, had moved with their families to a site named Saramanggala on the eastern edge of the Washkuk Hills. Numerous Yalaku families also had houses in the same area.

When Yalaku men who had houses in the same area learned of Teyikwal's plans, they sought him out and vehemently expressed their opposition to what he had in mind. They reminded him that the Awokapa were a long-established people in the region and for generations had been allies of the Yalaku. Teyikwal, however, was determined to kill not only Yombonggos, but as many of the other Awokapa people living with him as he could, in revenge for the role he believed he had played in the poisoning of his only son, Wunjen. Unable to dissuade him, the Yalaku living close to the Awokapa promptly advised them, for their own good, to move temporarily to the nearby Wurambanj hamlet at Hambandum, where they had many affines and potential protectors. This hamlet was at the base of a spur on the eastern edge of the Washkuk Hills, at the top of which the Wurambanj, at that time, had their main settlement. Yombonggos and the other Awokapa took their advice.

Not to be deflected by their move, Teyikwal led a war-party to Hambandum. However, shortly before the fighters arrived their presence was detected and their intended victims fled into the adjacent forest. Finding the houses empty, a number of the attackers set off to search for the inhabitants. While the other members of the war-party were waiting for them to return, and entirely coincidentally, Yombonggos, the man who was the primary target of the raid, was suddenly heard striding down the mountain from the direction of the main Wurambanj settlement, which he had been visiting. In addition to being a skilled surgeon, Yombonggos was an outstanding hunter. As a sign of his hunting skills, he carried a net bag lavishly decorated with the tusks of pigs he had killed. These jangled loudly as he walked.

From the sound of the net bag, the members of Teyikwal's war-party knew exactly who was approaching. As soon as they heard the sound, they began debating amongst themselves who should have the privilege of throwing the first spear at such a distinguished target. While they were still debating the matter, Yombonngos emerged from the forest at the bottom of the track. Unwilling to wait for a decision to be made, Kapakeli (128), Kiriyas's (130) father, picked up his spear and threw it. The spear, however, had only a lightweight bamboo shaft, and by the time it reached its target it had drifted slightly off course. Instead of striking his torso, it hit him in the arm. When he was hit, Yombonggos let out a might roar to warn the other

Awokapa that an attack was underway. He had assumed they were all still in their houses. He then turned and, after pulling the spear out of his arm, began running back up the same narrow mountain track towards the main Wurumbanj settlement. Two younger members of the war-party gave chase. They were Hopuyaw and Nyawuraman (25). When Yombonggos realized he was being pursued, he suddenly stopped on the track, turned towards the two Yalaku men and, brandishing the spear that had just been thrown at him, began shouting derisively at them. He demanded to know what these two 'children' thought they were about. Did they really think they could kill him? Had they forgotten, he asked, how often, when they were still infants, he had given them many tasty bits of food while visiting their parents? Did they now think they could best him in a fight? If they did, he shouted, here was their opportunity to prove it. With that, he charged down the hill towards them. Knowing of his reputation as a fighter, their courage failed them and the two men turned on their heels and bolted into the forest beside the track. In his haste to escape, Ayam added, one crashed into a young pandanus (*karuka*, TP) tree and broke it off at its base (a comment that prompted much laughter among the men listening). Having seen off his pursuers, Yombonggos successfully made his escape up the hill to the main Wurambanj settlement.

Teyikwal's attack had been a complete failure, as no one had been caught and killed. The failure of the raid was made all the more embarrassing by the behaviour of one of the younger members of the war-party. This man had been searching unsuccessfully for escapees in the forest beside the track that led up to the main Wurambanj settlement. Finding no one, he headed back to where Teyikwal and several other members of the war-party were waiting. Out of frustration, he had raised his spear aloft and was jabbing it in the air as he descended the hill. At the bottom of the track, he encountered the much more experienced warrior Mesipoko (165). Despite being fully aware of who Mesipoko was, he threw his spear hard at him, hitting his wooden shield squarely in the middle. He then let out a triumphal cry as if he had just speared an enemy. When other members of the war-party who were searching for escapees in the surrounding forest heard him they came rushing back to see who the younger man had killed, only to discover that out of frustration he had thrown his spear at one of their own. Ayam commented that Mesipoko was lucky not to have been killed.

*c.*1920–5
Tongwinjamb helps the Awokapa take revenge on the Yalaku

Following this attack, the Awokapa, who had moved not long earlier to Hambandum, decided to move much further to the north to the place named Walaminjuwi (3, Figure 6.1). This was the site of one the Yalaku tribe's earliest settlements (see Chapter 3). The site was owned by the Yalaku but the Awokapa owned pockets of land in the area. Soon after this move, the Awokapa unexpectedly received an offer from the Tongwinjamb to help them take revenge against Teyikwal for the raid he had led against them, even though they had suffered no deaths. The Tongwinjamb had their own reasons for offering to help a people who, only a generation earlier, they had tried to destroy. They were yet to avenge Kapay's killing of a number of their Tongwinjamb kinsmen, including those who had been killed in the attack Kapay had led on the Tongwinjamb hamlet at Watiyombu (pp. 122–3). Kapay's war-party had also abducted two women from that hamlet, one of whom Kapay had taken as his second wife. The Tongwinjamb invited the Awokapa to participate in the revenge raid because they had better knowledge of where their targets were currently living. Fatefully, as subsequent events demonstrated, the Awokapa leaders accepted the offer.

The day before the raid was due to be launched, the Awokapa participants took a large pig one of them had just killed up to the hilltop hamlet at which the Tongwinjamb members of the war-party were based. They gave it to their hosts to cook at the back of their men's house. When the food was ready, all of the members of the war-party shared a sumptuous meal of boiled pork and pork-flavoured vegetable soup.

The group set off the following morning at first light. Well before they reached their intended destination, the group paused at the site of the former Awokapa settlement at Saramanggala. There the leaders of both the Tongwinjamb and Awokapa contingents took stock of how many men they had. Discovering that there were more than they had anticipated, they reviewed their plans. Three Yalaku men were their primary targets: Teyikwal, Kapay and Mesipoko. These three men, however, were based at different Yalaku hamlets. Teyikwal and Kapay were based at the place named Wamanggey (14a, Figure 6.1). Mesipoko lived at the hamlet named Nggweriyaman (14b, Figure 6.1). The leaders of the war-party decided that they had enough men to split the group into two. The two halves would attack different hamlets.

Neither the Tongwinjamb nor their Awokapa guides were aware that Kapay had shortly beforehand moved away from Wamanggey. He had taken his second wife Naparuwe, and a group of kinsmen, to a site much further to the north named Nimbiyanggiir. This was well outside the region with which the Tongwinjamb were familiar and was effectively beyond their reach. He had left his first wife, Awasow, behind at Wamanggey.

After bivouacking together overnight in the forest the war-party split up. The group that had been given the task of attacking the hamlet at Nggweriyaman, where Mesipoko was living, reached its target first. This was the hamlet at which Wayananggi (148) was the leading man.

The attackers reached the hamlet at first light. By coincidence, a large group of people from other settlements were visiting the hamlet to celebrate the end of the formal period of mourning for Wayananggi's wife, Sendapay. She had died roughly a year earlier. Although it was still well before sunrise, both the visitors and the locals had gathered in front of Wayananggi's house. They had come together to witness the removal of the dead woman's bones from the burial platform on which her body had been exposed, and to participate in the feast that would follow. This was also the occasion when Wayananggi and the other chief mourners would cut their hair, wash and formally resume normal social life.

The members of the war-party were delighted to discover that there was a much larger number of potential victims than they had anticipated. They decided to focus on the large group that had gathered in front of Wayananggi's house. As soon as the fighting started, Wayananggi's second son, Womandu, urged his older brother to flee and save himself and his family. He told him that he would stay with his father and, if need be, die alongside him. The older brother reluctantly agreed and escaped with his family.

The men in the hamlet had constructed tall palisades around their individual dwellings. Most of the people fled into the forest as soon as the attack commenced. Wayananggi, in contrast, retreated into his palisaded compound. However, before he could barricade the door, one of the Tongwinjamb fighters pushed his way through. There he confronted Wayananggi, who was holding a bundle of spears. He used his shield to successfully deflect the spears Wayananggi threw at him and then engaged him in hand-to-hand combat. The Tongwinjamb man eventually managed to wound Wayananggi, who retreated into his house. By now several other Tongwinjamb fighters had also entered the compound. They gathered around Wayananggi's house, broke down the door and randomly threw spears into it. Wayananggi's son, Womandu, was also in the dwelling. A spear eventually caught the son.

One of those in this group, Njinoku, was one of the two Tongwinjamb men Kapay had tried to kill when he was attending the opening of a new Yalaku men's house, though he had succeeded only in killing the other man, named Nokuwar Kulamb (p. 124). On that occasion Njinoku was able to escape because one of his Yalaku allies had jumped on his back, to act as a shield. Although it was Yalaku members of the Tek totemic division who on that occasion had saved his life, Njinoku was a willing participant in this raid, even though it was on a 'Tek' hamlet, to help avenge Mesipoko's role in the attack on the Tongwinjamb hamlet at Watiyombu, and his abduction of one of its women. Mesipoko lived at the hamlet.

After a number of spears had been thrown through the door into Wayananggi's house, Njinoku poked his head through the opening to see what was happening. Wayananggi was waiting with a spear raised, and promptly drove it into him. He fell to the ground badly wounded, but not fatally. The others continued to throw spears through the door and eventually brought Wayananggi down. They then all entered the house and repeatedly speared him, and his wounded son, until they were sure both were dead. With Wayananggi's death the Yalaku lost one of their most admired leaders.

In all, four Yalaku people died during this attack on Nggweriyaman. They were the leading man Wayananggi, his son Womadu, a woman named Niikiiriikay, and one of her female children. Niikiiriikay was the wife of a Yalaku man named Tawurendu (probably 78). Another woman, Mepiyowar, was speared and badly injured, but she recovered. Ironically, Mesipoko, the principal target of the raid, managed to escape.

When the other half of the war-party reached Kapay's hamlet at Wamanggey and launched its attack, the men were understandably dismayed to learn that Kapay was absent. But they succeeded in killing his first and senior wife, Awasow. She was staying with her married son Nyakaw. They also killed the latter's wife. She was an Awokapa woman. This woman's father, an Awokapa man, had joined the war-party in the hope that he could prevent his daughter from being killed. He wanted to take her back to his community. When the fighting started, this Awokapa man quickly found his daughter and began guiding her to safety. But when Tongwinjamb members of the war-party saw what he was doing, they stopped him. They told him that the plan was not just to kill Yalaku women, allowing others to escape, and that his daughter had to die as well. A Tongwinjamb man named Takawor seized the woman and hacked her to death with his adze. Takawor was the father of a man named Mowe living at Tongwinjamb in 1973.

A Yalaku woman who escapes from the attack on Wamanggey dies in the night while hiding

Among the residents who escaped from Wamanggey during this attack was a woman named Nokuwoy. She was married to the Yalaku man Hopuyaw, one of the participants in the raid on the Awokapa at Hambandum (p. 126). Nokuwoy fled into the forest with a large group of other women but lost contact with them. When night fell, she slept in the forest on her own. She made a rough shelter out of sago-palm fronds thrown over the flanged buttress roots of a large tree and crawled inside and lay down. Before leaving her house, she had quickly gathered up the family's net bag of shell valuables, a bundle of dried tobacco leaves and a clan heirloom (*stori samting*, TP) named Minggilo, of which her husband was the custodian. Ayam gave no details about this object. She placed these things beside her in the makeshift shelter.

During the night she died. Once the attack was over, and she failed to return home, her husband searched for

her in the forest without success. He continued to search for several days and eventually concluded that she must have died.

Several months later, a man named Kiiriimel (probably 79) was looking for a tree laden with ripe fruit of a kind favoured by wild fowl and crowned pigeons, where he could build a blind and hunt the birds feeding on the fallen fruit. He suddenly heard the distinctive call of a crowned pigeon nearby. Assuming it was feeding, he went to investigate. There he found the place where the woman had died. The sago-palm branches were undisturbed. Realizing that only a person would have arranged the branches in the way they were lying, he removed them and found Nokuwoy's decomposed body underneath. The shell valuables were still beside her body, as was the ritual object she had rescued. However, the net bag in which the shells had been stored had completely rotted away, and the shells themselves had been had badly stained by fluids exuded by the woman's decaying body. Kiiriimel realized immediately that he had found the missing woman, Nokuwoy. He left her bones and the shell valuables where they were but took the ritual object to a stream where he submerged it for safekeeping.

As soon as he returned home that afternoon, he informed the dead woman's husband, Hopuyaw, that he had found his wife's remains. He also said that he had found the ritual object she had taken with her, along with the family's collection of shell valuables. Hopuyaw had no difficulty finding her remains. He wrapped her bones and the shell valuables in a palm spathe and took them home. He buried his wife's bones in the customary manner in a hole in the earth floor of his house. He then boiled the shell valuables in a large clay pot, to loosen the stains. After scrubbing them clean, he put them in the sun to dry. He made a new net bag to store them.

The Awokapa retreat to Kwarembu

Following their participation in these attacks on the two Yalaku hamlets, the Awokapa, for their own safety, moved close to the Tongwinjamb and built a settlement at Mbalay (10, Figure 6.1), the site at which the Yalaku had once had their main settlement. However, as happened when the Yalaku were living at Mbalay, many Tongwinjamb soon came to resent the presence of another political group living so close to them, and their unrestricted use of the economic resources to which they had been given temporary access. When several members of the Awokapa community died in quick succession, their kinsmen saw this as evidence that disgruntled Tongwinjamb were covertly practising sorcery against them. No longer feeling welcome, the entire community abandoned Mbalay and moved into low-lying country to the north, to a place named Kwarembu (M, Figure 6.1). Kwarembu was owned by the Tongwinjamb, and was the location of one of that tribe's many hamlets, but the Awokapa owned large tracts of forest nearby. It was also close to where the Apukili at that time had their main settlement.

The attack on both of their largest hamlets also prompted the Yalaku to move. At the suggestion of allies belonging to the Nowiniyen tribe, they constructed a new, consolidated settlement close to that community on Nowiniyen land. From a Nowiniyen perspective there was a benefit from this. A contingent of their men had participated in the raid Teyikwal had led on the Awokapa living at Hambandu. They were concerned that the Awokapa and Tongwinjamb together might try to take revenge on them, just as they had on the Yalaku. It was in their interests, therefore, to have the Yalaku close at hand to help counter such an attack, should it occur.

1928

The Honggwama Kwoma kill two visiting native police

In 1928, not long after the events described above, 'warfare', to use Ayam's term, broke out between two factions of the neighbouring Kwoma-speaking Honggwama tribe. This conflict inadvertently had the effect of bringing the Yalaku into much closer contact with this community, and subsequently led to the establishment of a formal political alliance with it.

The two Honggwama factions were made up of clans predominantly belonging to the Tek totemic division on the one hand, and those belonging to the Wanyi and Hamikwa divisions on the other.[74] It was at this time, and as a result of this 'warfare', that the members of the former took the new name 'Bangwis', and the latter the name 'Washkuk'. Today the clans belonging to these factions are located respectively at the two villages named after them: Bangwis and Washkuk (see Figure 1.1).

Up until the late 1920s, the Honggwama had their main settlement in the northern half of the Washkuk Hills, on the eastern side of the range, roughly equidistant from the Tongwinjamb, to their north-west, and the Wurambaj tribe, to their west.

In 1928, men belonging to what came to be known as the 'Washkuk' faction killed two native policemen visiting the Honggwama settlement from the patrol post at Ambunti. The purpose of the trip was to arrange to buy sago flour for the recently established patrol post. Ambunti had been established four years earlier in 1924. The two policemen had found a woman naked, in the traditional Kwoma manner (see Bowden 2006:20), and alone in her hamlet, and had raped her. That afternoon, when her husband returned from the forest, she told him what had happened. He immediately called a meeting in the hamlet's men's house, and the following morning they killed the two policemen. Guides from neighbouring Sepik River villages, who had accompanied the two police to the settlement,

74 For the names of these clans, see Bowden 2006:13.

carried news of what had happened back to Ambunti. There, the senior officer of the day, Harold Woodman, took an armed patrol of native police to the settlement to apprehend the killers. However, fearing that they would be slaughtered in retaliation, the whole community decamped into the forest before he arrived. Unable to find the killers, or anyone else, Woodman eventually returned to Ambunti. Still determined to apprehend the killers, he left a contingent of armed and unsupervised native police to continue the search for them. Without Woodman's knowledge, the police went on a rampage and killed everyone they could find over a period of several weeks. They also burnt down several men's houses and many domestic dwellings.[75] Whiting and Reed conducted fieldwork in this same community eight years later. They estimated that 'at least' seventeen men and women were killed during the rampage (Whiting 1941:20–1; Whiting and Reed 1938–9:174;). The number could have been much higher, as the killings were done in secret in the forest and were never reported to the authorities at Ambunti.[76]

Afraid that the native police would continue to carry out attacks on them if they returned to their settlement, the entire Honggwama population remained hidden for two years. Some lived at isolated bush-houses, others took refuge with relatives in neighbouring Kwoma-speaking tribes, and a significant number took refuge, with their approval, on Yalaku land.

The authorities at Ambunti tried repeatedly to locate the killers and used as an intermediary the man named Vakinap from Avatip village (Figure 9.1). Vakinap was a personal trading partner of several of the leading Honggwama men, spoke Kwoma fluently and had close personal and political ties to leading members of Nowil, the largest of the tribe's 'Tek' clans. To help both government officers and the native police to distinguish the clans that had been involved in the killings – members of the 'Washkuk' faction – from those that had not, and had not even been aware of what had happened until after the fact, Vakinap gave members of the latter faction strips of white cloth to tie around their arms. He also gave them a new name, 'Bangwis', after one of his community's ritual segments (Harrison 1990:105).

During the two years the Honggwama tribe as a whole remained in hiding, members of both factions took the opportunity to settle old scores by killing men in the opposing group who they believed had been responsible for deaths of kinsmen through sorcery. This was the 'warfare' within the Honggwama tribe to which Ayam referred at this point in the narrative.

In 1930, Harold Woodman was replaced as the senior officer at Ambunti by J.K. McCarthy, a man who would later become the head of District Administration in Papua New Guinea. McCarthy soon concluded that the identity of the killers would never be determined and, given the wider circumstances, the matter was closed. McCarthy devoted a chapter to these killings in his autobiography *Patrol into Yesterday* (McCarthy 1967:56–62). The matter having been settled. the Honggwama came out of hiding, but rather than return to the settlement they formerly occupied they moved to a new site further to the south overlooking the Napu and Washkuk Lagoons (N, Figure 6.1). It was at this site that Whiting and Reed conducted fieldwork in 1936–7.

During the two years when a significant part of the Honggwama population was hiding on their land, the Yalaku developed a much closer relationship with this tribe than had existed previously. This was consolidated through the exchange of several women as wives. One of these wives was the Nowil clan woman Wonyikowa (see, p. 137), the older sister of Manenggey, the man who first took me to Yelogu in 1973 (Figure 1.4). This new relationship with the Honggwama was to have major military benefits for the Yalaku.

1930s

The unexpected death of Kapay's son, Nyakaw, is attributed to sorcery practised by members of the Nowiniyen tribe

Shortly after the events described above, the Yalaku man named Nyakaw (p. 126) unexpectedly died. He was the eldest son of Kapay, the man rapidly emerging as his tribe's most influential leader and most audacious fighting man.

When Nyakaw died, rumours began to circulate that Nowiniyen men had poisoned him. Kapay was aware of these rumours but initially took no action. However, roughly a year later, when the period of mourning for Nyakaw had come to an end, a Nowiniyen man named Tukel paid a visit to the Yalaku settlement where Nyakaw had lived with his father Kapay. This was to watch his bones being removed from the burial platform and participate in the ensuing celebrations. As soon as he sat down to witness the proceedings, Kapay picked up a spear and killed him.

Kapay's killing of Tukel was in direct violation of the peace pact between their two tribes. Fearing that Tukel's kinsmen might retaliate, the Yalaku tribe as a whole

75 The Territory of New Guinea's *Standing Orders* of 1924 explicitly prohibited the burning of houses. See also, McCarthy 1967:58. The author possesses a copy of the *Standing Orders* that consists of a carbon-copied typescript ninety-six foolscap pages in length. The words 'Administration of New Guinea, Standing Orders, 1924' are written on the front cover, but the document lacks any other information indicating where and when it was produced. It also has a stamp on the inside of the front cover stating 'Department of Native Affairs, 28 Jan 1959'. On page four it states that the 'burning of houses is illegal'.

76 I investigated this period in Honggwama history in detail during my fieldwork and give an account of it in a forthcoming history of the community. See also, Bragge, Claas and Roscoe 2006.

Figure 9.1 The author (left) talking to Vakinap of Avatip village at Bangwis in January 1973. Vakinap would stay with totemic kin at Bangwis annually, during the height of the wet season when his village was inundated by the Sepik's rising waters (see Figure 9.2).

abandoned their settlement and moved much further away from the Nowiniyen to the south-west, to live under the direct protection of the Honggwama, their new and now main Kwoma ally. On their way to their new settlement, they camped at the site where Yelogu village is located today, but was then uninhabited forest. The next morning, they followed the ancient track that runs along the eastern side of the Washkuk Hills and climbed up to the ridge-top hamlet occupied by members of Nowil, the Honggwama clan with which they had the closest ties. After a meeting in the local men's house, Nowil's leaders gave Kapay and the other Yalaku permission to settle, temporarily, at the bottom of an adjacent spur on the eastern side of the Hills, at the place named Nggandawaya (H, Figure 6.1).

Within a relatively short period, however, several Yalaku died. Their kinsmen attributed the deaths to sorcery practised by unknown members of the Honggwama tribe, who they suspected were hostile to them settling as close as they were to that tribe's main settlement, and making use of their resources, to which they had been given temporary access. The Yalaku therefore decided to abandon the Washkuk Hills altogether and move to a site further to the north in an area of low-lying country they owned. There, to their great surprise, they came across a Yalaku man named Njuwim (p. 125), who they had not seen for many years. During the preceding years Njuwim had been living in hiding with his family after being suspected of playing a role in the poisoning of Wunjen, the only son of the leading Yalaku man Teyikwal. Wunjen's death had led Teyikwal to launch the attack on the Awokapa at Hambandum (p. 125).

According to Ayam, Kapay and the other leading Yalaku men were determined to identify the sorcerers who had caused the deaths while they were living at Nggandawaya. To this end, Kapay and other men made repeated visits

Figure 9.2 Avatip village on the Sepik in flood during the annual wet season, January 1973. The Sepik is in the background on the left, behind one of the village's many small men's houses. The buildings on the right are domestic dwellings.

to the Honggwama settlement to talk in confidence with allies there about who might have been responsible. They never discovered the identity of the sorcerers. But they were informed that Njuwim, with whom they had recently re-established contact, was holding the leavings of many Yalaku men and women on behalf of Honggwama men, who might later want to use them in sorcery. This news indicated that in addition to those who had already been 'poisoned' many others were potentially vulnerable to further sorcery attacks.

The killing of a member of the same tribe through overt violence is one of the major taboos in all of the societies in this region. However, Ayam acknowledged that if a man was discovered to be an active 'trouble maker', as he put it, by holding the leavings of other members of his community on behalf of sorcerers, other members of his tribe were entitled to kill him. The victim's kinsmen would play no part in the killing, but equally they would not take revenge if others did. Having become convinced that Njuwim was holding the leavings of different Yalaku men on behalf of Honggwama sorcerers, the different clan leaders decided that he was too dangerous to continue living among them and that he should be killed. Two men, named Tawurendu and Kisala, carried out the execution.

Following his killing, Njuwim's widow, Mepiyowar, married the Yalaku man named Pakiya. He had been living as a widower for many years after his first wife was killed in the ambush carried out by an Avatip war-party on Yalaku traders on the Yimi River (pp. 112, 114).

c.1930–3

The Yalaku move back to the ancestral site Walaminjuwi

For reasons that Ayam did not explain, the Yalaku community as a whole did not stay long at the site where Njuwim was killed, but moved further to the north to Walaminjuwi, the location of one of their earliest settlements (3, Figure 6.1). Ayam reported that this move took place around 1932–3, shortly after he was born.

c.1933

The Nowiniyen take revenge for Kapay's killing of their tribesman Tukel

Not long after this move, kinsmen of the Nowiniyen man named Tukel, who Kapay had killed not long earlier (p. 130),

decided that the time was right to take revenge. Kapay had speared and killed Tukel after suspecting that he, or people close to him, had been involved in the 'poisoning' of his son Nyakaw. Tukel's kinsmen were determined to avenge the death, despite the peace settlement that still formally existed between their tribes. Kapay was their target, not the Yalaku as a whole. To help guarantee the success of the raid, they enlisted the aid of allies among the Awokapa still living at Kwarembu (p. 129) and the Motek tribe.

The attack on the Yalaku took place at Walaminjuwi. Ayam gave only the barest account of it. He stated that it failed in its main objective, as Kapay escaped, but six other Yalaku were killed: four men and two unmarried girls. The Nowiniyen members of the war-party also captured at least one woman (see p. 151). As soon as the raid was over the attackers returned to their respective homes.

***c.*1933–5**

Warfare between Yalaku and Nowiniyen is brought to an end; the Yalaku move back to the Washkuk Hills

This attack, like Kapay's killing of Tukel, was a clear breach of the peace agreement between the Yalaku and Nowiniyen. The most influential of the Nowiniyen leaders, nevertheless, informed their Yalaku counterparts, through intermediaries, that they did not want warfare to resume between their two groups. This was in fact the last case of fighting between these two tribes. Notwithstanding their assurances, the Yalaku, as a precaution, decided to abandon Walaminjuwi and move, once again, far to the south to a site immediately to the east of the Washkuk Hills, adjacent to the Honggwama tribe's main settlement at that time (N, Figure 6.1).

***c.*1935**

The Awokapa suffer further crushing blows in warfare

As noted above, the Nowiniyen had been assisted in the attack on the Yalaku at Walaminjuwi by a contingent of Awokapa men. Given their participation, and their involvement in the attacks on the two Yalaku hamlets at Nggweriyaman and Wamanggey (pp. 127–8), Kapay and the other Yalaku clan leaders made the decision to drive all of the remaining Awokapa out of their region. If that failed, they would try to exterminate them piece by piece. The leading members of the Apukili tribe shared this uncompromising attitude to the Awokapa. The Apukili wanted rid of them, as the Awokapa, following the Yalaku attack on them at Hambandum, had moved to the north of the Washkuk Hills to the site named Kwarembu (M, Figure 6.1). Kwarembu was owned by the Tongwinjamb and the Awokapa had moved there with their approval. However, it was close to the border of the territory of the Apukili, who soon discovered that the Awokapa were repeatedly making use of their rich resources in sago without their permission. They decided to take drastic action of their own.

The Apukili leaders resolved to kill all the leading Awokapa fighting men they could catch at one time. They knew that if they killed the leaders, the rest of the community would fragment and its individual families would be forced to seek refuge among surrounding tribes. In time, they believed, this would lead to them being absorbed by those other groups or killed by their hosts. Either way, they would cease to exist as an independent political group – and hence would no longer pose a threat, as a group, to their resources.

The strategy the Apukili devised involved a major act of treachery. In conjunction with the Motek, they planned to invite all the leading Awokapa fighting men to participate in an attack on the Nowiniyen. The plan was for the Awokapa members of the war-party to rendezvous with those from the Apukili and Motek tribes at the main Motek settlement, located then, as today, at Ambuken on the Yimi River. The Apukili and Motek men, together, would then treacherously turn on the Awokapa at that settlement and kill as many as they could.

The Awokapa participants in the proposed attack were apparently completely taken in by the ruse. To indicate his wholehearted support for it, one very prominent Awokapa political leader, named Chikinenggi, hunted and killed a pig. The day before the attack was due to be launched he took it, in the company of the other Awokapa participants, to the Motek settlement, where he presented it to the leading men to cook. It was to form part of the meal that all members of the war-party would share that afternoon.

In addition to Chikinenggi, leading Awokapa warriors who had agreed to participate in the raid included the men named Pakiya, Kayipanggu and Hanenji. The leading Apukili participants included such men as Mokonap, Kanonggwapan and a second man named Pakiya. When all of the Awokapa and Apukili participants reached the Motek settlement, a meeting was held in one of the tribe's several men's houses to finalize the details. But it was all an elaborate ruse. The Motek, Ayam emphasized, were not on bad terms with the Nowiniyen and neither they nor the Apukili had any intention of attacking them.

The Motek leaders had secretly arranged with their Apukili counterparts to divide the Awokapa fighting men, the night before the ambush, into two groups and accommodate each in a different men's house. The reason they gave the Awokapa for this arrangement was that it would give everyone sufficient room to stretch out on the benches that traditionally lined the interiors of these buildings. The Awokapa men agreed to the plan and split into two. The two men's houses were several hundred meters apart and separated by dense forest. During the night the members of each group spent their time discussing the forthcoming attack with their hosts.

When the war-party was due to depart at first light the following morning it began to rain heavily. Normally,

heavy rain would not prevent an attack from taking place, but on this occasion the Motek hosts told the Awokapa men that because of the rain they wanted to delay the attack for one day. They assured their visitors that they were not their enemies and had nothing to worry about. The Awokapa men were uneasy, but eventually accepted the change in plan. Several decided to catch some sleep. Of the four outstanding Awokapa fighting men present, two – Chikinenggi and Kayipanggu – were in the men's house named Hambukin (= 'Ambuken'), located in the largest of the two Motek hamlets. The other two – Pakiya and his son Hanenji – were in the men's house in the smaller hamlet, named Mowaw.

While the Awokapa warriors in the Hambukin men's house were dozing on the sleeping platforms, one of the leading Motek men present, named Mopeyi, set about decorating his spear with feathers, something that men throughout this region customarily did immediately before participating in an armed attack. The two leading Awokapa men in the building, Kayipanggu and Chikinenggi, were by now both sound asleep. Other Motek men present included the very experienced warriors Kwowi, Nggaramaw and Mbaranyamba.

When Mopeyi had finished tying the feathers to his spear, he signalled in a prearranged manner to the Apukili and other Motek men present to get off the benches on which they had also been sitting and to pick up their spears. Suddenly, a Motek man, who had no reputation as a fighter and had no standing in his community, picked up his spear and drove it hard into Chikinenggi's sleeping body, killing him on the spot. He died without making a noise.

In commenting on this man's actions, Ayam expressed disgust that such an insignificant person should have achieved renown by killing an outstanding warrior like Chikinenggi, something he could never have achieved if his victim had not been sleeping. Mopeyi had arranged with the other Motek men that he would have the privilege of driving the first spear into Chikinenggi. Having lost this honour, he had to settle for spearing Chikinenggi several more times to make sure he was dead.

Next they speared Kayipanggu. Like Chikinenggi he had been in a deep sleep, but had begun to stir. A Motek man, Nggumanj, drove the first spear into him while he was waking up. One of Nggumanj's sons then drove in second spear, and another son a third. Unlike Chikinenggi, who died without making a sound, when Kayipanggu was hit by the first spear he woke up, leapt off the sleeping platform and let out a warning cry to his tribesman Pakiya in the other men's house. He shouted that an ambush was underway and that Pakiya must escape. But he was only able to shout his warning once before his hosts silenced him with more spears.

Pakiya heard Kayipanggu calling but he was too far away to hear him clearly. Fearing the worst, he shouted to his son Hanenji and the other Awokapa men in the same building to get off the sleeping platforms and pick up their weapons. However, their Motek hosts quickly tried to reassure Pakiya that it was a false alarm. They told him that someone in the other hamlet was simply trying to scare off wandering ghosts (*raunim debil*, TP). Pakiya was not to be fooled so easily and contemptuously dismissed what they were saying. Standing in the middle of the building with his spear raised, he told the other Awokapa men present that Kayipanggu must have come under attack. With that, he picked up his net bag, slung it over his shoulder and, holding his spear at the ready, strode outside into the heavy rain. There, thrusting his spear repeatedly into the air, he pranced back and forth challenging his hosts to take him on.

As soon as they had killed Chikinenggi and Kayipanggu, their Motek hosts set off for the other hamlet. The Motek man Apokwas led the way. When they arrived, they found Pakiya striding back and forth outside the men's house. Apokwas promptly hurled a spear at him. Pakiya saw it coming and managed to dodge it. Shouting contemptuously at Apokwas, Pakiya asked him if this was how the Motek treated their guests. He then rushed at Apokwas and felled him with his only spear. Lacking another weapon, Pakiya now tried to escape. But a Motek man named Hokwaw cut him off and managed to spear him, from the front in the pelvis. Pakiya staggered and fell. Others quickly pounced him on and drove in more spears, finishing him off.

As soon as spears began to fly, Pakiya's son Hanenji sprinted out of the men's house and fled down the hill on which the building was located and headed into an adjacent sago forest. Several of the Motek and Apukili warriors took off after him. When they were getting close, Hanenji stopped, turned around and threw his spear at the first of the pursuers, a man named Takawor. The spear had a bamboo shaft and lacked the weight of a black-palm fighting spear. Takawor, a man of great strength, brushed it aside. Takawor then physically threw himself at Hanenji and caught hold of him by the leg. This gave the other men time to catch up and drive their spears into him.

Having eliminated four of their most influential fighting men – Chikinenggi, Kayipanggu, Pakiya and Hanenji – the Motek and Apukili members of the war-party set off for the main Awokapa settlement at Kwarembu. Their intention was to slaughter every man, woman and child they could find, and burn the settlement to the ground. As a precaution, however, the Awokapa had posted lookouts around their settlement. As soon as they saw the enemy approaching they shouted warnings, enabling the Kwarembu residents to flee.

After spending a night or two hiding in the forest, the Kwarembu people headed towards a group of bush-houses they owned at a place named Nanggitok. Their Apukili and Motek pursuers picked up their tracks and followed them. Lookouts again detected their approach, but many

of the Awokapa by this time were too far away to hear their warnings clearly. Some, according to Ayam, even mistook them for the distant sounds of forest birds, such as the one named *wurumayak*, which has an exceptionally powerful, far-carrying call. Over several days, the Motek and Apukili pursuers managed to locate and kill the great majority of those who had escaped from Kwarembu. The renowned Apukili warrior named Mokonap led this extermination campaign.

The redoubtable Awokapa fighting man and leader Yombonggos (pp. 126–7) was among those who escaped from Kwarembu. On one occasion when the pursuers caught sight of him, he reportedly bounded away with great leaps like a tree kangaroo (*sikau*, TP). When commenting on this, Ayam remarked, humorously, that it was not surprising he should have used great leaps to escape his pursuers since his name, in Kwoma, refers to this animal: '*yobo*' (= 'yombu': 'tree kangaroo'). The equivalent Yalaku term is '*yayibu*'.

While the Apukili and Motek pursuers were scouring the forest in search of those who had fled Kwarembu, they slept at night in bush-houses the Awokapa had abandoned, and lived off the food they found in them. Ayam emphasized that the pursuers didn't just kill men, but women and children as well. One victim was an elderly woman named Neyimbiira; two other women they killed were Kwosanenggi and Manggunembii. A young married woman they located they decided to capture rather than kill, giving her as a wife to one of the men in the war-party. This woman had her young son with her, who they killed on the spot. His name was Meriisey. After a week or two, the pursuers decided that any remaining Awokapa would by then have left the region and were too far away to pursue. So they returned to their homes.

A Yalaku man's Awokapa brother-in-law is presumed killed, but then reappears

While this campaign of extermination against the Awokapa was underway, a Yalaku man named Halakwosi (156) happened to be visiting his sister Woyipeki (155). She was married to an Awokapa man named Sombochey. They were living at an isolated bush-house. Sombochey's house was one of those the Apukili and Motek located in their sweep through the forest around Kwarembu, but all three managed to escape. However, Sombochey's elderly mother, who was living with him, was caught and killed. She was the woman Neyimbiira referred to above (this page).

News of the Motek and Apukili extermination campaign reached the Yalaku not long after Halakwosi had set off to visit his sister. When another of Woyipeki's brothers, Apwi (153), heard the news, he began to fear for the safety of his two siblings and his sister's husband. He decided to search for them. When he reached his sister's house, he found it abandoned. He noticed a large pile of freshly cut coconut fronds next to the house. This was weighted down by pieces of timber. Thinking it might be a firewood store he removed the fronds. Underneath, he found the body of Sombochey's elderly mother, Neyimbiira. It was riddled with spear wounds. He could see that she had only just been killed, as the body had not begun to decay. He realized that someone from the house must have survived the attack and returned after the killers had left, to give the elderly woman a rough burial.

Fearing that one or both of his two siblings had been killed, Apwi set off for home. The Yalaku by this time had moved back to Yelogu, their present location on the eastern edge of the Washkuk Hills. On his way, Apwi stopped off at his principal bush-house, located at a place named Patawinggey. In a traditional expression of grief, he chopped down all of his highly prized betel-nut palms and smashed the pottery stored in the house. When he reached Yelogu, he gave a report of what he had found and said that he could only assume that his brother, sister and sister's husband were all dead. Deeply distraught at their loss, he smeared white clay over his face and body and went into mourning.

In narrating this part of the history, Ayam remarked that before European contact the Yalaku didn't count time in 'weeks', only days and months based on the cycles of the sun and the moon. He didn't know, therefore, precisely how much later, but in what was probably only a week or two, both the missing brother Halakwosi and sister Woyipeki suddenly emerged from the forest and walked into Yelogu. Sombochey had come with them, but not being sure of the reception he would receive, had gone into hiding in the nearby forest.

Apwi was overjoyed to discover that his siblings were still alive, along with his brother-in-law. However, he was also acutely embarrassed, and very annoyed, at having prematurely destroyed his prized betel-nut palms and the pottery at his bush-house.

Apwi's brother-in-law, the Awokapa man Sombochey, was not a noted warrior or political leader like those the Motek and Apukili had treacherously killed at the Motek settlement. But he was well known, and fearing that the Apukili and Motek or their allies would try to kill him if they could, he went into hiding in a remote area of swampy sago forest named Nokunggiy Hamba. After spending a few days with her two brothers at Yelogu, his wife Woyipeki joined him there.

Sombochey's brother, named Kwocholap, had also survived the killings, as had two other Awokapa men well known to the Yalaku. They were Suwuluk Somboyap and his son Ndowapa. All four went into hiding in the same section of forest.

The Yalaku leader Kapay reinforces the new alliance with the Honggwama, then leads a war-party against the Apukuli

The Apukili and Motek extermination campaign went a long way towards destroying the Awokapa as an independent community. But there were still a sizable group of Awokapa left. The Yalaku leader Kapay (123) now set out to kill as many as he could. This was despite the fact that several of these Awokapa men, such as Sombochey, were married to Yalaku women and hence had close political ties to his community. Kapay's hostility derived from the fact that Awokapa men were among those who had participated alongside the Tongwinjamb in the attack on the two Yalaku settlements at Nggweriyaman and Wamanggey (p. 127), during which his senior wife, Awasow, and his son's wife were killed.

Kapay and many other Yalaku men were equally hostile to the Apukili. The Apukili territory abutted their own, and when the Yalaku moved permanently to their present site in the 1930s the land adjacent to the Apukili was now too far away to be visited on a daily basis. They soon began receiving reports that the Apukili were regularly encroaching on their land and exploiting its rich resources. In much the same way as the Apukili and Motek had attempted to destroy the Awokapa, Kapay decided to launch an attack on the main Apukili settlement, then located at a place named Amba (O, Figure 6.1). His intention was to weaken them radically as an independent political group.

By the late 1930s, the Yalaku had declined in population to the point where they could no longer launch an attack on even a medium-sized group such as the Apukili without major assistance. For this support, Kapay turned to his community's new allies, the Honggwama Kwoma. The Honggwama at that time were still located at the site at which Whiting and Reed, a year or two later, would do their fieldwork (N, Figure 6.1). Kapay had long had a personal political tie to the Honggwama through his friendship relationship with a prominent member of its 'Bangwis' faction named Aponeenji (in Kwoma, 'red parrot'). Aponeenji was a leading member of Nowil clan, the Bangwis faction's largest and most influential group. Aponeenji, however, had recently died. On this visit Kapay renewed this personal political tie by establishing a new friendship relationship with Aponeenji's son, Tupukuman (Figure 9.3).

The two men established their new relationship in the customary way by publicly exchanging 'friendship' net bags (in Kwoma, *nareboy kow*, *nareboy*, friend; *kow*, net bag). Both bags were lavishly decorated with cowrie and other saltwater shells and, in the traditional manner, with jawbones of deceased relatives.[77] A jawbone was thought to be one of the abodes of the 'soul' (*hach*; Kwoma: *mayi*) of the deceased that acted as a guardian of the recipient and his family. It might do this by rattling the shells on the bag at night if it detected someone outside its owner's house looking for leavings to use in sorcery.

The jawbone Kapay attached to the net bag he gave Tupukuman was that of his recently deceased son, Nyakaw (p. 133). Tupukuman reciprocated with a bag decorated with the jawbone of his deceased father, Aponeenji, Kapay's former friend. A 'friendship' relationship is ideally lifelong and entitles each man to call on the other for military and political assistance whenever required.

Following his establishment of this new friendship relationship with Tupukuman, Kapay immediately invited him to participate in his planned attack on the Apukili settlement at Amba. He encouraged him to bring with him as many other 'Bangwis' men as he could. Kapay invited the much younger Tupukuman to participate in this raid in part to honour a promise he had made his father, Aponeenji, shortly before he had died. This was to give Tupukuman the opportunity to make a kill in intertribal fighting, so that he could acquire the ability to cultivate yams. Until he had made a kill, Aponeenji knew, his son would always be dependent on other men of higher prestige to plant yams for him. Kapay was hoping that the raid would provide his new friend with that opportunity.

Reportedly, Tupukuman jumped at the opportunity to assist in the raid. He also had no difficulty obtaining the support of a sizeable contingent of other members of his own clan. This included a number of young men like himself who were yet to achieve a kill in warfare and thus had not yet acquired the ability to cultivate yams. After securing Tupukuman's support, Kapay gave him a *tanget* (TP) consisting of a length of string with a series of knots tied in it, to indicate how many nights had to pass before the participants were to rendezvous at a pre-arranged meeting place. This was to be in the forest roughly halfway between Yelogu and the target settlement.

After meeting at the pre-arranged site, the men walked for a full day through the forest before they were in striking distance of the Apukili settlement. That night, and far enough away so as not to be detected, the men spent their time ceremoniously boasting about who they would kill the following day.

Earlier that day, the war-party had been spotted from a distance by a group of Motek men, who promptly vanished into the forest. The following morning, when the war-party reached the Apukili settlement and launched the attack, it found the place empty. The men concluded that the Motek people who had seen them passing in the forest, or unseen Apukili lookouts, had warned the residents and given them time to flee.

Finding the village empty, the war-party turned back. On their way home Tupukuman and the other Bangwis

77 The Australian administration outlawed the practice of attaching human remains to such bags after the Second World War.

Figure 9.3 Tupukuman of Bangwis village (Kwoma) in the 1960s. He was one of the 'friends' (nawa) and political allies of Kapay (123), one of the last of the Yalaku tribe's major leaders. Here he is shown holding a representation of the Nokwi ceremony female-spirit figure named Nankwi (see Bowden 1983a, 2011, 2022). Photograph courtesy of Dirk Smidt of Leiden.

participants stopped briefly at Yelogu, where, as a gesture of thanks, their Yalaku hosts provided them with a sumptuous meal of dog meat and boiled sago. As elsewhere in this region, dog meat was a traditional delicacy.

Not long after this, Kapay organized a second war-party and sent word to Tupukuman and his 'Bangwis' kinsmen that he was seeking their support. The target on this occasion was not the Apukili but the four Awokapa men named earlier. They were among the few who had escaped the Apukili and Motek extermination campaign and were now hiding in the forest. They were Sombochey, Kwocholap, Somboyap and the latter's adult son, Ndowapa. Two of these men were married to Yalaku women: Sombochey to Woyipeki, the sister of Apwi (153) and Halakwosi (156) of H1 clan; and Somboyap to Woyenduway (108), the sister of Asanembii (105) of YN1 clan – and Ayam's mother.

Despite two of these four men being married to Yalaku women, and hence theoretically safe from Yalaku attack, Kapay and others who were not closely related to them decided that all four should die. Kapay was well aware that their Yalaku brothers-in-law would be greatly offended if their affines were killed. It would not only deprive them of close political allies, but also of the substantial quantities of wealth that flow throughout her life from a woman's husband to her brother. Before they set off to hunt them down, therefore, the members of the war-party did their best to make peace with the Yalaku brothers-in-law by throwing liberal quantities of lime powder, from their lime gourds, over them – a traditional gesture designed to bring conflict to an end.

The Honggwama participants in this second war-party included not just Tupukuman and a large group of other members of the 'Bangwis' faction, but also a number of men belonging to the tribe's 'Washkuk' faction, to whom a number of Bangwis men were closely allied through marriage. The 'Bangwis' contingent included Latay, the man who would become his village's first government-appointed headman (*luluai*, TP) after the Second World War.

After doing their best to reconcile themselves to the Yalaku brothers-in-law of the men they were proposing to kill, the war-party set off. They knew their targets had gone into hiding in the area around the former Yalaku settlement at Molipiir (11, Figure 6.1). They soon located the small compound where Kwocholap and Sombochey were living with their wives. When they arrived, Kwocholap was dozing on a sleeping platform outside his house. Sombochey and his wife Woyipeki were processing sago nearby. They could hear pith being chopped out of a felled palm. This couple had an infant son with them, named Ayis.

Staying out of sight among the trees and dense undergrowth (Figure 9.4), and without making a sound, the war-party divided into two. Each half was to attack a different target. One group went after Sombochey. It approached him and his wife quietly through the swampy forest. When the couple was located, Sombochey was found to be standing beside a trough, washing the flour out of the pith. His wife Woyipeki had been chopping the pith out of a palm they had felled, but just then had taken a break to tend to her child. The child was asleep in a net bag hanging from a branch on an adjacent tree.

Figure 9.4 A Kwoma women washing sago beside a forest stream, 1978. The trough is formed from the U-shaped lower end of a sago-palm branch (technically a giant leaf). The dense undergrowth surrounding such work sites enabled enemy war-parties to approach people working in the forest without being seen. The woman is Kayimaka of Bangwis village.

The couple had lit a small fire. While Woyipeki was walking towards her child, she suddenly caught sight of the men hiding in the dense undergrowth. They were crouching down and had sunk up to their knees in the soft mud. Woyipeki kept her nerve. Pretending that she had not seen them, she called to her husband to come over and add wood to their small fire, which she told him was in danger of going out. When Sombochey walked over to the fire, she told him softly that a war-party was about to attack and that they needed to run. Continuing to act as if nothing unusual was happening, she lifted the net bag containing her child off the branch and then suddenly sprinted into the forest with her husband. They successfully escaped. The depth of the mud in which the attackers were standing meant that they had no hope of catching them.

The men in the other group quietly surrounded Kwocholap's house. When they revealed themselves Kwocholap leapt off his bed and headed into the surrounding swampy forest. But the attackers gave chase and the Yalaku man Membangg hit him with his spear. This slowed him down, but did not fell him. One of the 'Washkuk' Honggwama participants, named Chimbinggay, hit him with a second spear. These two then finished him off with their adzes. After making sure he was dead, they left his body where it was, half submerged in the swampy forest floor.

The Yalaku war-party sets off to search for Somboyap

After successfully making one kill, and accepting for the moment that Sombochey had escaped, the two groups recombined and set off to find the other two Awokapa men: Somboyap and his adult son Ndowapa. When they reached the site of the former Yalaku settlement at Molipiir, where there were still many houses in good condition, they paused briefly to refresh themselves on the fluid and jelly-like meat of green coconuts growing on some of the many palms there. They then searched the surrounding forest, travelling as far as a place named Sanggimonggey. That night they slept rough in the forest.

At first light the following morning, the war-party again split into two. One group set off in the direction of a house they knew Somboyap and Ndowapa owned at a site named Kiiriinggowi. When they arrived they found it empty.

The other group went to a place named Hamawapi, where they knew there were houses that Somboyap and Ndowapa periodically used. Before splitting up it was agreed that the two groups would rendezvous at Hamawapi later that day. The houses at Hamawapi also proved to be empty. Finding no one, the members of this group began searching the surrounding forest. By midday, having had no success, they returned to Hamawapi to wait for the other group to arrive.

Tupukuman kills Somboyap

After meeting up, the men headed back towards Molipiir. Before long they found where the two men were living. This was at a place close to Molipiir named Nuku Molipiir. It was the site of one of several small hamlets that had once ringed Molipiir when the Yalaku had their main settlement there.

A scouting party found the men, and immediately reported back to the main group.

The war-party approached silently. Peering through the dense undergrowth they could see that Somboyap's wife, Woyenduway, was outside her house, transferring newly processed sago flour from her net bag into a large storage pot.

Kapay was the overall leader of the war-party. Instead of launching the attack immediately, he chose to call to Somboyap and explain why he and the war-party were there. Somoboyap was inside the house. Kapay asked him, sarcastically, if he thought members of the Awokapa community could participate in an attack on the two Yalaku hamlets at Nggweriyaman and Wamanggey, in which his wife Awasow had been killed, and later live quietly in the forest as if nothing had happened.

Hearing Kapay shouting, Somboyap emerged from his house and let out a tremendous cry, to warn his son that they had come under attack. His son's house was some distance away. He then bolted for the forest. But Kapay and the others soon caught him. Kapay hurled the first spear, but Somboyap saw it coming and managed to dodge it. However, before Somboyap had gone much further, Kapay's protégé Tupukuman caught him with his spear. This caused Somboyap to stagger. Kapay then hit him with a second spear. Other men, younger members of the war-party, quickly gathered around and plunged their spears into him while he was still alive. By doing so, all instantly acquired the ability to grow yams.

Somboyap's wife, Woyenduway (108) also took off into the forest. The Yalaku members of the war-party quickly caught her and formed a cordon around her, to protect her from the Kwoma members of the war-party who would otherwise have killed her. She was a Yalaku woman and her tribesmen wanted to take her back to their settlement.[78]

Another Yalaku woman living with Somboyap at the time was Woyenduway's mother, Mbwimbwi. She had been paying her daughter an extended visit. The Yalaku members of the war-party, similarly, quickly found and surrounded her to prevent the Kwoma participants from killing her.

Somboyap and his wife Woyenduway had their two young sons with them. One, named Ukwaya, took off into the forest as soon as the fighting started. Several of the younger Kwoma men quickly located and killed him. A 'Bangwis' man named Manggapowa (living at Bangwis village in 1973) hit him with the first spear but did not kill him. Others finished him off. They also instantly acquired the ability to plant and grow yams.

The other son, named Ukwalem, similarly took off into the forest. Bangwis members of the war-party soon caught him. They would have killed him as well, but Woyenduway pleaded with Kapay not to allow them to do so. Kapay agreed and the boy returned to Yelogu with his mother.[79]

Ndowapa, Somboyap's adult son from an earlier marriage, had his house several hundred metres away. When he realized his father's compound had come under attack, he successfully escaped into the forest with his wife.[80]

Following these killings, the members of the war-party returned to their homes. A few weeks later, the Kwoma participants returned to Yelogu to thank Kapay formally for giving a significant number of their younger men the opportunity to achieve their first kills in intertribal fighting, and thus acquire the ability to cultivate yams. As a gesture of appreciation, they brought with them a large pig one of them had killed, and shell valuables which they distributed among the leading Yalaku participants. Their hosts boiled the pig, made a 'pork soup', and shared the food with the Kwoma men.

Two of the four Awokapa men take refuge with the Wurambanj Kwoma

The two Awokapa men who survived this raid, Sombochey and Ndowapa, took refuge with Sombochey's mother's Kwoma relatives in the Wurambanj Kwoma tribe. These relatives were living at hamlet named Towa. Two other Awokapa men, who had similarly been in hiding in the forest, also took refuge with the Wurambanj at the same time. They were Lopokeli and Yambokay. This was in the middle of the 1930s, when labour recruiters were becoming active for the first time in the hinterland region around Ambunti. Lopokeli and Yambokay decided that the best way to escape the conflict with their neighbours in which the surviving members of their community had become embroiled was to sign on as contract labourers and leave the Sepik region altogether. According to Ayam, however, they irresponsibly made no arrangements for their wives. Without husbands to protect them, unrelated Wurambanj men shamefully took advantage of them sexually whenever they encountered them working on their own in the forest. When Sombochey and Ndowapa discovered how badly the women were being treated they decided, disastrously in hindsight, to leave the Wurambanj settlement and take the two women, along with their own families, back into the low-lying forest country to the north, where they had previously been living. They settled, without permission, on a remote section of Yalaku land named Wonyimarukwa.

78 She subsequently married Waspen of Rama clan, and with him had Ayam, the narrator of this history.

79 I have no information about what became of this boy.

80 Ndowapa's wife was an Awokapa woman named Yowembwiya. Several marriages later she became one of Ayam's wives (see Chapter 3 and the Genealogical Index under Ayam's name).

***c.*1936–7**

Kapay tracks down the Awokapa men Sombochey and Ndowapa

Knowing that they had many enemies among the neighbouring communities – Yalaku, Apukili and Motek – Sombochey and Ndowapa constructed a huge palisade around their two houses. This rivalled in size the palisades the Yalaku tribe as a whole had formerly constructed around major men's houses. Ayam expressed astonishment and admiration for the fact that these two men on their own were able to build such a palisade. They also put in a large stock of spears. After completing the palisade, they made a slit-gong to communicate with each other if they came under attack and one was away working in the forest. In the customary manner, while carving it, they periodically tested it for the quality of its sound.

Ironically for these two men, on one occasion when Kapay was hunting in the same part of the forest he heard them testing the drum. He surmised, correctly, that it came from the secret compound Sombochey and Ndowapa had established following their departure from the Wurambanj settlement. When he returned to Yelogu he told the others he was going to investigate.

Kapay set off with the Yalaku man named Kapakeli (128), Kiriyas's (130) father. They soon found the palisaded compound. The two then quickly went back to Yelogu to put a war-party together. However, by the time they returned they found that the place had been abandoned. The two men somehow had got wind of their plans. Realizing they were no longer safe living on their own in the forest, they took refuge with one of the few remaining major Apukili leaders, the man named Mokonap. His settlement was at a place named Apoki (P, Figure 6.1). They sought refuge with him despite the fact that Mokonap had been one of the participants in the Apukili and Motek extermination campaign against the Awokapa living at Kwarembu, their tribe's last remaining major settlement (p. 134).

From the footprints they had left, it was clear that the two Awokapa men and their wives were heading in the direction of the Apukili settlement at Apoki. Many of the men in the war-party advised against pursuing them. Kapay, however, insisted that they keep going. Reluctantly, the others agreed. That night they slept rough in the forest at a site named Nyimben.

Soon after sunrise the following morning, they arrived at the Apukili settlement. There they found the two men. One of the members of the war-party was the leading warrior named Teyikwal. Although Teyikwal had led the attempt to kill the Awokapa man Yombonggos at Hambandum (p. 127), in revenge for the role he believed he had played in the poisoning of his only son, he joined this war-party to try to protect Sombochey, a close relative. Teyikwal's wife and Somobchey's mother were both from the Kwoma Wurambanj tribe and were actual sisters. This made Sombochey his 'son' (an actual WeZS). While on their way to the Apukili settlement, Teyikwal repeatedly appealed to Kapay to take no action against Sombochey. Kapay listened to what he had to say, but refused to change his mind.

When the war-party arrived at the Apukili settlement the men walked straight up to its men's house. Their sudden appearance reportedly came as a tremendous shock to Mokonap and the rest of the people living there. When they saw the heavily armed men walk into their village, the majority of the women and children, and some of the men, fled into the surrounding forest. Mokonap and the leading Apukili fighters stood their ground. The Yalaku could nevertheless see from the trembling of his hands that even Mokonap was nervous. At one point, Mokonap's hands shook so much he actually dropped his spear. To try to defuse the situation, Teyikwal strode up to Mokonap and in a gesture of friendship threw his net bag at his feet. Mokonap reciprocated, throwing his own net bag at Teyikwal's feet.

The moment the Yalaku arrived, a man named Tamow, who was visiting from the Motek tribe, disappeared into the forest and headed back to the main Motek settlement. He did so, Ayam remarked humorously, 'with the speed of a frightened ghost'. This man was actually a member of the Masakiina tribe, an independent political group located much further to the north. However, he was married to a Motek woman and had been living with her and her kinsmen at the main Motek settlement at Ambuken for some years. Tamow absented himself as soon as the war-party arrived, not out of fear, but to gather a group of Motek fighting men to help defend the Apukili settlement if need be.

Tamow had been visiting the Apukili with his wife, Wangganembii. Unlike most of the other women, who fled at the first sight of the Yalaku, she stood her ground alongside Mokonap. Mokonap's wife, Wanyuwar, did the same. The members of the war-party could see that the two women were also trembling with fear.

At Mokonap's suggestion, all the men moved into the men's house, including Sombochey and Ndowapa. There the two groups debated, aggressively, what should be done with the two Awokapa men. Kapay demanded that the Apukili hand them over, but Mokonap refused. The arguing continued throughout the night. At first light the following morning, Mokonap said that he had heard enough and that he wanted the Yalaku to leave. To encourage them to do so he pointed out that the man Tamow, who had disappeared into the forest the previous day, would soon be arriving with a substantial contingent of Motek fighting men.

The Yalaku agreed to leave. In retrospect, however, Kapay made a major tactical error. Instead of returning to Yelogu in one day, he decided to break the journey and spend the night at a small Apukili hamlet named Amariika. The war-party had passed it on the way and found it to be unoccupied.

After the Yalaku departed, Mokonap instructed one of his men, Sarakiya, as well as the Awokapa man Ndowapa, to follow the Yalaku at a safe distance to confirm that they were actually returning home. That night when Kapay was taking his turn at patrolling the area where the men were sleeping, he suddenly encountered these two men on the edge of the forest. Demanding to know what they were doing Sarakiya replied, implausibly, that Mokonap had sent them to say that they could help themselves to whatever food they found at the hamlet. He also said that they should not be concerned about leaving at first light for fear that armed men might be following them, but could instead take their time and wait until the sun was well up. He also told Kapay that one of his clan 'daughters', named Mbwiyakay, who was married to an Apukili man, had been absent from their settlement the previous day and was anxious to catch up with him before he returned to Yelogu. Sarakiya and Ndowapa then left.

That night the members of the war-party debated at length about how to interpret Sarakiya's comments. Some believed that they should be very wary and set off at first light. Others took the view that there was nothing to be concerned about and that they should not be in too much of a hurry to depart. Kapay indicated that he was keen to see his 'daughter' Mbwiyakay, and would only leave after doing so.

The following morning the men who were in no hurry to depart told the others that they could leave if they wished. But the latter said they would wait. Kapay then began, periodically, to beat signals on the buttress root of a nearby tree to guide his 'daughter' Mbwiyakay to where they were waiting. They heard replies being beaten periodically on other buttress roots in the forest. These were ostensibly from Mbwiyakay, saying she was on her way. Some of the men soon came to suspect that others were doing the signalling in the hope of delaying their departure.

Anxious not to be ambushed, the entire war-party decided to set off. However, before they had gone far a large number of heavily armed men with Mokonap in the lead suddenly appeared behind them. The group included the two men, Sarakiya and Ndowapa, that Kapay had encountered during the night, as well as Tamow and a large contingent of Motek fighters. When the group caught up with them, Mokonap called to Kapay, telling him that his intentions were peaceful. He told him, plainly implausibly, that he was looking for a dog he had lost, named Nembiiruku.

Kapay was carrying the full-length crocodile-skin shield he normally took with him into battle. This was tall enough to cover his entire body (Figure 7.3). But he had only one spear. Mokonap walked towards him in an apparently friendly manner, but when he was within range suddenly raised his heavy black-palm spear and hurled it at Kapay. The weapon went straight through the shield and struck Kapay hard in the side above the hip, seriously injuring but not killing him. Sarakiya then rushed forward and speared Teyikwal, seriously wounding him as well. When this happened the entire Yalaku war-party, including the two injured men, took cover in the forest. Mokonap's party, however, made no attempt to pursue them and promptly withdrew. Other than Kapay and Teyikwal, who remained where they were, when the Yalaku realized the attack had concluded they cautiously emerged from hiding. No one was interested in pursuing the Apukili.

After confirming that the attackers had left, the men then searched for Kapay and Teyikwal. When they found them, they were relieved to discover that they were still alive. However, both were seriously wounded. Teyikwal was too weak to stand and was lying on the forest floor. His companions quickly fashioned a stretcher out of poles and lengths of split vine and after placing him on it, hoisted him onto their shoulders and set off. Although Kapay was also seriously wounded he was still strong enough to walk, and made his way back to the bush-house he occupied near Yelogu without assistance.

When the first members of the war-party reached Yelogu they immediately informed the people there that their two major leaders, Kapay and Teyikwal, had been seriously injured but were still alive. Deeply alarmed at the thought of what might happen to their community if they lost their two leading men, many women began to weep openly.

As soon as they were back at their houses, Kapay and Teyikwal's kinsmen set about treating their wounds. In the customary manner, men skilled in the treatment of spear wounds cut deeply into the flesh around the injuries with bamboo knives, to release the 'bad' blood and give them access to the tips of the spear blades that had broken off in the wounds. The men operating on Teyikwal managed to extract the broken blade, but those operating on Kapay found that the tip of the spear was embedded solidly in bone and impossible to extract.

Those operating on Kapay decided that they needed help from more skilled surgeons, and sent a signal on a slit-gong asking for their 'Bangwis' allies to send their best practitioners. Their most renowned surgeons were Latay of Yanggaraka clan, and Nggayimes and Sawanambwi of Nowil clan. As soon as they heard the call these three men came over to Yelogu. After carefully inspecting Kapay's wound, the surgeons performed spells designed to help extract deeply embedded spear points. Eventually, they managed to remove the tip from his body and in time both Kapay and Teyikwal recovered.

*c.*1938–40
The Apukili enlist the aid of Tongwinjamb to kill Kapay, but find the Yalaku settlement abandoned

Fearing that the Apukili might make a more concerted attempt to avenge the highly aggressive manner in which Kapay had behaved at their settlement, the Yalaku as a whole decided temporarily to abandon their village and move closer to the Honggwama for protection. Carrying

their two injured leaders with them, they first constructed a makeshift camp on the eastern side of the Washkuk Hills at a site named Sinparaway (Q, Figure 6.1). A little later they moved to higher ground.

As the Yalaku had suspected, the Apukili soon took revenge for Kapay's attempt to seize the two Awokapa men who had taken refuge with them. Kapay was their target, as they considered him a continuing and major threat to them, not Teyikwal or the Yalaku as a whole.

Lacking the numbers to carry out the attack on their own the Apukili enlisted the aid of their old allies, the Tongwinjamb. A war-party was soon assembled, but when the fighters arrived at Yelogu they found the place abandoned. With nothing else they could do, they set fire to its newly constructed men's house. This building, the community's main meeting place and ceremonial centre, had been named Tokimba after the main ceremonial house at their former settlement at Molipiir, which a previous Tongwinjamb and Apukili war-party had also burnt down (p. 105). After putting Tokimba to the torch the attackers returned to their various homes. From their new settlement on the eastern side of the Washkuk Hills the Yalaku could clearly see the smoke from the burning building rising above the forest canopy.

***c.*1940**

The Apukili (led by Mokonap) expel the two Awokapa men Sombochey and Ndowama, but keep their wives

Having failed to kill Kapay, and not wanting to attract further attention from him by continuing to harbour the two Awokapa men he had sought, the Apukili expelled both. But they kept their wives. Mokonap took Sombochey's wife, the Yalaku woman Woyipeki, as a second wife, and a man named Asawowa claimed Ndowapa's wife, Yowembwiya.[81] Sombochey initially refused to leave the settlement or give up his wife. It was only when the Apukili man Sarakiya threatened to spear him that he complied. Sarakiya was the man who had earlier speared and seriously injured the leading Yalaku warrior Teyikwal.

Now without wives, Sombochey and Ndowapa took refuge among the Kwoma. Sombochey went to live with his maternal kin in the Wurambanj tribe. Ndowapa took refuge with the Kowariyasi Kwoma and remained there for the rest of his life.

***c.*1940–2**

Sombochey leaves the Wurambanj and goes to live with Yalaku

Following the expulsion of these two Awokapa men from the Apukili settlement at Apoki, two of the Honggwama tribe's leading men, Sawanambwi and Latay, once again became involved in Yalaku affairs. They were two of the surgeons who had successfully extracted the blade from Kapay's side after he had been speared by the Apukili leader Mokonap.

For reasons that Ayam did not make clear, these two Bangwis men strongly advised that Teyikwal remove his 'son' Sombochey (p. 140) from the Wurambanj tribe and invite him to move to Yelogu, where the entire Yalaku community had by this time returned. This was despite the earlier attempt by Kapay and other Yalaku men to kill Sombochey. After much discussion the members of Teyikwal's faction agreed to the proposal. The two 'Bangwis' men, Sawanambwi and Latay, fetched Sombochey from the Wurambanj settlement and took him over to Yelogu. By this time, these two men and the other members of the 'Bangwis' faction had split off from the remainder of their tribe and established the new village of Bangwis at its present site – which they named after their faction.

Sombochey lived without incident with the Yalaku for a year or more. Despite Kapay's earlier attempt to kill him, he even established a working relationship with him. Eventually, however, he fell out with the entire Yalaku community, including his 'father' Teyikwal.

One day, Sombochey received an invitation from his Wurambanj maternal kin to visit their settlement and collect a huge parcel of betel nut and cured tobacco they wanted to give Kapay, ostensibly as a gesture of friendship. The real purpose of the gift, according to Ayam, was to poison him in revenge for his earlier attempt to kill Sombochey, their 'sister's son' (*rawa*) – an action that had profoundly angered them. The poison to be used for this purpose was a white powder Kwoma know as '*wachiimakwa kapa*', which only the Wurambanj people possessed. Its name includes the Kwoma term for the breadfruit tree (*wachii*), a totem shared by the majority of the Wurambanj clans.

As requested, Sombochey travelled to Wurambanj to collect the gift. When he arrived, the donors informed him that they had included a small quantity of poison in the parcel, and instructed him to sprinkle this on anything that Kapay was likely to ingest. After being told what to do he returned to Yelogu with the parcel.

Sombochey took the parcel to the small men's house in the part of the Yelogu settlement in which both he and his protector Teyikwal had their houses. From there he sent a signal on one of its slit-gongs to Kapay, requesting that he come down from his house, further up the hill, and receive the gift. Kapay sent word on his personal slit-gong that although he was grateful for the gift he would be staying at his house. He advised Sombochey to distribute the contents of the parcel, on his behalf, among the men in his part of the village. Shortly afterwards, however, he changed his mind and decided to accept some of its contents personally.

Before doing so, he walked down the side of the spur on which the settlement is located to pick several green tobacco leaves from plants he was cultivating in front of one of his own former dwellings. This was close to, but

81 This is the same woman who, by 1973, and following other marriages, had become one of Ayam's two wives.

further down the side of the spur, the house of Waspen, Ayam's father. While walking past Waspen's house he badly stubbed his toe on a projecting root of a tree growing beside the track. Badly stubbing a toe is considered a portent. Wondering what it might signify, Kapay turned to his young daughter Kwaruk, who was with him, and commented, if only half seriously, that her mother must be annoyed with him for some reason, as he'd just stubbed his toe painfully. Kapay was referring to Naparuwe, the woman he had captured some years earlier in the raid he had led on the Tongwinjamb settlement at Watiyombu (p. 122). Ayam's father was sitting outside his house at the time and heard Kapay's comment. He spoke to him and told him that regardless of whether or not his wife was annoyed with him, he should pick the tobacco leaves he had come for and then go down to the men's house where Sombochey was waiting, and accept the gift his maternal relatives had sent.

Kapay picked the green leaves and took them with him down to the other part of the village. By now a large group of men had gathered in the men's house. Normally when a group of men come together to talk, several will bring smouldering pieces of wood from their kitchen fires for drying green tobacco leaves before rolling them into cigars. On this occasion there was only one piece of smouldering wood in the building. This was one Sombochey had next to him. The unopened parcel of betel nut and tobacco lay beside it. Kapay sat down next to Sombochey. Before unwrapping the parcel, he placed two of the green tobacco leaves he had brought with him on the smouldering end of one piece of firewood. After opening the parcel and examining its contents, his attention was temporarily distracted by someone who spoke to him. Sombochey reportedly seized the opportunity to remove the poison from the parcel and quickly sprinkle it over the leaves Kapay was drying on the fire. Kapay then turned his attention back to the leaves. Taking them off the fire, he broke them up in his hands and rolled them in a section of dry banana leaf. He lit the cigar on the same smouldering piece of firewood and started smoking.

As soon as he inhaled the smoke, he remarked to Sombochey and the other men sitting nearby that the tobacco was exceptionally strong and was making his head swim. A minute or two later, he told them that the tobacco was so strong he'd decided to finish the cigar later. After stubbing it out on one of the pieces of firewood, he tucked what remained of the cigar behind his ear, walked out of the building and headed up to his house. He left the parcel with Sombochey and told him to distribute the contents among the men present.

Kapay falls ill and dies

By the time he had reached his house, Kapay was feeling seriously unwell. He remarked ominously, though not entirely seriously, to his wife Naparuwe that Sombochey must have poisoned him and that he was going to die. Naparuwe brushed off the remark and asked if she could have what remained of his cigar. But Kapay told her that she had a young daughter, Kwaruk, to look after and that if anyone was going to die from being poisoned it should be him alone. Knowing that there was nothing he could do to counteract the effect of the poison if he had already ingested it, he decided to smoke the rest of the cigar himself. He lit the remaining section and smoked it. By the time he had finished the cigar he was convinced that the tobacco had been poisoned.[82]

While Kapay had been walking uphill back to his house, he had found a large ground-dwelling toad, of a type people formerly ate, in the middle of the track. He killed it with a stick and took it back to his house. There, despite feeling ill, he roasted it on his kitchen fire and ate it. Not long afterwards a huge ulcer (*buk*, TP) erupted out of the site of the wound he had received when the Apukili leader Mokonap had speared him.

The ulcer grew rapidly and became a source of great pain. Accepting that he was going to die, he called the younger Yalaku men around him and began instructing them in the history of their community and how they should behave in future. He described in detail how the different Yalaku clans had acquired the different parcels of land they owned, especially major sago stands such as those at the places named Amba, Mbapa, Tepi, Korombay, Wupa, Yanggemi and Molipiir. He also warned them that because the Yalaku were now greatly reduced in numbers, the Tongwinjamb would try to take over the land that abutted their territory. If he were alive, he told them, he could defend their land with his spear and bow and arrow, but now that he was dying he greatly feared what would happen to it. He emphasized that the Yalaku should not be afraid of the Tongwinjamb and must at all costs defend their forests, sago stands and streams.

He also repeatedly emphasized that because they were now so few, they must under no circumstances do anything to jeopardize their community's growing alliance with the Honggwama Kwoma. In generations past, he told them, the Yalaku always had the capacity to put together a war-party without necessarily having to call on others for support. But now they would need the support of the Honggwama. He had helped reinforce this alliance, he said, by exchanging 'friendship' net bags with Tupukuman of Nowil clan.

He also warned them not to precipitate conflict with surrounding peoples, as they would risk being defeated. He also repeatedly stressed that the younger men should be

82 Ayam's account here of Sombochey's alleged poisoning of Kapay is based entirely on people's retrospective interpretations of the events that led up to Kapay becoming seriously ill and dying. Yalaku sorcery beliefs are identical to those of the Kwoma (Bowden 1987). In all probability, Sombochey and his Wurambanj relatives were entirely innocent of any involvement in Kapay's death.

very careful not to damage relations with the Honggwama by having affairs with married women, or trying to lure wives away from their husbands. They should only marry Honggwama women if their brothers or fathers approved. To do otherwise would risk destroying the current peaceful relationship between the two tribes. None of the other neighbouring tribes in the region, he told them, were completely trustworthy, as over the course of his life he had killed members of every one of them, and many of the deaths were still unavenged. But he had never killed any Honggwama.

Kapay continued to talk day and night about the history of the Yalaku community and all of the things its members had to do. Men and women gathered around him and wept openly, fearing what might happen to them when he was no longer around to protect them. Then, late one night, he died.

As soon as he stopped breathing, his kinsmen announced his death in the usual manner on slit-gongs. They used the signal reserved for men who had killed others in warfare. The news instantly spread to all the surrounding tribes. When the members of these other groups heard that Kapay was dead they were overjoyed and celebrated with singing and drumming on their own slit-gongs. The groups that celebrated included the Nowiniyen, Tongwinjamb, Apukili and Wurambanj. They celebrated for days. The Yalaku tribe's only remaining leader of real influence was Teyikwal.

Two Honggwama men inspect Kapay's corpse and detect sorcery

A week or so after hearing the drumming that announced his death, Nyawuraman of the Honggwama tribe's 'Washkuk' faction together with Tupukuman of its 'Bangwis' faction came over to Yelogu to inspect Kapay's corpse. Nyawuraman was one of Kapay's 'wife's brothers' (*towo*) and Tupukuman a 'friend' (*nawa*). When they arrived, they climbed a ladder propped against the burial platform and after removing the sago fronds covering the body carefully inspected it. They discovered that Kapay's face was covered with a white substance being exuded from his nose and mouth. They took this to be the unmistakable sign of *kapa* poisoning. After climbing down, Nyawuraman told the men who had gathered around that in his view the colour of the exudations indicated that the poison was not the *kapa* most Kwoma used, but one that was unique to the Wurambanj people, the one named *wachiimakwa*. In his view, he said, it must have been Wurambanj people who had supplied the poison. He then asked how this poison might have entered their community.

Suspicion immediately fell on Sombochey and the large parcel of betel nuts and tobacco he had just brought back from Wurambanj. The Yalaku did nothing initially. In time Kapay's body decomposed and when only the bones remained the entire community gathered to participate in his second and final burial. This involved recovering his bones from the burial platform and cleaning them. Apart from those retained for different purposes, such as his jawbone to attach to a friendship net bag and his leg bones for daggers, the remainder were broken up and buried in the earth floor of his house.

c.1942–3

Teyikwal kills the Awokapa man Sombochey in revenge for poisoning Kapay

Following Kapay's death, the Yalaku men left the main settlement to stay for extended periods at bush-houses scattered around the forest. Teyikwal took Sombochey to stay with him at a bush-house he owned at a place named Manjuwapi.

Ayam did not spell out the details, but over time Teyikwal became convinced that Sombochey had poisoned Kapay. Despite being one of his close relatives – the son of his wife's sister – he also decided that he was too dangerous to remain in their midst. One day he asked Sombochey to help construct a sago blind in the forest at which he could watch for pigs at night. Several other men went with them. While they were constructing the blind, Teyikwal suddenly turned on Sombochey and struck him hard on the head with a heavy, tree-felling stone adze.

Despite sustaining a serious injury, Sombochey managed to stay on his feet and ran into the surrounding sago forest. Teyikwal let him go. It was getting dark and he knew that the injury meant Sombochey could not go far. It would be easier to track him the following morning. That night he and the other men slept rough next to the blind. The next morning, at first light, they set off to follow Sombochey's tracks. They soon found him. He was sitting underneath a tree, too badly wounded to travel any further. They finished him off with spears and adzes.

c.1942 onwards

The last few Awokapa die in fighting or are absorbed into other groups

According to Ayam, Sombochey was the last of the Awokapa men of note and his death brought his tribe to a final end as a distinct political group. There were other Awokapa men still remaining, but they were all absorbed into other groups in which they had totemic kin or affines. By 1973 most of these men had died. For instance, one man named Hikisanombo had taken refuge with the Wurambanj Kwoma. When the Australian administration withdrew from the Sepik during the Second World War and there was a resurgence of intertribal fighting, Hikisanombo was caught up and killed in warfare between the Wurambanj and the Tongwinjamb. He was killed by the outstanding Tongwinjamb warrior and political leader named Wuruwur.[83]

83 Wuruwur was the father of a man named Kawuminja, a renowned fighter and one of Tongwinjamb's leading political

The Awokapa man Ndowapa (p. 142) lived out his days safely with the Kowariyasi Kwoma. When he died, Ayam remarked, that really was the end of the Awokapa as a distinct political group. One man of Awokapa origin who was still alive in 1973 was Ayis, Sombochey's son by his Yalaku wife Woyipeki. He was living at Tongwinjamb, where he had been absorbed into what remained of the Apukili tribe (p. 137). Other men of Awokapa origin still living in 1973 were scattered among different tribes, such as the Nowiniyen and the Motek. Ayam repeatedly emphasized that by 1973 there was no longer a distinct group named 'Awokapa.'[84]

The killing of Sombochey, Somboyap and Kwocholap commemorated in a Kwoma song

The neighbouring Honggwama Kwoma were actively involved in the fate of the three Awokapa men: Sombochey, Somboyap and Kwocholap. A contingent of Honggwama men took part in the killing of Somboyap and Kwocholap (p. 144). It was the Honggwama man Tupukuman (Figure 9.3), Kapay's 'friend' (*nawa*), who actually killed Somboyap. A Honggwama man belonging to the 'Washkuk' faction had killed Kwocholap.

Following the death of Sombochey, the last of the Awokapa men of influence, an unidentified Honggwama man composed a song (Song 9) about the killing of these three men and the demise of their tribe as a distinct political group.

The song names the three Awokapa men the Yalaku killed: Sombochey (lines 2 and 5), Kwocholap (line 4) and Somboyap (line 7). No mention is made of the reasons why these men were killed, such as their participation with the Tongwinjamb in the attacks on the Yalaku hamlets at Nggeriyaman and Wamanggey. Rather, it implies that two of the three men started forest fires that eventually engulfed their entire political group. In Kwoma songs, fires are a metaphor for military conflict.

Nor does the song state explicitly that the three Awokapa men were killed. Instead, it describes how two of them suffer serious injuries for unspecified reasons. In Sombochey's case, the injury is a serious gash in the sole of his foot. In Somboyap's, it is a serious gash in the palm of his hand. The Honggwama incorporated this song into the cycle named 'The Nowki Song' (in Kwoma, '*Nokwi Hokwa*'). Formerly this cycle was performed by all of the Kwoma-speaking communities during the Nokwi ceremony, the last of the three yam-harvest rituals (Bowden 1983a, 2011, 2022).

Song 9: Kwoma-language song from the Nokwi Hokwa cycle recalling the killing of Sombochey, Somboyap and Kwocholap, and the final destruction of the Awokapa people

1 *Meer Tukuk sakiyawa hi*,
The fire flaring up at Meer Tuku,
2 *Sobochey ka hechawa*?
Was it Sombochey who stoked it?
3 *Majipayek sakiyawa hi*,
The fire flaring up at Manjipay,
4 *Kwocholap ka hechawa*?
Was it Kwocholap who stoked it?
5 *Sobochey yatii wopu piikawa ho*.
Ho, Sombochey has gashed the sole of his foot.
6 '*Epi u, awi a*.'
'O father, O mother.'
7 *Somboyap tapa wopu piikawa ho*.
Ho, Somboyap has gashed the palm of his hand.
8 '*Epi u, awi a!*'
'O, father, O, mother!'
9 *Nawiya, nawiya meyino*!
Come, come and look!
10 *Siinaban. Nawiya meyino*!
Nothing but ashes. Come and look!

Line 1 refers to a fire (*hi*) flaring up (*sakiyawa*) at a place named Meer Tuku. Line 2 asks if Sombochey had stoked it (*hechawa*). Meer Tuku is an area of Awokapa land. Line 3 similarly refers to a fire flaring up at a place named Manjipay, another area Awokapa land. Line 4 asks if Kwocholap had stoked it.

The remainder of the song changes the focus and refers metaphorically to the complete destruction of the Awokapa as a distinct political group. Lines 5 and 6 do so, mockingly, by likening Sombochey to a child who has badly gashed (*piikawa*) the sole of his foot (*yatii wopu*) and is calling plaintively to his parents for help. The parallel lines 7 and 8 similarly mockingly represent Somboyap as a child who is calling plaintively to his parents after he has badly gashed the palm of his hand (*tapa wopu*). In both cases gashing or tearing the skin is a metaphor for being speared and killed.

The last two lines (9 and 10) equate the final demise of the Awokapa with the ashes (*siinaba*) that remain after the fires the two men have stoked have gone out. The singer invites others to come and inspect the ashes, all that remains metaphorically of this once powerful community.

figures for several decades after the Second World War. I met Kawuminja at Tongwinjamb in 1973.

84 In 2008, when I last visited the Sepik, a group of younger men at Tongwinjamb of Apukili origin were attempting to re-establish themselves as a distinct political group by constructing a new village at Patakatowa, the location of one of their tribe's former settlements. This new settlement was described as 'a hard day's walk' through swamp country to the north of Tongwinjamb. I expressed an interest in visiting it, but was diplomatically advised that the walk would be far too challenging for me.

10

Warfare with Avatip village and the destruction of the Apukili tribe

***c.*1942**

An Avatip war-party under the protection of a Japanese military patrol attacks the Nowiniyen and a Motek subgroup named Hoponokor

Following the establishment of the patrol post at Ambunti in 1924, the Australian administration quickly brought warfare to an end among the peoples living on or close to the main course of the Sepik. G.W.L. Townsend, one of the first officers in charge, bluntly but effectively demonstrated the seriousness with which his administration viewed intertribal fighting by holding public hangings at Ambunti of those found guilty of engaging in warfare. He rammed home the message by distributing parts of the hangman's ropes among the leaders of the different local communities (Townsend 1968:95–171). This ban on intertribal fighting, however, had no impact on the Yalaku or other hinterland peoples living well away from the Sepik, with whom the government was yet to make formal contact.

Despite the government's earlier success in suppressing intertribal fighting in the river region, during the Second World War, when civil administration collapsed in the face of invading Japanese troops (in late 1941), there was a resurgence of fighting. This occurred both among river peoples and between them and neighbouring hinterland peoples. Japanese troops occupied the river region from 1942 to 1945 (Ryan 1972:1211–24).

A common tactic during this period was for the members of one village to inform the commander of the local Japanese garrison that Australians were hiding out in a village they wished to attack, but lacked the strength to do so unless accompanied by an armed escort. Sepik village people at that time had no access to firearms. The reports of Australians hiding out in different villages invariably proved to be bogus, but once inside the enemy's settlement the war-party would kill as many people as they could and torch ceremonial houses and other buildings.

Around 1942 part of the Avatip tribe came into conflict with the Nowiniyen and Motek over the control of sago stands along the lower reaches of the Screw River. This is the section between the Sepik, where the Screw enters the main river directly opposite Avatip village (see Figure 1.7), and the confluence of its two main branches: the Yimi and the Amaku. For some years Avatip people had been occupying hamlets on the lower section of the Screw and making extensive use of its rich resources in sago. The Yalaku became caught up in this dispute.

Wanting to rid the lower section of the Screw of competitors for these resources, the Avatip people who had houses in this area informed the local Japanese commander that Australians were hiding out with the Nowiniyen at their main settlement, located then, as today, on the Yimi River not far upstream from its confluence with the Amaku. The Japanese commander sent a patrol with a group of armed Avatip men to the settlement to investigate.

When the patrol arrived it found the Nowiniyen settlement empty, the entire population having got wind of its approach and decamped into the surrounding forest. Needless to say, no Australians were found. Frustrated at finding no one, the Avatip warriors burnt down at least one men's house and many domestic dwellings.

The Avatip warriors then successfully persuaded the Japanese patrol to follow them up the Amaku River, the main eastern branch of the Screw. There they attacked and burned a settlement belonging to what Ayam described as a subgroup of the Motek tribe, named Hoponokor. The settlement was at a place named Winggarow. Most of the people escaped, but the attackers managed to capture and kill two men: Aparow and Awasen. After that, the Avatip fighters and their Japanese escort returned to the Sepik.

***c.*1943**

A combined Hoponokor, Yalaku and Tongwinjamb force take revenge on the Avatip

The Hoponokor people were too few to be able to take revenge on their own on the Avatip who instigated this attack. They consequently enlisted the help of Yalaku, Nowiniyen, Motek and Tongwinjamb Kwoma allies. The revenge raid took place probably in late 1943.

According to Ayam, a number of Yalaku men agreed to participate in this revenge raid because several of their children had died after visiting the main Avatip settlement

with their parents. Their parents had been visiting personal trading partners and attributed the deaths to Avatip sorcery.

A sizable contingent of Tongwinjamb men agreed to participate in the raid to take revenge for the assistance Avatip warriors had given the Honggwama and other Kwoma tribes during an attack on the main Tongwinjamb settlement, which had occurred shortly beforehand. This had also been carried out under the protection of an armed Japanese patrol. During that attack, several Tongwinjamb men were killed, including two very prominent leaders named Katuwi and Nggiiruwi. Several men's houses were also put to the torch. For their part, the Avatip participants captured two Tongwinjamb men alive – one named Korandaway – and took them back to Avatip, bound hand and foot. There they decapitated them and later displayed their over-modelled skulls as trophies in one of their men's houses.

It was this earlier attack, by a combined Kwoma and Avatip force, that prompted the leading Tongwinjamb man named Wuruwur to present the Yalaku with a secret ceremonial Yena figure (illustrated in Figure 5.5) to create a peace pact. This would enable members of his clan to flee safely into Yalaku country if their settlement came under attack again. Unlike the Motek, who had their own version of the Yena ritual, the Yalaku lacked a ceremony in which this sculpture could be displayed. They nevertheless preserved it carefully as evidence of the peace pact. Wuruwur presented the sculpture to Ayam's father, Waspen. When Waspen died, Ayam inherited custody of it.[85]

To be able to participate in the revenge raid on the Avatip, the Tongwinjamb contingent crossed to the Screw River on foot, guided by Yalaku men who had been visiting relatives at their settlement. After meeting up with the rest of the war-party they travelled on foot downstream to the hamlet from the which Avatip attackers had derived. The raid was a success. Ayam did not specify precisely the number of Avatip killed, but the Yalaku contingent killed two: a man named Yengginowa and his wife. Kiriyas killed the husband. This was Kiriyas's first kill in warfare and it immediately elevated him to the highest status in his society. The Yalaku man Membangg (168) killed his wife.

The Avatip take revenge for the above attack and kill their Yalaku guide

When the people at the main Avatip settlement learned that Yalaku men had been involved in the raid on their tribesmen living on the Screw River, their leaders began planning a revenge raid on them. As it happened, two Yalaku men, Kasakawanyi (70?) and Yakoman (105), were visiting Avatip at the time. They were staying, in the customary manner, with personal trading partners. Concerned that these Yalaku visitors might learn of their plans and warn their tribesmen if they returned to Yelogu, they persuaded the other Avatip not to ferry them to the opposite side of the Sepik before the raid took place. At that time, Yalaku men visiting Avatip were always ferried across the Sepik in Avatip canoes. When the attackers set off they decided to take Yakoman, one of the two men, with them as a guide. They were aware that if the Yalaku had got wind of the impending raid and scattered into the forest they would need someone with local knowledge to find them.

Yakoman was married to the Honggwama Kwoma woman named Wonyikowa, a member of Nowil clan. For generations this group had been (and still is) a key political ally of the Avatip people as a whole. Wonyikowa had gone to Avatip with her Yalaku husband and had taken her young, then unmarried, brother Manenggey (Figure 1.4) from Bangwis village with her. When the Avatip war-party set off for Yelogu in their several canoes, they took Wonyikowa and Manenggey with them, along with Yakoman.

The war-party used the channel that runs from the Sepik opposite Avatip through the Kwasanamba Lagoon to reach the eastern edge of the Washkuk Hills (Figures 2.1 and 2.3). Despite the best efforts of the Avatip warriors to keep their plans secret, the Yalaku had in fact learned of the impending raid from Bangwis village allies. Several days before it took place the entire community had therefore decamped into the surrounding forest. When the war-party reached Yelogu it found the place empty. That night the attackers rested in the deserted village, and the following day they forced Yakoman to lead them into the adjoining swampy country to locate their quarry.

When the Yalaku had learned of the impending raid they had sent an urgent request to the leading men at Bangwis village for support. A large group of armed men promptly joined the Yalaku in the forest. Their intention was not to engage the Avatip in fighting, but to keep the two sides apart, as they were close allies of both groups. One of the main Bangwis actors on this occasion was a very prominent man named Yamban, of Nowil clan. He later brokered a permanent peace between the Avatip and Yalaku (p. 148). In the event, no fighting took place.

This Avatip raid took place during the wet season, when the low-lying forest country to the north of Yelogu, into which the people had fled, was boggy and difficult to traverse. To protect his tribesmen, Yakoman deliberately took the Avatip warriors on a fruitless journey into a part of the forest where he knew no one would be hiding. The Avatip quickly became bogged down in deep mud. Realizing the futility of their enterprise, the pursuers gave up and returned to Yelogu. There they debated what they should do. Deeply frustrated and angry at not having found a single Yalaku, they decided to kill their guide, Yakoman. After constraining him, an Avatip man named Woraw

85 It is now in the National Gallery of Victoria (Melbourne, Australia).

decapitated him alive. He took his head back to Avatip to display as a trophy of war.

Yakoman was decapitated in front of his wife and her young brother Manenggey. Before killing her husband, they seized Wonyikowa to prevent her from panicking and potentially harming herself if she tried to flee. They assured her and her brother that they had no intention of harming them, as they were members of a clan to which their own community was closely allied. Wonyikowa accepted their assurances and made no attempt to escape. However, when Yakoman was decapitated, and fearing that the same might still happen to him, Manenggey took off into the forest. According to Ayam, he only stopped running when he reached Bangwis, his home village – about three hours' walk away along a narrow forest track. Manenggey was sitting in the Yelogu men's house when Ayam made this remark and, like all of the other men in the building, laughed out loud at it.

After her husband was killed Wonyikowa returned to Bangwis, where she remarried, and was still living in 1973. When the war-party returned to Avatip they released Kasakawanyi and allowed him to return to Yelogu.

The Yalaku leaders knew they had no guarantee that the Avatip would not try to attack them again. Although no further attack did take place, they nevertheless decided that for their own safety they would once again leave their relatively new settlement at Yelogu and move to the north, well beyond the reach of the Avatip, back to their former settlement at Molipiir (11, Figure 6.1). Many Yalaku men maintained bush-houses there and it was a place where ready-made shelter was available. This was towards the end of the period during which the Japanese were still in control of the Sepik. According to Ayam, moving to Molipiir also helped reduced the risk that they would be hit by machine-gun fire and bombs dropped by Allied aircraft on Japanese encampments on or near the main course of the Sepik. This was a time, he remarked, 'when everyone had to look after himself'.

*c.*1946–7
Final warfare with the Apukili and the killing of that tribe's last major political leader

Not long after the Australian government re-established civil administration in the Sepik at the end of the Second World War, the Yalaku came into serious conflict with the Apukili one more time. Like the Yalaku, the Apukili during the previous half century had steadily declined in numbers through warfare, and by the late 1940s consisted only of a few families. They were living under the protection of the Tongwinjamb, their long-term Kwoma ally. Most of these families were living at the Tongwinjamb hamlet to the north of the Washkuk Hills named Kwarembu (M, Figure 6.1). This had also been the site of one of the Awokapa tribe's last settlements (p. 133).

Kwarembu was adjacent to a vast area of forest the Yalaku owned, which the Apukili had taken to exploiting without their permission. This included building semi-permanent compounds at which men and their families would stay for months hunting, gardening and processing sago. Individual Yalaku men visiting the region from Molipiir would object to their illegal use of these resources, but they lacked the military strength on their own to do anything about it.

Eventually they decided to put a permanent end to the Apukili theft of their resources by killing their one major remaining leader, a man named Pakiya. Although nominally based at Kwarembu, he and his extended family of several wives and many children spent most of their time living at a compound he had established on Yalaku land, several hours' walk away. The Yalaku decision to kill Pakiya was prompted by news they had received from a prominent Tongwinjamb ally, named Wimey, that Pakiya was planning not just to continue living on Yalaku land, but, with the support of Tongwinjamb allies at Kwarembu, drive the Yalaku out of the region altogether, by launching an attack on them at Molipiir.

When the Yalaku received this news they responded in two ways. First, they abandoned Molipiir and moved to Nyinggi to the south-west, another of their former settlement sites (12, Figure 6.1). This was closer to the Washkuk Hills and much closer to the Honggwama, their principal Kwoma ally. As with many of their other former settlements, a number of Yalaku men maintained bush-houses at the site. This meant that the people had shelter as soon as they arrived. The site was also rich in fruit trees, such as banana, fruit pandanus and coconut, all planted when the community as a whole had previously been located there. The people rapidly built more houses and constructed a huge palisade around the settlement.

Second, they invited the men of Bangwis village who had come to their aid when the Avatip war-party was threatening them (p. 137), to pre-empt Pakiya and help raid his forest compound and kill him. They specifically invited Latay to lead the Bangwis contingent. Latay was one of the Honggwama tribe's outstanding warriors (and artists and ritual leaders) and a close friend of leading Yalaku men. He replied that under normal circumstances he would have been delighted to do so. However, following the re-establishment of the Australian administration at Ambunti at the end of the Second World War, he had been appointed his village's first government-appointed headman (*luluai*, TP). This position required him to promote the administration's interests at village level. This included enforcing its ban on intertribal fighting. Latay decided that his position as *luluai* made it impossible to participate in the raid. But he asked another of his village's seasoned warriors, Mokot (Figure 10.1), to take on this role. Both men would have been in their fifties or even sixties at the time.

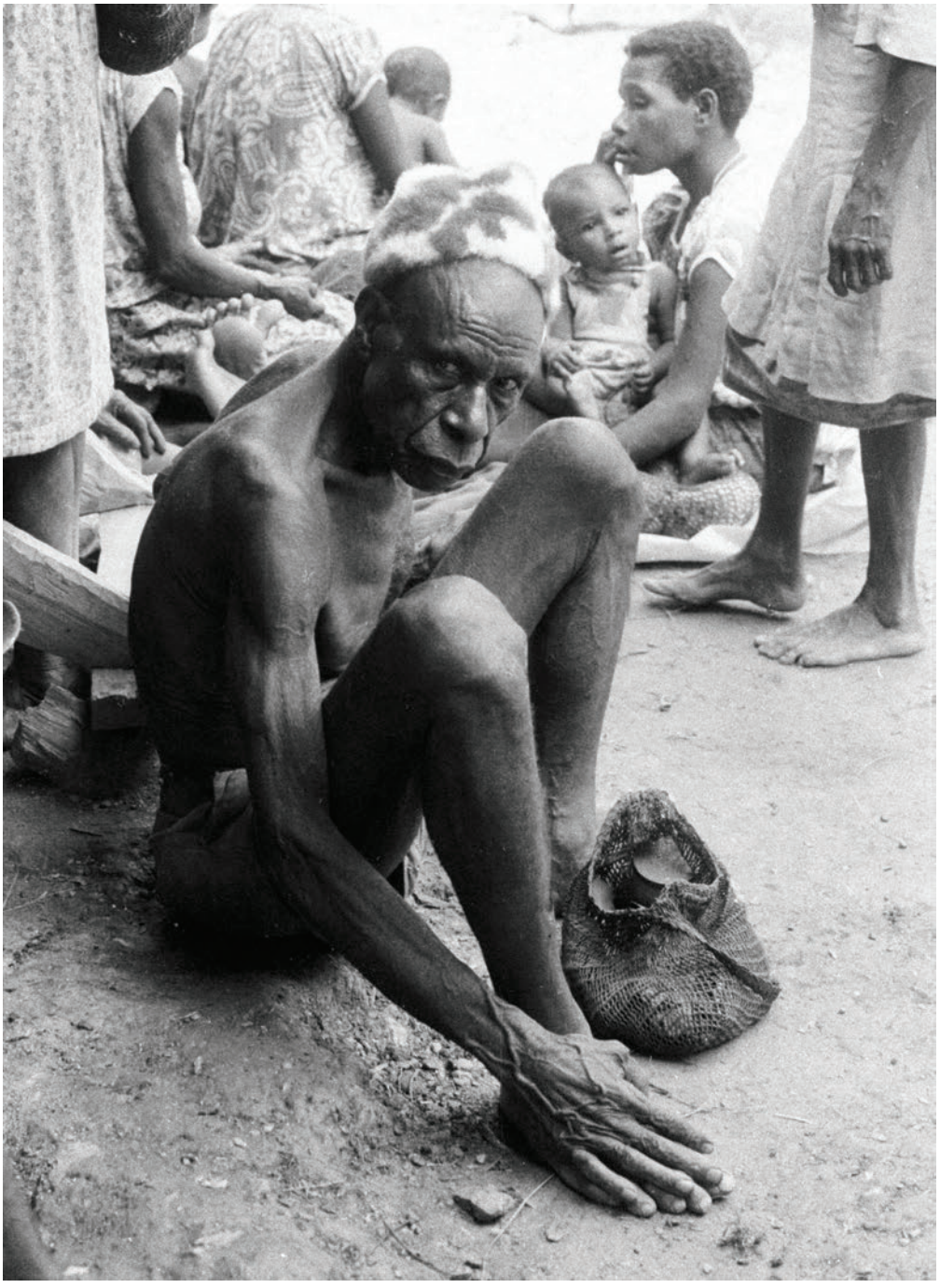


Figure 10.1 Mokot of Bangwis village (Kwoma), 1973. Mokot was one of his tribe's major fighting men during the first half of the twentieth century. Here he is shown wearing a cuscus-fur headband as a sign of his status while attending a death payment at Bangwis (Chapter 4). He died in the late 1970s aged in his late eighties. One of his shields is illustrated in Figures 7.4 and 7.5.

Ayam gave only the briefest of accounts of this raid. He gave no reason for its brevity, but it was during this raid that the Yalaku captured two women, one of whom, Yowembwiya, had since become one of his two wives. Both Yowembwiya and the other woman captured had been married to Pakiya at the time, and both had had two children with him. All four children were killed in the attack. Ayam's own house was only a few metres from the men's house in which I recorded this narrative, and well within his wife's earshot. I can only assume that he avoided discussing the attack in detail out of deference to Yowembwiya's feelings.[86]

However, I did discuss this raid in detail with two of the Bangwis men who participated in it: Yati of Yanggaraka clan and Wachongg of Nggiley clan (for photographs of these two men, see Bowden 2006:102 and 127). The account of

86 Yowembwiya can be seen in Figure 2.6 at Ayam's house, with her back to the camera, sitting beside the front centre post.

this raid, which makes up the remainder of this chapter, draws primarily on what these two other men told me.

When the Yalaku leaders made the decision to try to kill Pakiya, and to ask their Bangwis allies for support, two of that village's most influential men happened to be visiting the Yalaku settlement at the time. This was after the group had moved to Nyinggi. Both men belonged to Nowil, the largest of the Bangwis clans. One was Yamban, a man who had been closely involved in Yalaku politics for many years, and had helped keep the Yalaku and Avatip apart when the latter made a raid on them (p. 137). The other was Ndunggwonggi. Both were visiting clan 'sisters' who were married to Yalaku men.

When the Yalaku leaders confirmed their decision to try to kill Pakiya, they asked these two visitors to return to Bangwis village immediately and find men who were willing to assist. They insisted, however, that they reveal their plans only to those who were not closely related through marriage or friendship to either the Apukili or Tongwinjamb, as they knew they would immediately inform their allies if they got wind of them. To help limit that risk, the two Bangwis men exclusively recruited participants from their own village. They did this in part to give a large number of young Bangwis men, such as Yati and Wachongg, the opportunity to make their first kills in warfare, and thus acquire the ability to cultivate yams.

The Bangwis contingent travelled to the Yalaku settlement at Nyinggi the day before the war-party was due to depart. When they arrived, they were informed that one of the Yalaku men, Halakwosi (156), was scouting out the region where Pakiya was last known to be living, to make sure he was still in residence. Like all Yalaku men, Halakwosi knew Pakiya personally. He not only determined that Pakiya was still in residence at his forest compound but actually visited him at his house. When he arrived, he found him lying on a bench at the front of his house, resting after getting a type of tree sap in his eyes that had almost blinded him. Throughout this region men formerly used this sap both as a cosmetic, which they rubbed into their hair and on their bodies to make them glisten, and as a defensive device during warfare, to make themselves slippery and difficult to hold if caught. People also say that this sap is a 'wonderful' medicine for treating tropical ulcers. The negative side to the sap is that if it gets into the eyes it is a serious irritant. While rubbing the sap into his hair Pakiya had accidentally allowed some to get into his eyes. It had irritated them so badly he could hardly see. He explained to Halakwosi that he was resting until he had recovered his sight.

Before getting the sap in his eyes Pakiya had been working on a new spear, which was lying on the ground next to him. Halakwosi drew up a small stool and sat down. There he engaged him in general conversation. He told him, falsely, that he had been hunting in the forest nearby but that the smouldering piece of firewood he had been carrying had gone out. He was looking for a new brand, he said, to help illuminate the track on his way home that night. Pakiya told him to help himself to a piece of burning wood from his small fire. He then told Halakwosi that under normal circumstances he would have asked one of his wives to offer him some food, but they were all fishing at a nearby forest stream. The group fishing included his mother, who was visiting from Kwarembu.

Halakwosi stated that he wasn't concerned about food and was keen to move on. When he stood up to depart Pakiya unexpectedly gave him the spear on which he had been working, as a gesture of friendship.

When Halakwosi returned to the Yalaku settlement at Nyinggi that afternoon the Bangwis men were all bathing in the adjacent stream, named Hava. Hearing that he had returned, they immediately went back to the Yalaku men's house to hear his report. There Halakwosi proudly displayed the two items he had obtained from Pakiya. Holding up both the firewood and the spear, he told the assembled men that these contained Pakiya's 'soul' (*debil*, TP) and ensured that he would die in the attack. The Yalaku, like Kwoma, believed that if a member of a war-party could obtain something from a place that was about to come under attack, this was a sign that its owner would die in the fighting. The object, furthermore, contained the person's soul. Being a supernatural entity, a soul knows when the person whose body it normally inhabits is about to die, and leaves it shortly beforehand to begin its journey to the underworld. If the person was about to die in warfare, their soul would temporarily lodge in one or more of their personal possessions that a member of the enemy war-party had obtained immediately before the attack took place, such as the spear and lump of firewood that Halakwosi was holding.

That afternoon their Yalaku hosts provided the Bangwis men with a sumptuous meal of pork, cassowary soup and unlimited quantities of freshly boiled sago. Following the feast, the members of the war-party spent the entire night in the men's house 'beating the *tanget* [TP]', boasting about who they would kill during the forthcoming action. They also appealed to ghosts of great warrior forebears to emerge from the underworld and help ensure that the attack a success.

The beating of the *tanget* continued until daybreak. As soon as there was enough light to see, the war-party set off. Pakiya's compound was located on an area of Yalaku land named Hamiik.

Halakwosi led the group along the same track he had used the previous day. They reached their target around noon. Halakwosi insisted on the right to throw the first spear at Pakiya. But two of the Bangwis participants demanded that they be given that right. They were Mokot, the leader of the group, and Tupukuman. Halakwosi deferred to their wishes. However, when they reached Pakiya's house and the

men were getting into position, Mokot was slow to give the signal to attack. Fearing that Pakiya and the other residents would detect their presence and escape, Halakwosi decided to take matters into his own hands. Giving a mighty cry he charged towards Pakiya and hit him hard with his spear. Ironically, the spear he used was the one Pakiya had given him the previous day. The others then all followed.

Pakiya had been sitting on a low stool at the front of his house next to his fire. The force of the blow knocked him backwards on to the ground. Wachongg, one of the two Bangwis men who provided this account of the attack, said that he and another of the young Bangwis participants, a man named Yambundimi, rushed in behind Halakwosi and when Pakiya fell back, drove their spears into him while he was still alive. This made them 'second spears' and instantly gave them the capacity to grow yams. A Yalaku man named Siiriinjuwi (34) of Rama clan also plunged a spear into him while he was still alive. All four men shared the credit for the kill.

The moment the attack was launched the numerous other residents of the compound headed for the forest. Different members of the war-party went after them. The Bangwis participants wanted to kill everyone they could catch, including Pakiya's two youngest wives: Yowembwiya and Siisuk. But the Yalaku men were keen to capture them and take them back to their community. There they could 'help raise the next generation of fighting men' (*kamapim nupela soldia*, TP) who would help defend their community and its resources. To prevent the Bangwis participants from killing them, the Yalaku men quickly caught and surrounded the two women.

When they returned to their settlement, Yowembwiya was given as a wife to Apwi (153) of H1 clan. When Apwi died, she married Siiriinjuwi (34) of Rama clan. He was one of the men who had helped kill her former husband, Pakiya. With him she had three sons. When he died, she married Ayam (36), Siiriinjuwi's 'younger brother'.

Siisuk was given as a wife of Kiyanombo (33) of Rama clan, another of the participants in the raid. With him she had two sons. She outlived this husband and in 1973 was living as a widow with the oldest of these sons: Haraw (44).

In addition to Pakiya, the attackers killed at least seven members of his household; these were one of his older wives and six of his children. Yati, one of the two Bangwis men who provided this account of the attack, killed one of the children. He said that when the attack commenced the boy he killed was being held in his mother's arms. The child was old enough to walk, and when his mother made her escape she put him down to allow him to run and hide. He took cover under the trunk of a large fallen tree. Yati followed him and when he had located his hiding place, killed him by thrusting his long spear repeatedly under the log.

Four other Bangwis men also killed children. These were Kwalawi, Wulakawen and Wulasaka, all of Nowil clan, and Yomuveenyi Kapay of Awonow clan. The Yalaku man Ambareka (82) of YK clan killed a sixth child. Yati commented that the spear that killed one of the children, a boy, hit him with such force that it went straight through his body and pinned him to the ground. The four children the two captured women, Yowembwiya and Siisuk, had had with Pakiya were among the six children killed.

Three members of Pakiya's extended family escaped. One was his mother, Wonyilar, who had been visiting from Kwarembu. Another was Pakiya's senior wife, Manggwus. The third was a son named Rekanggwanj. All three fled into the forest as soon as the attack began. After sleeping rough in the forest that night they eventually made their way back to the Tongwinjamb settlement at Kwarembu.

A Tongwinjamb man named Alisa was lucky to avoid being killed. He lived at Kwarembu, but had been staying with Pakiya for several days while hunting in the surrounding forest. By chance he was absent when the attack took place. He only discovered what had happened when he returned to the compound later that day, after the attackers had left. He immediately set off to take the news back to Kwarembu. Using sago-frond torches to light his way, he reached Kwarembu around midnight.

The attackers make an orderly retreat at night

By the time the attack was over it was around mid-afternoon. To be able to see their way in the forest on their way home after dark, the members of the group lit pieces of firewood taken from Pakiya's store. The journey home took them past Molipiir, the settlement the Yalaku had only recently abandoned. After briefly resting there, and refreshing themselves on green coconuts from the many palms growing at the settlement, they resumed their journey. Late that night they reached the site of another old Yalaku settlement, the hill named Hopokwow (15, Figure 6.1). This was one of the sites at which many Yalaku had taken refuge during the last part of the Second World War, to escape the strafing and bombing by Allied aircraft of Japanese encampments closer to the Sepik. It was also a site to which the segment of the Tongwinjamb that had made a peace pact with the Yalaku during the war retreated after they came under attack from traditional enemies protected by Japanese patrols (p. 138). The men rested at this site until dawn and then headed for Nyinggi.

Tongwinjamb from Kwarembu give chase

When the Tongwinjamb man named Alisa, who had been visiting Pakiya, reached Kwarembu late the same night, he gave an account of what had happened. The men there immediately relayed the news on slit-gongs to all of the surrounding Tongwinjamb hamlets and promptly put together a large war-party. The aim was to give chase at

first light the following morning and catch the killers before they had gone too far. Although Pakiya was an Apukili, the Tongwinjamb at Kwarembu, under whose protection he had been living, regarded his killing as tantamount to an attack on them. The pursuers were well aware that the killers would long have left the scene of the attack, but were prepared to follow them as far as the main Yalaku settlement at Nyinggi. To go any further would risk a confrontation with the Honggwama, the Yalaku's main Kwoma allies.

The pursuers stopped briefly at Pakiya's house to inspect his body. They pulled out several bamboo spear blades that the attackers had contemptuously left sticking into him, and quickly constructed a rough burial platform on which they placed his body. After that, they found the retreating group's footprints and began following them.

The attackers were well aware that the Tongwinjamb at Kwarembu would send out a war-party to follow them, and periodically left men at different points in the forest to watch for them. Kiriyas acted as one of these lookouts. At one point the pursuers took a break at one of the many bush-houses the Apukili had built, illegally, on Yalaku land. Kiriyas found them there, hearing the pursuers before he could see them. Several of the men were chopping wood for small fires on which they were baking yams and other food. To get a better idea of how many there were, he climbed a tall tree. After determining the size of the group he headed straight for Nyinggi, reaching the settlement not long after the others. When he informed the people there that a very substantial war-party was on its way, the leaders of the different Yalaku clans recommended that everyone temporarily vacate the settlement and go into hiding. They dispersed to widely scattered bush-houses further to the east, towards the Yimi River. The majority went to a place named Mbangga. The Bangwis contingent at that point left the other members of the war-party and returned to their village.

When the Yalaku leaders made their decision to undertake the raid on Pakiya's forest compound a number of men from their community were absent, having left Nyinggi beforehand to spend several weeks with their families at distant bush-houses. They were unaware of what had happened. Three men in this position, members of H1 and H2 clans, had been staying together in a section of forest named Hama Numbu. The day after Pakiya's killing, two of them decided to make a brief trip back to their home base. Shortly before they arrived, the Tongwinjamb pursuers reached Nyinggi. Unaware that the settlement had been abandoned, the latter took cover in the surrounding forest while determining their best method of attack. They positioned themselves opposite the main door in the palisade.

While contemplating their next move, the two Yalaku men from Hama Numbu suddenly emerged from the forest and went straight to the door the pursuers were watching. They began removing the planks barricading it. While doing so, they caught a glimpse of the war-party hiding among the nearby trees. Its members were standing stock still and in complete silence. Seeing them, but saying nothing, the two men bolted into the forest. While they had been removing the planks from the door, a number of the village dogs that had been left behind when the settlement was vacated had gathered on the inner side of the palisade. When the two Yalaku men bolted several of the dogs leaped through the opening they had made and, howling at the tops of their voices, followed them into the forest.

The pursuers soon realized that the settlement was empty. Hoping that other people, like the two men who had just escaped, might similarly be unaware of the killing that had taken place and innocently visit the settlement, they waited patiently in the forest for several hours. When no one else appeared, they accepted that their pursuit had been in vain. Before returning to Kwarembu, they entered the settlement and there cooked several of the village dogs and numerous chickens, together with lumps of raw sago baked on the fires.

Despite their failure on this occasion, the Tongwinjamb let it be known that they intended to avenge Pakiya's killing. But before they could do so, the Australian administration at Ambunti brought warfare in this region to a permanent end. Twenty-five years later, in 1973, the two Bangwis men who gave me this account of the raid said that their failure to avenge Pakiya's killing still rankled with the Tongwinjamb, and that if there was another breakdown in civil administration in the Sepik, as there had been during the Second World War, they would no doubt try to do so then.

Pakiya was the last of the major Apukili leaders and with his death, as Ayam put it, the Apukili ceased to have a 'name' as a distinct political group. He was not the last of the Apukili, however, but those who remained were all absorbed by other groups, principally by the Tongwinjamb.

Four Kwoma songs celebrating the killing of Pakiya

The killing of Pakiya was the last act of warfare in which the Yalaku and Bangwis people were involved. Like other killings, it prompted the composition of a number of songs, in this case both by Pakiya's Tongwinjamb defenders and his Honggwama killers. These were subsequently added to the different cycles that all of the Kwoma-speaking tribes once performed during their yam-harvest ceremonies. There they became part of a repertoire of songs shared by both the 'winners' and the 'losers' in this event. The Yalaku learned them when they participated in these rituals. The four reproduced here (Songs 10–13) all derive from the Honggwama version of 'The Nokwi Song' (Kwoma, *Nokwi Hokwa*), the cycle performed during the Nokwi ritual. Bangwis men translated them for me in 1973. Wachongg

was one of the translators. He was one of the four men who speared Pakiya.

The first three of these songs were composed by Tongwinjamb men living at Kwarembu when the killings took place. Like many historical songs composed by men on the 'losing' side of a military confrontation, they nevertheless contain humorous and self-deprecatory elements. The names of their composers were not known to my Bangwis translators.

Song 10

1 '*Alisa, ameya ya rabona*!'
'Alisa, you should have brought (the news) faster!'
2 '*Yaparabo, ameya ya rabona*!'
'Yaparambo, you should have brought the news faster!'
3 *Pakiya nuku poyika chichawa.*
Pakiya has been bitten by a mountain pig.
4 '*Ameya rabona*!'
'Brought (the news) faster!'
5 *Tobo poyi chichawa.*
Bitten by a lowland pig.
6 '*Ameya rabona*!'
'Brought the news faster!'

Song 10 humorously recalls the response of an unnamed Tongwinjamb man at Kwarembu when he heard Alisa's report of Pakiya's killing. As noted, the Tongwinjamb man Alisa had been staying with Pakiya when the attack took place and only narrowly missed being caught up in the attack because he was away hunting. When he returned to Pakiya's compound and discovered what had happened, he immediately set off to take the news to Kwarembu. This involved several hours of hard walking through the forest at night.

Although Alisa had travelled as fast as he could, one of the men at Kwarembu absurdly reprimanded him for not bringing the news faster. The absurdity of the complaint led another of the men at Kwarembu, when he learned of it, to commemorate it in this song.

Lines 1 and 2 represent Alisa's unidentified critic demanding to know why he hadn't 'brought' (*rabo*) the news of Pakiya's killing faster – and by implication enable the people at Kwarembu to organize their pursuit sooner than they did. Manenggey, one of the Bangwis translators, glossed the line in TP as, '*Yu no laik kam hariap na tokim mipela, na mipela i go kwik!*'

Line 2 parallels the first line but replaces Alisa's name with that of one of his clan brothers, Yaparambo. Listeners would be well aware that only one man, Alisa, is being referred to and that the second man's name has been added as a poetic elaboration. The second name is also a pun since the second part of it – '…rambo' (*Yapa* + *rabo*) – sounds the same as *rabo*, the term used in lines 1 and 2 for 'bringing' (also, 'throwing') the news. The TP equivalent of '*rabo*' is '*tromwe*' ('throw').

Lines 3 and 5 refer to the killing of Pakiya metaphorically, and humorously. They describe him as having been 'bitten' (*chi+cha+wa*) by a pig (*poyi*). Line 3 identifies this as a 'mountain pig' (*nuku poyi*) and line 5 as a 'lowland pig' (*tobo poyi*). In the context of this song, 'mountain pig' and 'lowland pig' are metaphors respectively for the hill-dwelling Bangwis and the lowland Yalaku. Literally, *nuku* and *tobo* refer to the 'top' and 'bottom', or the 'upper' and 'lower' sections, of something, such as the top and bottom of a tree or the upstream and downstream sections of a river. Here they refer to people who live 'up' or 'up top' in the Washkuk Hills, in contrast to those who live 'below' in the adjacent low-lying country. In TP, Wachongg glossed line 3 as '*Pik i stap antap i kam kaikaim Pakiya*'; line 5 he glossed as '*Pik i stap daunbilo i kam kaikaim Pakiya*'.

Lines 4 and 6 repeat the outrageous assertion made by his unidentified critic that Alisa had failed to bring the news of Pakiya's death sufficiently quickly.

Song 11

1 '*Kopasawo, woren na koba yayana!*'
'Kopasawo, bring me a shield!'
2 '*Woligiya, yabun koba yayana!*'
'Wolinggiya, bring me a spear!'
3 *Apoko Wachiipoko*,
Father Wachiipoko,
4 *Uku nediik siitiiwa.*
Brought to a standstill by deep floodwaters.
5 '*Woren, woren na yayana!*'
'A shield, bring me a shield!'
6 *Sam nediik siitiiwa.*
Brought to a standstill by dense undergrowth.
7 '*Yabun, yabun na yayana!*'
'A spear, bring me a spear!'

Song 11, composed by another unidentified Tongwinjamb man, similarly focuses on the response of one of the men at Kwarembu, who is desperate to help catch Pakiya's killers. Line 3 names the man as Wachiipoko.[87] The pursuers set off but soon discover that Pakiya's killers are out of reach. The song begins by humorously representing Wachiipoko as calling urgently for his two sons to bring him the weapons he requires to participate in the chase. In line 1 he calls to one son, named Kopasawo, to bring him his shield (*wor*). In line 2 he calls to the other son, Wolinggiya, to bring him his spear (*yabu*). The lines are humorous, as the man in question would have had these weapons ready to hand at the front of his house, with no need to call for anyone to find them for him.

87 This name is often abbreviated to 'Wachiipok'.

The second half of the song (lines 4–7) refers to the complete failure of the pursuers to capture the killers. It does so metaphorically. Line 4 tells how Wachiipoko, and by implication the other men giving chase, frustratingly finds himself brought to a standstill (*siitiiwa*) in the middle of deep floodwaters (*uku nedii*). These floodwaters are of the kind that periodically inundate the low-lying country between the Washkuk Hills and the Yimi and make travel on foot through the forest impossible. Line 6 changes the metaphor and describes Wachiipoko as having been brought to a standstill (*siitiiwa*) by the thorn-filled undergrowth (*sam nediik*) through which he is trying to pass. Humorously, the song nevertheless represents Wachiipoko as still calling urgently for his weapons.

By 1973, when I recorded this song at Bangwis, the Tongwinjamb man Wachiipoko who is the subject of it had died, but the two sons it names were still living at their tribe's main settlement.

Song 12

1 *Bodiiwa yeemik jichawa,*
Lashed to a *bodiiwa* pole,
2 *Basiiye yeemik jichawa,*
Lashed to a *basiiye* pole,
3 *Wamara mara.*
Swings gently from side to side.
4 *Apobara wamara mara.*
Apombara swings gently from side to side.
5 *Wamara mara.*
Swings gently from side to side.
6 *Nokwawi wamara mara.*
Nokwawi swings gently from side to side.

Song 12 grimly, but again humorously, reminds listeners that there was more than one way to die in warfare. It refers to one of the Kwarembu men who was among the pursuers suddenly collapsing and dying from 'natural' causes, possibly a heart attack.

The man in question was named Apombara (more fully, Apombara Mbarakulambu). He is named in line 4. The pursuers from Kwarembu gave chase for two days. During the first day, when they were briefly resting in the forest, Apombara suddenly collapsed and died. The majority of the members of the war-party continued the pursuit, but several stayed behind to carry the dead man home. They made what the song humorously describes as a 'stretcher' (*yeemi*). This was not a stretcher consisting of two poles with a bed of vines between them, on which the dead man could be laid and then hoisted on to the carriers' shoulders. Rather, it consisted of a single pole from which the deceased was slung after the manner of a large pig that had been killed in the forest. The forest country through which the men were carrying the 'stretcher' was frequently boggy, and when they struggled through the muddier parts the song indicates that the body jerked violently from side to side, making their task all the more difficult.

The song humorously likens the violent jerking of the body from side to side to the gentle twisting (*wamara mara*) from side to side of women dancing outside a men's house during a ceremony while they hold outstretched net bags above their heads (see Figure 7.2).

The humour is enhanced by the fact that the pole from which the dead man is suspended has been cut from timber that has no tensile strength and hence is totally unsuitable for this purpose. Line 1 identifies the timber as *bodiiwa*. Line 2, its parallel, identifies it as *basii*. Only one type of timber would have been used in practice. Both types of tree are also known for having holes in their trunks that are infested with stinging ants. This makes the handling of them especially unpleasant.

The song names the dead man twice: as Apombara in line 4 and as Nokwawi in line 6. The second is not another of the dead man's names but that of a clan 'brother', who the song metaphorically equates with him.

Song 13

1 *Omunyaw Siyakamel:*
(At) Omunyaw Siyakamel:
2 *'Yanii kubu kiyawa.'*
'(You come) carrying a *yanii*-wood dibble.'
3 *'Meesi kubu kiyawa.'*
'(You come) carrying a *meesi*-wood dibble.'
4 *'Wanyi, seechabaga maji?'*
'(You) Wanyi, what else is there to tell?'
5 *'Seechabaga bakaney?'*
'What more can I say?'
6 *'Poko mu yo.'*
'This was work done in the lowland forest,'
7 *'Poko mu yeyiwa.'*
'Work completed down in the lowland forest.'
8 *'Hamikwa, seechabaga maji?'*
'(You) Hamikwa, what else is there to tell?'
9 *'Seechabaga bakaney?'*
'What more can I say?'

Song 13 switches the focus from the pursuers to the Honggwama participants in Pakiya's killing. Of the four songs this is the only one whose authorship was known to my translators. It was by Latay of Bangwis village. As noted earlier, the Yalaku men organizing the raid on Pakiya's forest compound offered Latay the opportunity to lead the war-party. He declined the offer, however, as his recent appointment as village headman (*luluai*) made it impossible for him to engage in warfare. He therefore passed the leadership to Mokot (Figure 10.1) of the same village. Latay nevertheless took a keen interest in what was happening.

Figure 10.2 The Bangwis village men's house named Omunyaw Siyakamel (viewed from the rear), 1955/56. Photograph: René Gardi: 'Washkuk, Sepik, Papua New Guinea.' Courtesy Museum of Cultures (Museum der Kulturen) Basel, Switzerland. Cat. (F)Vb 13288.

Once the raid had been carried out, news of it spread rapidly among the different Kwoma tribes and soon reached members of the 'Washkuk' faction of the Honggwama tribe. They had deliberately been kept ignorant of what was being planned, as many were linked totemically and through marriage to different Tongwinjamb clans, and the Yalaku were concerned that they would secretly inform their allies of the impending raid, and thus deprive them of the element of surprise. The Bangwis leaders were also keen to limit their tribe's participation to members of their own village, to maximize their young men's chances of making a kill and hence acquiring the ability to cultivate yams.

As soon as news of the killings reached members of the 'Washkuk' faction, men belonging to its various clans immediately travelled to Bangwis to find out what had happened. They were rightly concerned that if any of them travelled to Tongwinjamb to visit relatives they might become the target of revenge killings.

At Bangwis, they addressed their enquiries to Latay, the village's newly appointed headman. In the customary manner when political issues are involved, the meeting took place in the village's men's house. To their great surprise, Latay refused to confirm or deny that any killings had taken place. He did so deliberately to keep them on tenterhooks. His refusal to co-operate was an expression of the long-standing hostility between the tribe's two major factions. This stemmed from the killing by members of the 'Washkuk' faction almost twenty years earlier of the two native policemen visiting from Ambunti. On that occasion the killers acted without first informing other members of their tribe of what they were planning and consequently exposed them to the same violent and indiscriminate reprisals by the native police as the killers' clans.

Not satisfied with being brushed off, leaders of the different clans in the Washkuk faction made repeated trips to Bangwis to try to get to the bottom of what had happened. On each occasion Latay was equally evasive. During one of these visits, exasperated at being continually asked the same thing, Latay made the comments that form the basis of this song. Using the euphemistic language typical of Sepik political speech, he told his Washkuk visitors that what they were enquiring about was 'work' that had been carried out 'in the lowland forest' (*poko mu yo*) – i.e. the region in which Pakiya had been living – and now that it was 'over' (*yeyiwa*) he had nothing to say. The Washkuk people did eventually learn what had happened, but not until many very tense weeks had passed.

Latay himself subsequently composed this song and incorporated it into the Nowki cycle. By doing so, he knew that whenever members of the Washkuk faction participated in performances of the Nokwi ceremony at Bangwis they would be reminded of their intense frustration at being kept in the dark for so long about who had killed Pakiya. Latay was also well aware of the pleasure his fellow 'Bangwis' villagers would take in them being reminded of that discomfort every time the song was performed.

Like the majority of Kwoma historical songs, this one begins by identifying the place where the event it commemorates took place. This was Bangwis village, and more particularly the men's house where the 'Washkuk' visitors questioned Latay about what had happened. This building was named Omunyaw Siyakamel. It is identified in line 1 (Figure 10.2).[88]

Lines 2 and 3, which form a pair, refer metaphorically to the way delegations of Washkuk men repeatedly came to Bangwis to 'dig out' the facts relating to the killings. They are described in line 2 as bringing wooden digging sticks made of *yanii* timber, and in line 3 of bringing digging sticks made of *meesi* timber. The reference to the second type of timber is a poetic elaboration.

The Washkuk faction of the Honggwama tribe was, and still is, composed of clans belonging to two totemic divisions, named Wanyi and Hamikwa. Lines 4 and 5 report Latay addressing visitors from the Wanyi totemic division and asking them exasperatedly what else he can tell them – literally 'what else is there to tell?' The implication is that he has told them everything he is willing to say, even if that amounted to nothing.

Lines 6 and 7 represent Latay as telling his visitors that what they are enquiring about happened down in the low-lying swamp country – i.e. to the north of the Washkuk Hills where Pakiya was living – and that the matter is now over. Line 6 literally states that the 'work' (*yo*) took place at the 'base' (*mu*) of a dense thicket of 'forest vines' (*poko*). In line 7 the term *'yeyiwa'* has the dual meaning of both 'going down' somewhere, as in the case of the Bangwis participants in the war-party 'going down' into the neighbouring lowland forest to carry out the 'work' alluded to, and also that the 'work' has been 'completed' or 'concluded'.

Lines 8 and 9 parallel lines 4 and 5. These represent Latay as giving the same response to visitors from his tribe's Hamikwa clans: 'What else is there to tell?'[89]

88 Unlike the masterpiece of vernacular architecture and art that replaced it on the same site in the middle 1960s (Figure 1.3), Omunyaw was never decorated with sculptures and bark paintings. A later photograph of the same building can be found in the Basel Museum's exhibition catalogue *Heilige Bildwerke aus Neuguinea* [Sacred artworks from New Guinea] (1958:31). The photographer in this case, Gardi, does not name the building.

89 Manenggey of Bangwis glossed lines 3 and 6–9 in TP in the following way:

Line 3 *Olgeta taim yu go i kam na karim ol stik i kam brukim nabaut, paindim toktok.*

Line 6 *Em wok bilong as bilong kanda,*

Line 7 *Ol i wokim pinis.*

Line 8 *Yupela Hamikwa, bai mi tok wanem long yupela*?

Line 9 *Wanem tok bai mi tokim yu*?

Today the Honggwama clans that belong to the Wanyi and Hamikwa totemic divisions occupy different segments of Washkuk village, a settlement established in the 1950s. Wanyi clans occupy the lower end of a mountain spur named Tiyumu (var. Tilumu). Hamikwa clans occupy the lower end of an adjacent spur named Ndowakapa. Both sites are located on the edge of the Napu Lagoon (Figure 6.1). They are ancient market places at which the Kwoma, like the Ngala before them, traded with neighbouring peoples on the Sepik.

11

Entering the modern world

***c.*1947–50**

The Yalaku move to Yelogu village and establish formal peace pacts with the Avatip and Honggwama

When the Yalaku abandoned the settlement at Nyinggi, as a defensive measure following their killing of Pakiya, they scattered to isolated bush-houses much further to the east. After 'catching their breath' (*kisim win*, TP), as Ayam put it, several of the leading Yalaku men made the trip to Bangwis to discuss with its leaders what their community should do. The Bangwis men recommended that they move back permanently to Yelogu on the eastern edge of the Washkuk Hills. This would have the effect of moving them well away from the Tongwinjamb at Kwarembu, where Pakiya had been based, and bringing them much closer to the Honggwama, their principal Kwoma ally. In particular, it would bring them much closer to the people at Bangwis village; this was the segment of the Honggwama tribe to which they were most closely linked through personal and political ties. The Yalaku leaders accepted this advice and moved the community back to Yelogu, where it has remained ever since. This was in the late 1940s.

Following the move back to Yelogu, the community as a whole made three major decisions about its future. Like other Sepik peoples, the Yalaku were well aware that European settlement was opening up a new world of cultural riches. These were both material and non-material. The material included metal tools such as axes; steel plane blades that could be hafted to traditional adze handles instead of stone blades; metal cooking pots that were far more durable than their low-fired earthenware counterparts; kerosene lamps that provided light at night; metal fish-hooks; fishing nets; outboard motors for powering canoes; and firearms for hunting. The non-material included the government's gradual, but successful, suppression of warfare throughout the Sepik. This made travel possible, for the first time in history, far outside the boundaries of their own language group, including, eventually, to coastal towns such as Wewak. Ayam referred to this new period as a 'time for making money', or 'business era' (*taim bilong bisnis*, TP).

Although the Yalaku were yet to make formal contact with the government, they and the other Kaunga knew that to be able to take advantage of the opportunities this new world was offering, warfare between their communities would have to come to a permanent end. Only then would it be safe for people to travel between their communities whenever they wished. The Yalaku, decades earlier, had entered into a peace pact with the Nowiniyen. Now all three Kaunga-speaking tribes – the Yalaku, Nowiniyen and Motek – agreed to do the same. This brought warfare between them to a formal end, entirely independently of the administration at Ambunti.

The Yalaku enter into formal peace pacts with both the Avatip and Honggwama

The Yalaku simultaneously made the decision to try to put an end to all hostilities between them and the Avatip, the largest and most powerful of their Sepik River neighbours. As discussed in Chapter 10 (pp. 136–8, 141), when the Japanese were in occupation of the Sepik, from 1942–5, there was a resumption of intertribal fighting throughout the middle Sepik. During this period one segment of the Avatip tribe clashed with all three Kaunga communities. The Kaunga retaliated and a number of deaths were suffered on both sides.

The Yalaku obtained active support for the idea of a peace pact with the Avatip from Yamban of Nowil clan, one of the Honggwama tribe's most influential leaders. He had close affinal ties to the Yalaku through the marriages of several of his clan sisters, and for a decade or more (see p. 140) had played a prominent part in Yalaku politics. He was also a long-standing trading partner and political ally of Vakinap of Avatip (Figure 11.1), for decades one of his community's most respected and influential men. Like many other Bangwis men, Yamban was fluent in both Manamabu and Kaunga. Vakinap likewise spoke Kwoma fluently and also seems to have had a working knowledge of Kaunga.

Figure 11.1 Vakinap of Avatip, aged c.75, Bangwis village, January 1973.

Figure 11.2 Two domestic dwellings at Avatip village (Manambu language group), July 1969.

Yamban agreed to broker a peace settlement between the two groups and sent word to Vakinap, asking for his support. Vakinap agreed to the proposal. Yamban also suggested to the Yalaku that they enter into a formal peace pact with his own community, a suggestion they readily accepted. On a pre-arranged day, Vakinap brought a substantial contingent of Avatip warriors to Yelogu, and Yamban did the same with a contingent from Bangwis. There, two formal peace settlements were made: one between the Yalaku and Avatip and one between the Yalaku and Bangwis.

Such peace pacts, as already noted, could be formalized in different ways. One was through the exchange of secret ceremonial objects associated with clan spirits, such as sculptures or flutes. On this occasion they were formalized through the consumption by young boys representing the different groups of plant totems (*chaba*; *pisin*, TP) donated by each party. The totemic plants were consumed mixed with normal foods. The Yalaku gave both the Avatip and the Bangwis the edible top or 'cabbage' (*kru*, TP) of a type of palm they call *hobor*. The Bangwis reciprocated with an edible plant they term *asakinya*, and the Avatip with the edible top of a plant Ayam identified using the Kwoma term '*awa*' – a generic term for cordylines. The young boys were one of Yamban's own sons (who Ayam did not identify), a Yalaku boy named Ukwaya (110; Figure 3.3),[90] and an Avatip boy named Wanyinggi.

The Yalaku subsequently reinforced the peace pact with the Bangwis people through several marriages. In 1973 there were five extant marriages between these two groups. Three involved the marriage of Bangwis women to Yalaku men, and two of Yalaku women to Bangwis.[91] No such option existed for the Yalaku and the Avatip, as these two groups did not intermarry for ecological reasons (see Chapter 4).

The three Kaunga groups agree to create all-weather tracks between their communities

Although the permanent cessation of warfare among the three Kaunga tribes meant that it was now possible, in principle, for people to travel between them at any time safely, there was still a major practical obstacle to them doing so. This was the lack of all-weather tracks.

The absence of all-weather tracks between these three communities was no accident. Prior to the cessation of warfare, the leaders of each group had deliberately ensured, as a defensive measure, that there were no such tracks, so as to make access by enemy war-parties more difficult.

Following the termination of warfare between the three groups, the issue of the absence of reliable, all-weather tracks connecting them soon came to a head. This occurred when an elderly Yalaku man named Tiiniimay and his wife paid their first visit to the new village of Bangwis. There, they complained bitterly to Yamban, the same Bangwis leader who had brokered the peace pact with the Avatip, about the difficulty of visiting their daughter Mbwimbwi. She was living with her husband at the Nowiniyen's tribe's hamlet, named Mbandala, on the Yimi River. Tiiniimay's wife was a Kwoma woman and member of Yamban's clan, but a generation older. Yamban referred to her as 'father's sister' ('FZ'). This connection made Tiiniimay one of his affines: a 'FZH'.

The daughter, who Tiiniimay and his wife had not seen for many years, had originally been married to a Yalaku man and had lived with him in the same settlement as her parents. But many years earlier, when the Yalaku had their main settlement at Walaminjuwi (see p. 133), a Nowiniyen war-party had captured her and taken her back to Mbandala. There, she was given as a wife to a man named Wola. Although a formal peace settlement had nominally existed for decades between the Yalaku and the Nowiniyen, the periodic killings that continued to take place meant that tensions between the two communities had remained high, making casual visiting unsafe. Although the threat of warfare had now come to an end, the absence of all-weather tracks between the three Kaunga groups meant that for elderly couples, such as Tiiniimay and his wife, travel between them was still difficult. Deeply distressed at not having seen their daughter for many years, Tiiniimay and his wife had taken to permanently wearing the white clay of mourning on their faces and bodies. They were smeared with white clay when they visited Bangwis.

Yamban was reportedly deeply shocked to discover how distressed Tiiniimay and his wife were at not having seen their daughter for so many years. After they returned to Yelogu, he again made contact with his trading partner and political ally Vakinap of Avatip, to see if he had any suggestions. As indicated above, Vakinap was the man with whom Yamban had only shortly beforehand brokered the peace settlement between the Yalaku and the Avatip.

Vakinap sent word back to Yamban that he was willing to travel to all three Kaunga groups and recommend that they jointly undertake the immense task of constructing all-weather tracks between their main settlements. If they agreed, he told Yamban, he would take a large group of Avatip men to help, and encouraged Yamban to do the same with people from his community. True to his word, Vakinap made the trip to all three Kaunga groups and put the offer to them. All three accepted.

90 In 1973 Ukwaya was one of those who listened intently to Ayam narrate his history.

91 Of the three Honggwama women married to Yalaku men in 1973, two were married to Kiriyas (130) and one to Ambareka (82). The two Yalaku women married to Honggwama men in 1973 were Handaniimba (89) of YK clan, married to Kiiwas of Hipo Hamikwa clan at Bangwis village, and Wapiyalum (84), also of YK clan, married to the Bangwis village man Wana of Yanggaraka clan.

Figure 11.3 Men and boys from various language groups in the Ambunti area participating in Christmas festivities at Ambunti, c.1930. The man in the foreground has not been identified. Photograph courtesy Mrs Lorna McGuigan. The photographer is not known but was possibly Fr. Franz Kirschbaum of the Marienberg Catholic Mission (Lower Sepik), the first permanent European resident on the Sepik.

Ayam emphasized that agreeing to construct all-weather tracks was one thing. Determining the best routes was another. Before any work could begin, therefore, men from all three communities had to spend months tacking back and forth through the forest during the wet season to determine which sections of forest were likely to remain dry even during the worst floods.

Once the best routes had been selected, work commenced. Two tracks were involved. One was to connect the main Motek and Nowiniyen settlements. The second was to run from the latter to Yelogu. Contingents of men from each group worked outwards from their settlements. A substantial group of Avatip men stayed at each community until the work was completed, as did Bangwis men. The helpers slept in their hosts' men's houses, or in bush camps if they were too far away to return at night. The local people fed them.

Ayam indicated that this work was immensely demanding physically and took several months to complete. The first section to be finished was that between Yelogu and the Nowiniyen settlement at Mbandala, the place where Tiiniimay's daughter was living. Each group constructed roughly half of the track. The two sections met midway between them on the edge of a lagoon named Yatiikawapi.

At the time, many of the members of all three Kaunga tribes were living at isolated houses or small hamlets scattered throughout the forest. In some cases, they had not seen their fellow tribesmen for many years. For instance, in the course of constructing the track to the Nowiniyen hamlet at Mbandala, Yalaku workers came across two members of their own community, a father and son named

Figure 11.4 Ambunti, c.1927–8. The open area on the left flanking the Sepik is where Christmas festivities were held during the early years of the patrol post. Photograph courtesy Mrs Lorna McGuigan. Photographer not known but possibly Fr. Franz Kirschbaum of the Marienberg Catholic Mission (Lower Sepik).

Kapakeli and Asanembii, who they had not seen for many years. It was so long since they had seen them that the workers initially mistook the son for the father, the boy having grown to adulthood in the meantime.

The all-weather tracks connecting the three Kaunga communities constructed at this time are still in use today. From Yelogu, people make the journey to Ambunti via a much older all-weather track that winds around the eastern edge side of the Washkuk Hills, a track that Kwoma for generations (like the Ngala before them) have used to reach trading sites on that side of the range.

The Kaunga begin to participate in Christmas festivities at Ambunti

Once warfare between the three Kaunga tribes came to a permanent end in the late 1940s (or early 50s), and the all-weather track between them was completed, people from all three groups began to travel regularly to Ambunti to find casual work and sell food for cash, which they would then use to buy consumer goods. They also began to participate regularly in the Christmas festivities the Australian administration hosted at the patrol post. Even before these all-weather tracks were completed members of all three Kaunga groups had periodically travelled by other routes to participate in these festivities (Figures 11.3–11.5).

The Australian administration had begun hosting Christmas festivities at Ambunti soon after the patrol post was established in 1924. These were designed to bring members of formerly warring communities together in a friendly environment so that they could get to know each other better. The festivities took the form of competitive dancing and singing by groups representing the different

Figure 11.5 Men and boys dancing and singing during Christmas festivities at Ambunti, c.1930. Photograph courtesy Mrs Lorna McGuigan. Photographer not known but possibly Fr. Franz Kirschbaum of the Marienberg Catholic Mission (Lower Sepik).

communities. In the early days, they took place on a large open area adjacent to the Sepik (Figure 11.4). After its construction they were later moved to the airstrip (Figure 2.4). The festivities lasted a full day and a full night. Armed native police supervised.[92]

I cannot say when Yalaku people or other Kaunga first began participating in these festivities, but it would have been no later than the late 1940s. Evidence for this derives from an account Manenggey of Bangwis (Figure 1.4) provided of an incident he witnessed as a young man, when he was visiting Ambunti to apply to join the New Guinea Police Force. This can be dated firmly to Boxing Day, December 1948. Early on that morning, after an all-

92 G.W.L. Townsend, one of the government officers who helped found the Ambunti patrol post in 1924, reports in his autobiography (Townsend 1968:99) that he named the patrol post 'Ambunti' after what he took to be the name of the place where it is located. He obtained this information from a Iatmul-speaking man from Korogo village, who told him, when he was first travelling up the Sepik to help establish the patrol post, that this was 'Ambun'. He writes that he only later discovered that 'Ambun' was not the name of the place to which he was travelling but a Iatmul expression that meant 'a very long way further up the river'. By the time he discovered his mistake, he writes, 'Ambunti' had become the patrol post's official name and it was too late to change it. In fact, Townsend was correct the first time. The name the Korogo man gave him was the actual indigenous name for the site on which the patrol post was established. Strictly, 'Ambunti' (*Abudi*) is the indigenous name of the hill on the north side (or left bank) of the Sepik, known today as Mt. Townsend, at the base of which the government offices are located. Kwoma report that the name is of Ngala origin (or even earlier), but like many other names of Ngala origin for places in the Washkuk Hills, they were retained after the Ngala were expelled from this range in the middle of the nineteenth century.

night session of singing and dancing, a Motek man named Apokwas suddenly became fearful that several Kwoma men sitting in a group near him on the airstrip were going to attack and kill both him and the other Motek people he was with. To pre-empt their attack, he picked up his spear, ran at the Kwoma men and used it to stab two of them. When the people nearby saw what was happening, they leaped to their feet and scattered, shouting and screaming.

At the time Manenggey was walking up the hill beside the airstrip to the government offices to submit his papers to become a policeman. He heard the commotion and, with several armed police, went down to investigate. He reported that Apokwas was a very seasoned fighter, and instead of immediately beating a retreat to avoid retaliation, he raised his spear in the air and proudly pranced back and forth with it on the airstrip to celebrate his action. He then calmly strode into the dense forest at the northern end of the airstrip, and vanished. No one tried to stop him. The native police on duty made no attempt to pursue him. According to Manenggey, the police knew that once Apokwas was in the forest they would never find him. No action was ever taken against him.

The two men Apokwas attacked survived. One was Miikamoy of Tongwinjamb. He was still living at Tongwinjamb in 1973. The other was a Nukuma Kwoma man from the Kawaka tribe, named Takapawa. Apokwas attacked Takapawa first, stabbing him in the neck. 'Fortunately', Manenggey said, the blade 'missed the windpipe'. After pulling the spear out of Takapawa's neck, Apokwas drove it into Miikamoy, striking him in the buttocks.

Apowkas returned to the Motek settlement not via Yelogu, but by the ancient track that runs along the eastern side of the Washkuk Hills and passes through Bangwis. This eventually leads to Tongwinjamb and even further to the north (the track to Yelogu is an offshoot). Once he reached Tongwinjamb, he took a series of connecting tracks that led across the low-lying forest country between the northern end of the Washkuk Hills and the Motek settlement on the Yimi River.

On his way home, Apokwas stopped briefly at Bangwis village. None of the people there were aware of what had happened. One of the village's leading men, Nggayimes of Nowil clan, briefly entertained him at his house and provided him with a meal.

*c.*1950–5
First village census

Ayam said nothing about when the Yalaku first became aware of Europeans. They had probably heard of them soon after Germans and others began exploring the Sepik at the end of the nineteenth century. At that time the northern or 'New Guinea' half of modern-day Papua New Guinea was a German Pacific possession (Falck 2018:117; Howarth 2015:17; Welsch 1998, vol. 1:295ff.; Winter 1915). By 1914, when the Australian military captured the region at the outbreak of the First World War, German explorers and others had mapped the Sepik and some of its hinterland to the international boundary with (then) Dutch New Guinea. They had also been frequent visitors to the larger villages such as Avatip (Bragge n.d.:400; Reche 2015:31). By then the Yalaku would almost certainly have heard of these 'ghosts' (*debil*, TP), as Europeans were first described, and might even have seen a number while staying at Avatip with trading partners.

Regardless of when they first sighted Europeans, Ayam reported that his community's first formal contact did not take place until the late 1940s, roughly twenty-five years after the founding of the patrol post at Ambunti in 1924. It occurred when the entire community travelled from Yelogu to Bangwis to participate in one of the government's annual censuses. Prior to then, no government officer had ever visited Yelogu, or appointed any of its people to the position of headman (*luluwai*, TP) or official translator (*tultul*, TP). No Yalaku, consequently, had been given one of the much admired and prestigious peaked hats (*jilu*, TP) that went with these offices.

Ayam described their first encounter with government officials at Bangwis in the following way:

> At that time, we knew very little about the white man and his ways. In our own community we were still walking around largely naked. After all, we had only recently given up warfare [e.g. the killing of Pakiya] and weren't concerned about things like clothing. We had other, more important, things on our minds. One or two people had a few scraps of clothing that Avatip or Bangwis friends had given them, but that was all. When we travelled over to Bangwis for the census, our relatives and friends there gave us a few pieces of cloth [*laplap*, TP] so that when we stood before the patrol officers we weren't completely naked. We tied them around our waists to hide our genitals. We held them in place not with proper leather belts but with lengths of split rattan. They were only fragments of cloth. Our backsides were still uncovered, as were the women's breasts.

The Bangwis leaders informed the visiting patrol officers that some of the people who had gathered for the census were from a neighbouring village named Yelogu. Ayam gave the following account of how they responded when they were called on to line up and have their names taken:

> When the patrol officers called on us to line up so that they could record our names, we didn't know exactly what they were asking us to do. We didn't know about standing in a row. In our community people always

Figure 11.6 The Ambunti Local Government Council meeting house, 1979. This building, styled after a Kwoma men's house, was constructed in the middle of the 1960s, and formally opened around 1967, to coincide with the commencement of the Ambunti Local Government Council.

> just stood wherever they wanted, all over the place [a comment that provoked much laughter among the people listening]. So, the Bangwis people took hold of us, turned us around so that we were facing in the right direction, stood us in a row and then instructed us to call out our names one by one when asked. This was the first time any patrol officer had asked for our names. After that we knew what to do when a census was taken.

The patrol officers on this occasion gave the Yalaku a 'village book'. These books contained a summary of the census data collected and miscellaneous confidential information – written in English, which no village person at the time could read – about who, at some future date, might make suitable headmen (*luluai*) and official translators (*tultul*). They also contained comments on any local disputes they had adjudicated. A village headman had the responsibility of looking after the book and making it available whenever government officials visited. Staff from the departments of Public Health and Agriculture were also authorized to make entries in them.

Normally a village book would only be provided after a headman had been appointed. On this occasion, the patrol officers (*kiap*) told the Yalaku that it was too early for anyone to be made a *luluai* and that one would be appointed only after they had visited their village. They nevertheless gave them a village book and handed it to Ambareka (82) of YK clan for safekeeping.[93] They informed Ambareka that he might, at a later date, be appointed *luluai*, and that only then would he receive the appropriate peaked cap.

Ambareka was in fact appointed *luluai* several years later, once the patrol officers from Ambunti had visited Yelogu. Following that visit they decided that the community was too small to form a separate administrative unit, and that for the census and all other official purposes it would be administered jointly with Bangwis village. This situation still applies today.[94] This meant that whenever the patrol officers made their annual rounds, the Yalaku had to assemble at Bangwis.

Contract labouring

Labour recruiters had been active on the main course of the Sepik River region from the earliest days of European contact. However, it was only in the 1930s that they began actively to seek young men to 'sign on' in the hinterland regions around Ambunti.[95]

The first two Yalaku men to sign on did so in the early 1950s. They were Kapay (133) and Siiriinjuwi (34). Both were taken to work on the goldfields at Wau (Idriess 1950). They were apparently very nervous about signing on, and only finally agreed to do so when a totemic kinsman from Avatip village, named Miindaman, also agreed to do so and to mentor them. He had already completed a three-year period as a contract labourer and was familiar with the process. At the end of their contracts the three men returned together. Miindaman guided them back to Yelogu from the mouth of the Sepik, where the labour recruiter had dropped them off – among people of whom they had no knowledge.

Labouring was reportedly hard work, and there were severe punishments for people who broke the rules, even if the infractions were minor. Vakinap of Avatip was among the first to sign on from his village, at the beginning of the 1920s. He told me that when he was working as a labourer on a copra plantation on New Britain, he was forced to work for an additional month without pay at the end of his contract for eating one of the coconuts from which he was extracting the meat. He did so when the plantation's kitchen staff failed to bring him his lunch. Regular meals at set hours were one of the things to which all contract labourers were legally entitled.

Despite the hard work, every Sepik man that I knew who had worked as a contract labourer immensely enjoyed the experience. It gave them the opportunity to visit parts of New Guinea they would never otherwise have seen, and to learn Tok Pisin. At the end of their contract, they returned home with what they regarded as a treasure trove of goods. In addition to their pay, this included a lockable metal box similar to those government officers took on patrols, an axe and a pair of sturdy boots. More than one man proudly showed me the boots he had received many years earlier.

Occasionally, men who left to work as contract labourers chose never to return. This was evidently the case with the Yalaku man named Kuriyanjaw (85) of YK clan. He left Yelogu, and his wife, in the early 1960s to work as a labourer on the island of New Britain, and decided to settle there permanently. He reportedly made no effort to keep in touch with his wife or other people at Yelogu. By 1973 his wife had long since remarried and he was no longer regarded as a member of the community.

93 Ambareka was at Yelogu in 1973 when I recorded this history. He sat in on the discussions, but he was an exceptionally self-effacing man and liked to keep in the background. In 1959 the linguist Donald Laycock's used him as the sole source for his sketch of 'Yelogu' grammar (Laycock 1965:139). In his published report he somewhat puzzlingly describes 'Avareka' as a 'young and not very intelligent informant'. I suspect that Laycock was misled by his shyness. Ambareka had died by 1988, when I conducted a second census of the village.

94 This was confirmed in 2019 in a letter from Thomas Yati of Bangwis village.

95 The first Kwoma men to 'sign on' as contract labourers did so in the early 1930s (Whiting 1938–9:174–5).

When Siiriinjuwi and Kapay returned from their work on the goldfields, they called in at the government office at Ambunti to request that Yelogu village be given a 'hat', i.e. someone be appointed a headman. The officers agreed and told Kapay that he would be appointed the *tultul* (government interpreter) and Ambareka the *luluai*. They appointed Siiriinjuwi the village medical orderly (*dokta boi*, TP). Before he returned to Yelogu, he received instruction on how to set up a village aid post and was provided with basic medical equipment such as disinfectants and bandages.

The patrol officers formalized the appointments when they visited Yelogu for the first time. Ayam reported that when they first inspected the village, they found that the population was divided between two hamlets several kilometres apart. The hamlet at Yelogu was composed of clans belonging to the Keyava totemic division. The other, at a place named Mbanggay, was composed of clans belonging to the Tek totemic division. The patrol officers visited Mbanggay, but when they found that it had only 'five houses' (*paivpela haus*, TP), as Ayam put it, they immediately ordered the people to move to Yelogu to make the community easier to administer. The people at Mbanggay complied but resented having to leave the area where their major sources of sago were located. They resolved the issue by building houses at Yelogu but also maintaining houses at Mbanggay at which they and their families spent most of their time.

Around 1960 two more men 'signed on' to work outside the Sepik region. They were Kiyanombo (33) and Yuwiyaku (35). The latter was one of Ayam's half-brothers. They both worked on copra plantations on the island of Manus in the Admiralty Islands. When they returned, another two men signed on: Ukwaya (110) and Wanenggwa (29), men who were 'friends' (*nawa*).

Mid-1960s

The establishment of the Ambunti Local Government Council

Not long after the last two men returned from their three-year stint of labouring, the Papua New Government introduced the system of local government councils. This resulted in government-appointed headmen (*luluai*) and interpreters (*tultul*) being replaced by locally elected councillors (*kaunsil*, TP) and assistants termed 'committee men' (*komiti*, TP). Being too few to form a separate administrative unit, the Yelogu people combined with those at Bangwis to elect a single councillor. The councillor's role, much like that of the former government-appointment headman, is to the administer his village in keeping with the government's wishes, hold informal courts to settle minor intra-village disputes, and represent his village (or villages) at meetings of the Local Government Council at Ambunti.

When the Ambunti Local Government Council was being planned in the first half of the 1960s, the Honggwama Kwoma, the former owners of the land on which Ambunti is located, invited the leaders of other villages in the council area to help a construct a building that could be used for its meetings. This took the form of a traditional Kwoma men's house (Figures 11.6–11.8). The ceiling and posts were decorated with paintings and sculptures mostly in the Kwoma style. The paintings predominantly depicted totemic plants, animals and other entities owned by the groups to which the different artists belonged. Two rows of sculptures were placed outside the building to form an avenue leading to it from the adjacent airstrip, the route taken to the building by visiting dignitaries. The figure placed in the most prominent position visually, against the front centre post, depicted a Honggwama forebear named Arokotombo, the greatest of that tribe's remembered warriors and a man who played a key role in the middle of the nineteenth century in the expulsion of the Ngala from the Washkuk Hills. The Kwoma gave the building the name Mayinggapi, after one of the early nineteenth-century Ngala men's houses. This had stood high up on a ridge at the south-western corner of the Washkuk Hills overlooking the present site of Melawei village (see Figure 1.1).[96] Naming a structure such as a men's house after a building owned by a defeated people was a common Kwoma practice. It was a way of celebrating a victory over an enemy and of reminding people of what had happened in history.[97]

Kwoma men's houses have a life expectancy of only about twenty-five years and by the late 1980s this building had fallen into disrepair. It was eventually demolished and never replaced. Its decorative artwork was either discarded or sold to visiting art dealers.

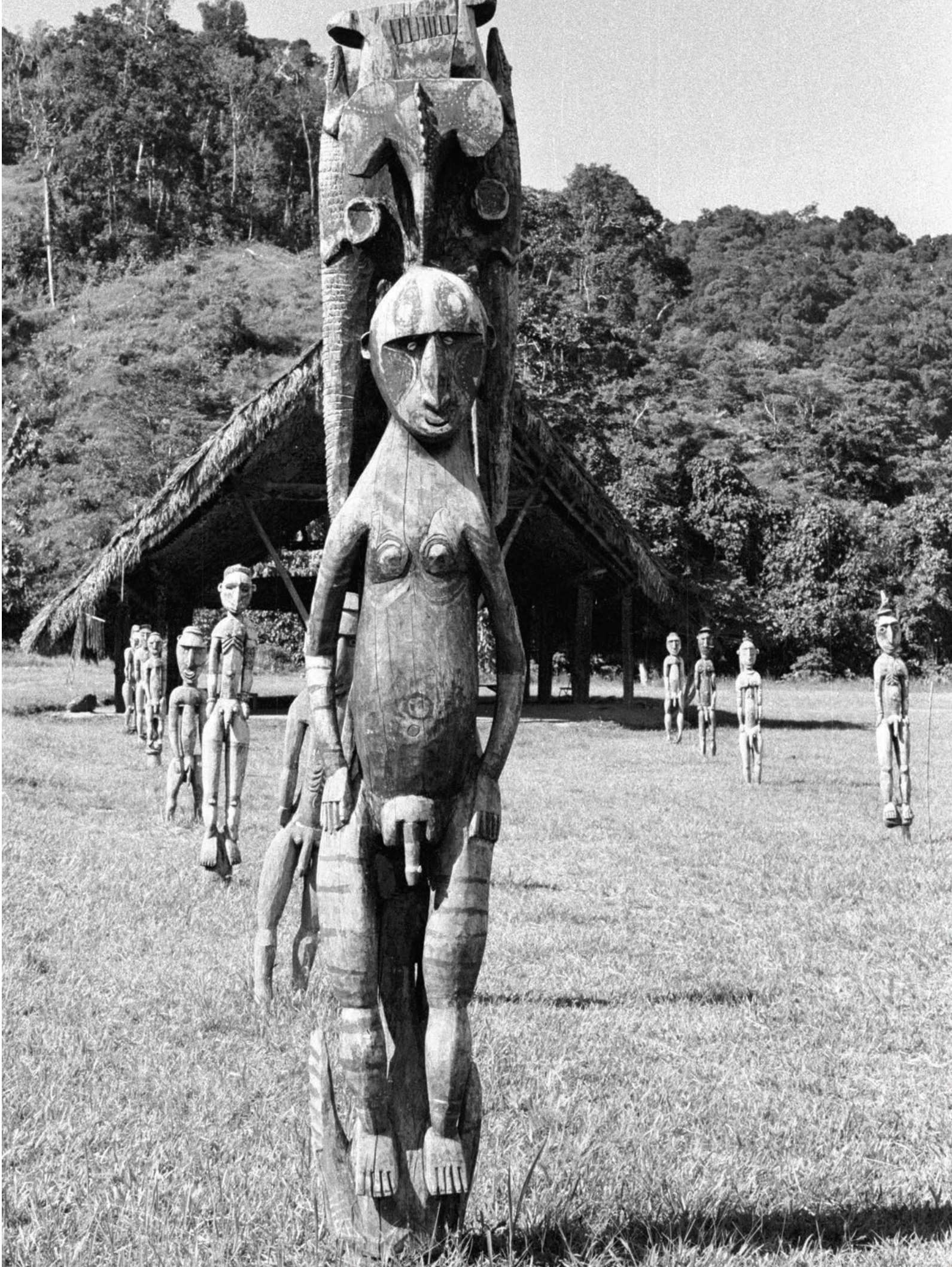
After briefly referring to the establishment of the Local Government Council at Ambunti, and the construction of this meeting house, Ayam brought the history of his community to an end.

96 Bragge (1990:39) also refers to this building. He spells its name 'Mankap'.

97 This practice is not limited to the Kwoma. To commemorate his success in bowling out David Boon and Michael Bevin, two of Australia's leading batsmen, on the first day of the Test match in Melbourne in 1994, the English cricketer Darren Gough added their first names to the one he and his wife had already given their newborn son. His son became 'Liam David Michael Gough'.

Figure 11.7 (opposite) Sculptures outside the Ambunti Local Government Council meeting house, 1972. Most depict clan ancestors. They were produced by leading artists from several of the language groups in the region the council administers.

Figure 11.8 (overleaf) A panel of bark paintings on the ceiling of the Ambunti Local Government Council meeting house, 1972. The paintings were produced by men from different political and language groups in the region the council administers.



Part III

Myths

12

Introduction to Yalaku myth

The Yalaku, like other Sepik peoples, narrate their history in two parts. One focuses on the activities of humans (*du*). This consists principally of accounts of the different settlements the forebears of the different clans constructed and their interactions with other groups, mainly in the form of warfare. This aspect of Yalaku history has been the subject of the preceding chapters.

The other part focuses on the activities of spirits (*wari*), the named supernatural beings who created all major aspects of their culture (*yobu*) as well as many features of the physical world. For the Yalaku, 'culture' in this context refers to the customary, and supernaturally sanctioned, 'ways' (*yobu*) in which people behave. The creative activities of spirits are thought to have taken place mostly at the beginning of history, even before the founders of their different clans emerged from the spirit world. What the different supernatural beings created is described in myths.

In the Yalaku view, humans at any one point in time are aware of only part of what the spirits created. However, further discoveries about their creations can be made. One of the ways this can occur is in dreams: when people's souls leave their bodies at night during sleep, temporarily enter the spirit world and see spirits or witness objects they have created. People also make new discoveries when they encounter spirits by chance in the course of everyday life (see Chapter 14).

The belief that spirits created all key aspects of their culture, as well as many aspects of the natural world, forms part of the wider Yalaku view that only spirits are endowed with intellectual or other forms of creativity, including artistic. Humans, in contrast, are endowed with no culturally significant creativity.

My use of the term 'myths' for the narratives that tell how spirits created the world as the Yalaku know it – or at least knew it until recently – is potentially misleading. Like other Sepik peoples, the Yalaku believe that myths are factually accurate accounts of what actually happened in history. They are no different in this respect from clan histories and other accounts of events in which humans were involved. For the Yalaku, in fact, the only distinction between what I refer to as 'myths' and 'history' is that the former deal with the activities of spirits, whereas the latter deal with the activities of humans. No distinction, furthermore, is made linguistically between the two types of narratives. Both are termed '*hudi*' (*stori*, TP).

The Yalaku mythology is immensely rich and far too complex to describe in detail here.[98] In the final part of this book, therefore, I give only a brief selection of myths to illustrate how accounts of the creative activities of spirits are narrated. The selection consists of one longer myth (Chapter 13) and three shorter texts (Chapter 14). The first myth (Chapter 13) describes, among many other things, how two culture heroes named Wantan and Mbapan established trade between the Yalaku and neighbouring peoples on the Sepik. This trade has figured prominently at different points in the preceding history.[99]

The three shorter myths in Chapter 14 describe events that are thought to have taken place much more recently in Yalaku history. The first tells how tobacco originated when plants grew spontaneously from the blood a spirit shed when it was gravely wounded by a man in revenge for having sexual relations with his wife.

The second story gives an account of the origin of a new branch of the Wupa River. It also, incidentally, gives a very clear illustration of how the Yalaku understand the world in

98 Most, if not all, Sepik societies have – or had – equally rich mythologies. Anthropologists, unfortunately, have been seriously remiss in not documenting them in detail. Even notable exceptions such as Wassmann (1991), who has documented clan-origin myths of Iatmul speakers at Kandingei village, reveal in their publications that they have only scratched the surface of this aspect of the societies in which they have worked. For myths in other Sepik societies see, among others, Craig 1980a, 1980b; Bowden 1983a:135–53; Harrison 1990; Schuster 1965; Silverman 2016; Wassmann 1991, 2001. The richness of Sepik mythology contrasts markedly with what the anthropologist Anthony Forge (1970:288) has reported for the Abelam, located on the southern foothills of the coastal mountains in the area in which the Amaku River originates. Forge reports that they had no myths to speak of, an assertion that Tuzin later supported (Tuzin 1995:289, 301).

99 The Kwoma, and the Mayo peoples further to the west, also have versions of this myth.

which spirits have their permanent abodes. This is located only a few metres below the earth's surface. The story describes how a woman fishing with a hand net in a forest pool is captured by the spirits who live in the underworld directly below it. Their intention is to kill and eat her. When he learns of her capture, the woman's husband, with the assistance of other men in his village, hastily prepares a large parcel of their choicest foods to offer the spirits in exchange for his wife, assuming that she is still alive. The woman's brother, who lives in the same community, then descends through the pool into the underworld. There he encounters the spirits who captured his sister. He finds, to his great relief, that she is unharmed. The spirits accept the offer of food in exchange for the woman, and allow her and her brother to return to the upper world, through the same pool of water.

The myth indicates that spirits created this forest pool, in a deep hollow left by an uprooted tree, and filled it with fish precisely to attract a woman to it with her fishing net, who they could then capture. It also indicates that following the recovery of the woman, the water, which has welled up from the supernatural world, continues to rise. Eventually, it overflows the banks and, draining away through the forest, gives rise to a new branch of the nearby Wupa River. The Yalaku say that the emergence of this new branch of the river occurred relatively recently in their history.

The third of the shorter texts describes how a man introduced a new way of decorating cross-beams in men's houses. This was based on the appearance of a spirit he encountered by chance while crossing a flooded forest stream. The spirit took the form of a log similar in length and width to cross-beams.

The locations of the events described in myths

In myths, the supernatural beings typically take human form. But unlike people, whose form is fixed, they have the ability to change their appearance at will. Thus, in the course of a single story a spirit might initially have the form of a man, woman or child but later transform into a plant or animal.

In contrast to the places named in the history of the activities of their human forebears, only a few of those named in myths are known to the Yalaku today. Among the few that are known are those referred to in the story of the two brothers, Wantan and Mbapan (Chapter 13). This tells how the brothers, after migrating out of the coastal mountains to the north, construct a home for themselves in the Washkuk Hills on the top of a ridge named Ndukupa. This is the name of one of the ridge-top sites on which the Kowariyasi Kwoma had their main tribal settlement up until the 1950s, when the community shifted to new sites beside the Meneenjipa (Sanchi) River. Correctly or otherwise, the Yalaku equate the place named Ndukupa in this myth with the location of the pre-contact Kowariyasi settlement.

As indicated in Chapter 1, in the 1960s the Yalaku discovered that a number of the places named in their myths are actually located on the southern slopes of the Torricelli Mountains. These are in the area in which the Yimi River rises. On the basis of this discovery, they concluded that the southern slopes of the Torricelli ranges must be the region in which at least some of the events described in their myths took place.[100]

Two forms of myth

The Yalaku traditionally narrated myths in two forms. One consisted of immensely long choral song cycles, such as the one named Haya (see Chapter 3). The rituals in which these song cycles were primarily performed had been given up long before I first visited Yelogu in 1973. Ayam and Kiriyas were the only two men in their community who still had some knowledge of them. For my benefit, they performed short segments of several. But they stated that the stylized poetic language in which they were composed made it 'impossible' to translate them meaningfully into Tok Pisin. They had to limit themselves, therefore, to giving brief summaries of some of the events described. Regrettably, I can say nothing more about them. When these two men died, this vast body of oral poetry died with them, at least at Yelogu.

The other form was in prose. The following two chapters present a selection of the prose narratives.

Ownership of myths

Myths are owned by the different totemic divisions that own the spirits that figure most prominently within them. Only men who belong to the totemic division that owns a myth have an automatic right to narrate it. Others require their permission.

Myths as a form of entertainment

In addition to providing accounts of the origins of key aspects of their culture, myths play (or played) a number of other roles in this society simultaneously. One is as entertainment. In a society that until recently lacked radio, and still lacks television, myths provide a valued form of

100 A number of anthropologists have recently argued that myths in the Sepik and elsewhere in New Guinea are like those of Aboriginal Australia, in that they serve as records of ownership, by the groups to which the myths belong, of the areas of land named (see the various chapters in Rumsey and Weiner 2001). Rumsey (2001:13) describes such myths as focusing on 'placedness'. In the Sepik, this model of myth might apply to a society such as the Iatmul (e.g. Wassmann 2001) but it has no relevance to the Yalaku, or the neighbouring Kwoma. As previously indicated, the locations of most of the places named in Yalaku myths are not known to people today, and even if people are aware of the locations of places named, this does not necessarily give the owners of the narrative any rights in them.

entertainment around kitchen hearths at night. There men narrate them, or segments of them, for the enjoyment of their wives and children. People's enjoyment of these stories, furthermore, is enhanced by the fact that many of the events described are humorous, even ludicrous, and people laugh out loud at them. Skilled narrators, such as Ayam, often exaggerate their humorous aspects for comic effect.

In marked contrast to what is reported for neighbouring Ndu-speaking peoples such as the Iatmul and Manambu,[101] Yalaku myths are not secret and anyone may listen to them. Women often know the stories as well as men, having heard them told on many occasions.

History and change

The belief that supernatural beings created all major aspects of their culture is part of the more general belief that their society has not changed structurally since it was first created. This view is shared by all of the other Sepik peoples among whom I have done fieldwork (e.g. Bowden 1999, 2006:69–81). Forge makes an identical point in relation to the Abelam (Forge 1967:66, 80 and 83).[102]

This is not to say that changes do not occur, or that when they occur people do not recognize them. But the change that does take place is not attributed to human agency. Rather, it is attributed to further discoveries about what different spirits created at the beginning of history, or to aspects of the spirits themselves.

This view of history is illustrated very clearly by the third of the myths in Chapter 14. The story tells how a man named Kayimeni introduced a new way of decorating cross-beams in men's houses (see Figures 14.3–14.5), reportedly not long before first contact with Europeans. This man was not mentioned in any of the genealogies I recorded, but he was said to have been a member of H2 clan, a group that traces its descent from a founder of the same name. The myth explains very clearly that Kayimeni did not personally invent his new way of decorating cross-beams, but based it on the appearance of a spirit he encountered by chance in the forest. In reality, Kayimeni might been a great creative artist in Western terms, as many sculptors and painters in the past undoubtedly were. But for the Yalaku, his innovation was not a sign of any culturally significant creativity on his part. It was simply a consequence of the fact that a spirit of which people were previously unaware chose to reveal itself to him. In the Yalaku view, this spirit could equally well have revealed itself to anyone else. (For a discussion of equivalent understandings of creativity among the neighbouring Kwoma see Bowden 2006:69–81, 2022:61–70.)

Creator spirits combine in themselves normally incompatible features

In his analysis of myths of Northwest Coast peoples of the United States and Canada such as the Haida and Tlingit, Lévi-Strauss (1988) examines in detail how peoples in this region also believed that their cultures were created by supernatural beings. Their cultures came into being when humans acquired from the supernatural world the material objects and social practices that were traditionally central to their societies. These included valuables in the form of sheets of copper that men of the highest rank exchanged among themselves to compete for prestige. Lévi-Strauss argues convincingly that one of the ways in which Northwest Coast myths symbolize different supernatural beings acting as 'mediators' between the supernatural and human worlds, is by attributing to them normally incompatible features. These might involve elements drawn from both the celestial and terrestrial realms, or the terrestrial and aquatic worlds (1988:120). The same is true, he argues, of the myths of peoples elsewhere in the Americas who have similar beliefs. The Aztec 'plumed serpent' is a case in point, as this creator figure combines in itself elements of both the sky (birds) and the earth (snakes).[103]

Yalaku myths provide many striking examples of the same phenomenon. One is the female spirit Wolitakwa, a major actor in the myth of the two brothers Wantan and Mbapan (Chapter 13). In the myth, this spirit is credited with teaching humans how to perform most of the major ceremonies the Yalaku once practised, and many of their myths. Wolitakwa's basic form is that of a human female. But, anomalously, she combines elements of both male and female. She is anatomically female but has the fighting ability and strength of a man; in addition, she is expert at handling spears and bows and arrows, weapons that men exclusively used. She also combines features of the human and plant worlds: while she is human in appearance, her 'children' are all plants.

The spirit the man Kayimeni encountered, and whose appearance became the basis of a new style of decorating cross-beams in men's houses, similarly combines in itself incompatible features: it has a living anthropomorphic front half, but its rear half takes the form of an inanimate log of wood. The spirits who were the ultimate progenitors of the different Yalaku clans described in Chapter 3, likewise, combined in themselves normally incompatible features: human, animal and plant.

101 See Bateson 1958:63, 127, 228; Harrison 1990; Silverman 2001:34; Wassmann 1991:45, 60.

102 For discussions of history in a wider ethnographic context – not all of which I find plausible – see, among others, Carmack 1972; Eliade 1959:35; Fabian 1983; Lévi-Strauss 1968: chap. 8; Lewis 1998; Lutkehaus *et al.* 1990:5–66; Price 1989:63; Sahlins 1981.

103 See also Lévi-Strauss 1967:219–23 and 1979:26 *et passim*.

The recordings of the myths

With the exception of the second of the three shorter myths in Chapter 14, Ayam narrated all of the texts reproduced here. The one exception is the story of the origin of a branch of the Wupa River. At Melawei village he narrated this (in Tok Pisin) jointly with the Kwoma man Mburunggay, of Amachey Keyava clan.[104] Mburunggay's clan, now located at Melawei, traces descent from a chthonian ancestor named Mbam (see Chapter 3) who is said to have originally belonged to the Yalaku tribe. However, early in Yalaku history Mbam left his community of origin and migrated into the Washkuk Hills. There he was incorporated into the Kwoma-speaking Honggwama tribe. As a descendant of someone who was originally a member of the Yalaku community, Mburunggay insisted that he and the other members of his clan 'owned' the myth that he and Ayam jointly narrated just as much as any of the Yalaku clans, and consequently had an automatic right both to narrate it, and depict the entities it refers to in their bark paintings and sculptures (see Figure 14.1).

104 'Melawei' is the government spelling of 'Mariyawaya'. This is the indigenous name, of Ngala (pre-Kwoma) origin, for the hill at the south-western corner of the Washkuk range at the base of which the village is located, and after which it is named.

13

The brothers Wantan and Mbapan and the origin of trade with river peoples

Narrator: Ayam of Yelogu village. Recorded at Bangwis village, January 1978.

This story is set in the region to the north of Yelogu, where peoples such as the Mbumbunj Apaku and Masalaka are located.[105] This is an area where huge grasslands are found this side of Wosera[106] in the direction of the townships of Dreikikir and Nuku in the Torricelli Mountains.[107] Many of our myths are set in this region, and even further to the north. Few of the events described in our myths took place where we live today at Yelogu. Most took place much further to the north.

Two women are unhappily married to the same man

This is the story of two brothers named Wantan and Mbapan. Wantan was the older brother. The story tells how a man had two wives. The women were constantly quarrelling. The first, and senior, wife wanted to get rid of the second so she could have her husband to herself. It's the same with us today. If you have two wives they will constantly be quarrelling over their husband.

The junior wife was pregnant, with twins. The senior wife was not pregnant and, as she had not yet had any children, was deeply envious of her co-wife. One day the two women went into the forest to collect edible greens and firewood. They came across a wildfowl nest and decided to dig out the eggs. Using their hands and digging-sticks, they dug deeper and deeper into the huge mound of forest litter. At one point the first wife straightened up to take a breather. The other was on her knees with her back to her, still digging. Seizing the opportunity to get rid of her, the first wife picked up a handful of dirt from the nest and told the other woman to look at her. When the other turned around she threw the dirt in her eyes, blinding her. Without saying anything, the first wife then picked up her belongings and left for home. Not being able to see, the second wife was not capable of going anywhere. All she could do was feel around with her hands. She was also burdened by the weight of the two unborn children she was carrying.

It so happened that a man from another community was in the same region, hunting with his dog. His name was Holereka. The dog's name was Hoyiva. Scurrying around well ahead of its owner, the dog came across the blinded woman and started barking. Hearing it, the man wondered what the dog had found. Thinking it might be a large monitor lizard digging eggs out a wildfowl nest, he went to investigate. He found a woman sitting on the ground. Her eyes were shut and she was desperately using her hands to try to keep the dog at bay.

The man could see that the woman was attractive and young. He spoke to her and asked what was wrong with her eyes. She told him that she was a man's second wife, and that his first wife was extremely angry with her husband for taking a second wife without her permission.[108] So she had got rid of her by throwing dirt in her eyes to blind her and then abandoning her in the forest.

The man expressed his sympathy for her, and told her to wait. He went off and found a type of wild sugar cane (*pitpit*, TP), the soft, unopened inflorescence (*kru*, TP) of which we use for wiping foreign bodies out of eyes. He broke off some of this material, put it

105 I have no information about the Mbumbunj Apaku. The name could be one of the many stock epithets used in myths for distant and unrelated peoples.

106 'Wosera' is the name for the area immediately to the north-east of the confluence of the Yimi and Amaku Rivers; according to Laycock the people speak the 'Wosera' dialect of Abelam (Laycock 1965:25–97, 1973:25).

107 Dreikikir and Nuku are two small towns and administrative centres located on the southern slopes of the Torricelli Mountains. The former is in the area in which the Yimi River originates. Nuku is further to the west. The region is occupied by speakers of unrelated 'Torricelli phylum' languages (Laycock 1973:7–17).

108 A man is formally required to obtain the permission of his first wife before he can take another wife. Not to do so is a proverbial source of domestic conflict between co-wives.

Figure 13.1 Marak of Washkuk village (Honggwama Kwoma) painting the face of a woman prior to the commencement of the Minja ceremony at Washkuk, December 1972. Ayam and many other Yalaku men and women participated in the ceremony. Marak (c.1910–90) was one of his tribe's outstanding painters, sculptors, singers, ritual specialists and political leaders. His older brother Kulambu, and his father Pokolambu, were equally accomplished.

into a little net bag he had hanging around his neck and intoned a magical spell. He then took it over to the woman and told her to open her eyes and try to look up at him. She tipped her head back and opened her eyes. The man carefully wiped the dirt out. Having cleaned her eyes, Holereka decided to take the woman home with him and make her his second wife.

When the two reached his house, his existing wife immediately asked who the woman was. Holereka told her that he had found her in the forest and explained the circumstances. He reported that she was the junior wife of another man, whose first wife was intensely jealous, and had got rid of her by blinding her by throwing dirt in her eyes and then abandoning her in the forest. He said that their dog had found her. He had followed its barking and discovered the woman flailing around trying to keep the dog at bay. He said he had decided to bring her home.

The woman was pregnant and gives birth to twins: two boys

Holereka's first wife welcomed her into their family. She told her that she had always found it hard foraging for wild foods on her own in the forest and that the two could find food together. So, the woman who had been abandoned in the forest settled down as this man's second wife, with his first wife's permission.

Before long, the new wife gave birth to the twins she was carrying. Both were boys. These were the children she had conceived with her first husband. The other woman was delighted to see that there were twins, and suggested that they each look after one child. She offered to take care of the one born second. But their mother told her that she was so grateful for being permitted to join her family that the senior wife should have the honour of raising the first born. She would be content with the younger.

The father, Holereka, initiates the two boys

The two infants soon grew into strong young boys. When they were approaching puberty their father, without warning his wives of what he was doing, initiated them into manhood. One day when the women were working together processing sago in the forest, Holereka constructed an open-sided shelter on the far side of the clearing in front of his house. It was the size of a small kitchen. He thatched it sufficiently well with sago-palm branches to keep out the rain and then built a screen right around it. Inside, he dug a tunnel that came out some distance away in the forest, to give access to a toilet the boys could use during the period of initiation without their mothers seeing them.[109] When he had prepared everything, he took the boys inside. There they underwent a rite equivalent to the one Kwoma used to perform called Nal, Nal Sukwiya ('The Red Ceremony'; Kwoma: *nal*, red; *sukwiya*, ceremony). Its purpose was to transform boys into men by giving them the strength to become successful warriors and hunters, and efficient gardeners.

After placing the two boys inside the makeshift enclosure their father collected a number of immature wild figs (*hobi siik*) from the forest. These have hard shells. He placed them in a heap inside the enclosure. He would use these to play a trick on the boys' mothers.

When the women returned from the forest that afternoon they sat down to rest outside their house. Their husband now played the trick on them. Inside the enclosure he picked up several of the wild figs and bit into their hard outer shells, making loud cracking sounds as he did so. At the same time, he called to the two women, telling them that he had the two boys inside the enclosure with him and that he was now cracking open their skulls so that he could cook and eat their brains.

Not having realized their sons were inside the enclosure, the women let out shrieks of horror and shouted that it was a terrible thing for him to have killed their sons. Holereka casually replied that what he was doing was none of their business and that he was now going to eat their brains. In fact, the two boys were perfectly all right.

Before the period of seclusion began, Holereka had collected a large quantity of vegetable food and hunted pigs to provision both himself and the boys while they were inside the enclosure. He had stored all of this extra food in the family's kitchen, and now instructed his wives to cook it piecemeal for 'him' while he was in the enclosure. He did not reveal at this point that the boys were still alive. He told his wives that the food would be exclusively for him. At no time during the period

109 In a discussion of this myth Ayam emphasized that tunnels were not traditionally constructed to give access to a toilet during an initiation rite. This occurs only in this story. In practice, both the initiates and the older men supervising them would have used a common toilet accessed through the back of the ceremonial enclosure that opened directly on to the forest. Toilets consisted of a log on which people squatted. Formerly, all men's houses had a public toilet of this form, in the adjacent forest, which both village men and male visitors could use while participating in rituals. During ceremonies a separate toilet would be constructed for the use of women. Each household also had its own toilet of the same type.

of seclusion did their father allow the boys to show themselves to their mothers.[110]

The boys remained inside the enclosure for several months. During this time their father fed them magical substances mixed with food to help turn them into men. He also taught them how to make the decorations they would wear when they emerged from the enclosure at the end of the rite. These included head decorations made from a very light wood cut from the flanged buttress roots of trees that grow in swampy areas of forest. Kwoma call this type of tree *cheebisowa*. We at Yelogu call it *tiyu*. He cut slabs of the required size and brought them back to the enclosure. There he showed the boys how to shape them and decorate them with painted designs and feathers.[111] He also asked his two wives to make two pairs of net bags. One pair was for each boy, but he told the women they were all for him. Each pair consisted of a small bag called *wala wur*, which the boys would wear on the chest suspended from the neck, and a larger one called *wur kech*, to be hung from the shoulder. In addition, he asked each wife to make two sets of woven arm- and leg-bands; each boy would wear a pair around his upper arms and a pair below his knees.

The women by this time had come to suspect that their husband had not killed their sons and that they were inside the enclosure with him. But they said nothing and played along with the deception. All the while their husband kept the two women working at collecting sago in the forest, so that he and the boys could eat hot, freshly cooked serves each day. The women would place the boiled sago and other food outside the screen at the front of the enclosure. Their husband would then take it inside. This constant supply of freshly cooked hot sago helped the boys develop 'hot', active blood.

When the period of seclusion was close to ending, Holereka would wait each day for his two wives to leave for the forest and then take the boys out on to the clearing in front of their house to rehearse the songs and dance steps they would perform on the final day. He accompanied the singing and dancing by playing on a hand drum. When the singing and drumming started, his wives heard it in the forest. That afternoon when they returned to their house, they asked Holereka about it. He told them, untruthfully, that the noise was coming from a nearby tribe that was holding a ceremony. He surmised that it was either the Apanawa or the Mbumbunj Apaku.[112] For several days in a row the same thing happened. As soon as the women left for the forest in the morning, Holereka and his sons would resume their singing and dancing. Each time they returned from the forest the women would ask who had been producing the sound. On every occasion Holereka dissembled and told his wives that what they had heard was coming from another tribe. He too had heard it, he would say.

The day before the long period of seclusion was due to come to an end, Holereka decorated his sons in all their finery. When his wives left for the forest to continue processing sago, he led the boys out on to the clearing and there, decorated in all their finery, they danced back and forth while he played the hand drum. After satisfying himself that they knew what to do, he led them back inside the enclosure and helped them remove their decorations. They wrapped them in sheets of palm spathe for safekeeping. That afternoon, when his wives returned from the forest, he told them that when they heard the sound of drumming and singing the following day, they must stop what they were doing and return to the house immediately.

The next morning the two women set off for the forest once again to continue processing sago. As soon as they left, Holereka took the two boys down to the nearby stream and there bled them, making deep incisions in their tongues and penises. This was done to remove any of their remaining childhood blood that had become 'cold' through contact with their mothers and other 'cold' entities while they were growing up. He then rubbed a special 'salt' into the incisions. This temporarily caused the boys great pain. He also aspersed them with other magical substances. This was all done to impart added strength to them, so that they could become successful warriors, hunters and gardeners. Sitting beside the stream they then put on their decorations. When they were all fully decorated, the father as well, they returned to the clearing in front of the house. There, while they danced back and forth, they sang at the tops of their voices the songs Holereka had taught them.

110 The myth is giving a highly condensed account of the traditional Yalaku male-initiation rite. According to this account, the rite had the classic tripartite structure of a 'rite of passage' as described by van Gennep (1965). This consisted of three distinct phases: 'separation' (entering into seclusion), 'transition' (the period of seclusion) and 'reincorporation' (the return to normal social life with a new status).

111 Hair ornaments made from very light balsa-type woods were produced in various middle Sepik societies. Two outstanding, but very different, examples can be seen in Newton 1971:95, and Calmels Cohen 2003 (vol. 3):105. The latter was formerly owned by the French Surrealist poet André Breton; the catalogue incorrectly describes it as a 'shield'.

112 Holereka's suggestion is not entirely fanciful. In the Sepik it is possible to hear, especially at night, ceremonies being performed in neighbouring communities many kilometres away. These communities might even belong to different language groups.

Figure 13.2 A mosaic of grassland and forest on the northern edge of Yalaku country, 1987.

As soon as the singing and drumming began, the women heard it. They immediately stopped what they were doing, picked up their bags and hurried home. When they reached their house, they stood and stared in amazement at their two sons, now grown men, who they could barely recognize. Holereka assured them that they were their sons – the boys he had told them he had killed and whose brains he had eaten.

Overjoyed by what they found, the two women joined in the dancing and singing. In the customary manner during rituals, each woman inserted a loop of rattan into one of her largest and most colourful net bags to stretch it tight. Holding it above her head, she then slowly twisted it from side to side as she danced in time with the drumming and singing (see Figure 7.2). Apart from breaks to eat, they continued to sing and dance throughout the night. The months of seclusion had achieved their purpose. The two boys had been transformed into fully developed men. Their mothers could only wonder at the change that had taken place in them.

Holereka sends his two sons off on a quest

The following day, after everyone had caught up on sleep, Holereka set his sons a task. He told them that now they were men they couldn't sit around doing nothing in the way they had when they were boys, and that he was determined to see how strong they were. He told them that he wanted them to hunt and kill a 'cassowary' living in the region. They were to take the family's two dogs to help find and kill it.

After listening carefully to what their father had to say, the brothers picked up their spears and shields and set off into the forest with the dogs. When Holereka referred to a 'cassowary', he was speaking

euphemistically. What he was actually referring to was a fearsome and dangerous woman with the strength and fighting ability of a man. Her name was Wolitakwa (*takwa*, 'woman'). She lived on the on the far side a nearby area of grassland (Figure 13.2). The sons were unaware that their father was referring to this woman. They thought he was referring to anything that was dangerous or loathsome.

Before long they came across a termite nest. The termites (*waitanis*, TP) were of a type that builds nests as thick as a large tree trunk. Kwoma refer to them as *daga*; we call them *tiinuku*. Thinking that this was what their father had in mind, the brothers collected a large number of them, wrapped them in a palm spathe and brought them back to their house. As they walked through the forest they sang triumphantly as if they were celebrating a kill in warfare. When they arrived, their father asked what they had with them. The sons showed him the termites.

Holereka laughed with derision. He told them that although what they had found were horrible things, they were not what he had in mind. So, the two young men took the parcel into the forest and threw the termites away. Their father now instructed them to go back and try to find the 'cassowary' he had in mind. This 'cassowary' lived on the edge of a large area of grassland.

That night the brothers slept soundly and the next morning set off again into the forest. They travelled over to a nearby grassland and there killed a real cassowary. They slung the bird from a pole and carried it home. As they did so they sang triumphantly, as if they had made a kill in warfare. When they reached home they presented the bird to their father and asked if this was what he had in mind.

But again, their father laughed at them and said that this was not what he had in mind. He nevertheless acknowledged that cassowaries made good eating and instructed them to give the bird to their mothers to butcher and cook. He now informed them that they would find what he was referring to when they saw smoke from a fire rising on the far side of another area of grassland in the same general area. But he also warned them that this 'cassowary' was extremely dangerous. She was a woman but an anomalous one because she fought with spears and bows and arrows like a man. They needed to flush her out by stealing wood from her kitchen fire. She would then pursue and try to kill them. But they had to stand up to her and, if they had the strength, overcome her. If they lacked the strength to do so, she would certainly kill them. He repeated that he was doing this to see how strong they were. They should therefore prepare themselves for a hard, drawn-out fight.

The sons encounter the warrior woman named Wolitakwa

The brothers listened carefully to what their father had to say and at first light the next morning set off again. Each took with them a large bundle of spears.[113] They walked for most of the morning and eventually arrived at a huge, largely treeless, grassland. They could see smoke rising on its far side. Wolitakwa was making salt by burning the dry branches and bark of a pandanus tree (*kiira*). The fire was producing huge clouds of smoke. Salt made in this way is called *kiira hoyich* ('pandanus salt'). In Tok Pisin we refer to this tree as *karuka*. In their language Kwoma call it *apiyapu*. This tree is very similar to the type of pandanus known in TP as *aran*, and which we, and Kwoma, both call *moyicha*. *Moyicha* is the variety that produces long cylindrical fruit with edible red seeds. Both types of tree have many aerial roots. But the *kiira* tree is much taller. Wolitakwa had collected a large quantity of bark off *kiira* trees and was burning it to make salt. We do the same today.

The woman was working some distance from her house. She had many children, who were all at home. They weren't true human children. They were food plants of different kinds: banana, wild sugar cane, and so on. These plants were her children.

The kitchen fire inside her house was smouldering in the normal way. It had several small pieces of wood poking into it and one very large one (Figure 13.3). The large piece was a sizable log. One end was in the fire smouldering. Wolitawa had decorated the outer end with a cassowary skin pelt and several long ropes of shell valuables. She closely guarded this log and the valuables draped over it. To ensure that no one stole the log, she had tied one end of an immensely long piece of bark string (*maj*) to its outer end and the other to her large and protruding clitoris (*siikiibor*). If anyone tried to steal the log, she would know by the tugging on the string. With the log secured to her in this way, she had set off that morning to make salt.

The two brothers cautiously approached the rising smoke through the chest-high sword-grass (*kunai*, TP). They followed a track used by pigs and cassowaries. Soon they were close enough to see a house among the trees. They stopped to consider what they should do. They agreed that the dense column of smoke was what their father had been referring to. The older brother suggested that he waited, where they were while the younger approached the house to see if he could obtain

113 In another version of this myth, narrated in 1982, Ayam stated that the two boys took bows and arrows rather than spears.

Figure 13.3 Men at Avatip village (Manambu language group) sitting around a small smouldering fire under one of the village's many men's houses, 1973. Substantial logs are fed into the fire as they burn down. The fire lacks hearthstones, as it is not used for cooking. Slit-gongs with finials depicting crocodiles can be seen in the background.

some of the wood from the woman's kitchen fire. The younger brother agreed.[114]

The younger continued on his way. When he reached the trees, he could see that Wolitakwa was working some distance away from her house, making salt. Only her children were at home: the banana, wild sugar cane and other food plants. He walked up to the house and spoke to the children. He told them he needed fire and asked if he could get a piece of wood from their kitchen hearth. The children agreed and took him inside the house. There, they gave him one of the smaller pieces. Noticing the largest piece, he asked about the string tied to it. The children told him that their mother had the other end tied to herself, to her clitoris.

114 As indicated in the account of the killing of the Apukili man Pakiya (Chapter 10), this act is symbolically significant. The Yalaku believed that if a warrior could obtain something from a settlement about to come under attack, such as a piece of burning wood from a kitchen fire, this effectively separated the 'soul' of the person to whom the object belonged from their body, and presaged their imminent death in the fighting that was about to take place.

When he got back to where the older brother was waiting, he showed him the piece of firewood and reported what he had found. He said that there was one very large piece of wood protruding from the woman's hearth, that she had decorated it with a cassowary-skin pelt and shell valuables, and that she had tied it to herself with an immensely long piece of string.

Wolitakwa was unaware of what was happening and the brothers got no reaction. The younger brother therefore agreed to go back and get another piece of wood from her fire. When he arrived, he told the children that the first piece of wood had gone out. The children gave him another. He took this back to where his brother was waiting. But again, they got no reaction from Wolitakwa. The younger brother therefore agreed to go back another time. When he reached the house, he told the children that the second piece of firewood had also gone out. So, they gave him another. Again, the brothers got no reaction from Wolitakwa. So, the younger brother did the same thing, over and over again, until only the largest piece of wood remained. The brothers realized that they had no alternative but to steal it.

For one last time the younger brother went back to the house. When he asked for another piece of burning wood the children told him that there was nothing available. But he brushed them aside, went into the house, picked up the log and ran off with it. Wolitakwa immediately felt the string pulling hard against her clitoris, and shrieked in pain. Thinking her children were tugging playfully on the string, she shouted at them to stop. But the pull on the string only became stronger, and soon began to drag her along. To relieve the pain, she held the string tightly with one hand and sprinted back to her house to find out what was happening. Finding that the log from her fire had been stolen, she grabbed several spears and the shield she kept stored at the front of her house and set off after the thief. In the rush she trampled flat many of her children, who had gathered around her.

Wolitawka caught up with the brothers in the middle of the grassland. A major fight erupted and spears were thrown back and forth. Each would retrieve the spears thrown by the other and hurl them back. The fighting lasted for most of the day. Late that afternoon, realizing that the light would soon fail, the brothers discussed what they should do. They agreed that the younger brother should go ahead and dig a deep pit in the middle of the track, cover it with grass, and that they would try to lure Wolitakwa into it. The older brother would keep the woman at bay until the pit was ready.

While the older brother continued to fend off the woman, the younger brother dug the pit. Irresponsibly, however, he only dug a very shallow one, up to the depth of his armpits. After covering the hole with a layer of long grass, he went back to where his older brother was still fiercely battling with Wolitakwa, and told him that they should now both run. He advised his brother to keep a very careful eye on him and that when he, the younger, reached the pit and jumped over it, the older must do the same.

The brothers took off through the tall grass. Wolitakwa set off in pursuit. When they reached the pit, well hidden by the layer of long grass, the younger brother leaped over it. Seeing him do so, the older brother did the same. But when Wolitakwa reached it, unaware that there was a pit, she stepped on the grass and plunged into it. However, the pit was so shallow she was able to climb straight out and resume her pursuit.

Seeing that she had climbed out of the pit without difficulty, the older brother rebuked the younger for irresponsibly digging a pit that was too shallow. They could both see that the woman wasn't going to give up the chase, and that there was a real chance she would catch and kill them. So, the older brother asked the younger if he thought he could hold her at bay while he went ahead and dug another pit. But he warned him that the woman was a formidable warrior, and he must not let any of her spears hit him. The younger brother was confident of his abilities and assured the older he would be able to dodge anything she threw at him.

While the younger held their pursuer at bay, the older brother went ahead and dug a much deeper pit. After hiding the excavated earth beside the track and covering the pit with grass he went back to where his brother was waiting. He instructed him to do the same as they had previously. This time the younger had to keep his eye on the older, so that he would know when to jump.

As soon as the brothers turned and ran the woman set off after them. Her strength was undiminished. The younger brother kept his eye carefully on the older and when he saw him jump, he did the same. But Wolitakwa, not realizing there was another pit, stepped on to the grass covering it and fell straight in. This time she was in well over her head and there was no way she could get out.[115]

Seeing her fall, the brothers stopped and came back. To this point in the story the brothers have not been named, but from here on they are known

115 Listeners are well aware that in the characters of the two brothers the myth is establishing a contrast between two entirely different personality types found in everyday life – here associated with the older and younger siblings respectively. One is more considered and responsible, the other hot-headed and irresponsible.

as Wantan and Mbapan. Wantan was the older and Mbapan the younger.

Wolitakwa imparts valuable cultural knowledge to the two brothers

Well aware that she was trapped and could not escape, Wolitakwa stood at the bottom of the deep pit and appealed to the brothers not to kill her immediately. She said she had many important things to tell them first. The brothers agreed to let her talk.

She said she first wanted to inform them about how to behave in a culturally appropriate manner. She said that when they married and their wives were menstruating, the must not allow their wives to cook or do any domestic chores. Their wives should only resume cooking and carrying out other domestic activities once they had finished menstruating and bathed. Until then, they, their husbands, must also do all of the cooking and other chores around the house. If they ran out of sago flour, they must go into the forest and process more without the help of their wives. Their wives must remain at home. If their wives cooked while they were menstruating and others ate the food, their health would be badly damaged. They would suffer shortness of breath, their joints would become painful, they would suffer terrible headaches and their skin would become pallid and look unclean. To avoid becoming seriously ill they must behave in the way she had described.

Wolitakwa told them to observe the same taboo, for a full month, when their wives gave birth. On both occasions, furthermore, they must have no direct physical contact with their wives. They could do so only after their wives had bathed and resumed normal household activities.

She then told them she wanted to teach them how to make different types of plaited bands. To be able to do this, they first needed to collect several lengths of rattan for her from the nearby forest.

The brothers did as they were instructed and brought several lengths of rattan. They threw these into the pit, where she split them into thin strips and showed them how to weave arm- and leg-bands in different ways. She also showed them different ways of plaiting the bands used to haft stone blades to handles so as to make different kinds of adzes, including those used to fell sago palms and other trees. There are many ways of hafting blades to adze handles. She also showed the younger brother how to use heated breadfruit-tree sap to glue in place the twine that binds a bamboo blade to a spear shaft. The older brother never learnt how to do this. She taught him, the older brother, how to plait arm- and leg-bands using strips of palm leaves (*lip bilong limbum*, TP).[116] The younger brother never learnt how to do this.

Wolitakwa then taught the brothers how to perform different rituals. When talking about the Rom ceremony, she asked the older brother to move away. She only taught the younger. But when talking about the Maku ceremony, she asked the younger to move away. She only taught the older brother. These ceremonies were similar to the Kwoma rituals named Yena and Minja (Bowden 1983a). Each was to be performed by the members of a different ceremonial moiety. The members of one moiety were to be prohibited from witnessing the ceremony performed by the other. She also taught the brothers myths (*stori*, TP), but different ones. When she had finished imparting this rich body of cultural knowledge to the two brothers, she told them she was ready to die.[117]

The older brother asked the younger what they should do now: kill her or let her live? He expressed the view that given the immensely valuable cultural knowledge she had imparted to them, they should help her out of the pit and let her return home. But the younger was less generous and refused even to consider freeing her. He said he was incensed that Wolitakwa had taught his older brother many things but had refused to instruct him about them as well. There was no way, therefore, that he would agree to freeing her. The younger brother said that even if the older brother did not want to help kill her, he would. The older brother said he regretted the younger's decision, but would not stand in his way.

The younger brother decided not to spear Wolitakwa, but instead to decapitate her, alive. This was the way we killed outstanding enemy warriors captured during warfare.[118] But before he did so, the two brothers cut several lengths of large-diameter bamboo from a clump growing on the edge of the nearby forest to use as containers. The younger brother now leaned down into the pit, grabbed Wolitakwa by the hair, dragged her out and with a bamboo knife deftly separated her head from her body. He placed the severed head on a large leaf. The blood dripping out of it stained the leaf bright red. This is why the same type of shrub today has bright red leaves, a colour that derives from Wolitakwa's

116 Ayam did not identify the types of palm in question.

117 In Yalaku and Kwoma myths, it is common for prominent captives about to be killed to voluntarily impart valued cultural knowledge to their captors. I have no evidence that this was a practice in everyday life. But the accounts of it in myth can be viewed as a metaphor for the fact that in this society a community only flourished demographically and culturally if its leading warriors had the capacity to kill members of other communities in warfare.

118 I have no information about this practice.

blood. We call this type of shrub *hokorabariga*; Kwoma call it *sogwanal biika* (Kwoma *nal*, 'red'; *biika* 'leaf').

After setting the head aside, the brothers used the bamboo containers to catch the blood spurting out of Wolitakwa's neck. When there was no more blood to be collected, they plugged the containers with leaf stoppers. They then bound them together in two bundles, one for each brother to carry.

The brothers travel towards the Sepik; populations spring up from the blood

Leaving Wolitakwa's decapitated body where it lay, the brothers set off. They took the severed head and the tubes of blood with them. This fight with Wolitakwa took place on the southern foothills of the Torricelli Mountains, a region in which there are huge expanses of open grassland. The Yimi River flows through this region. This is also where the story originated. So, the brothers set off down the rolling hills towards the Sepik.

When night fell, they slept rough on the track. The following morning they set off again. The older brother, Wantan, accidentally left one of his containers of blood behind. When he realized what he had done, he told his brother Mbapan that they should go back and get it. But when they were approaching the spot where they had slept the previous night, they heard the voices of a large number of people. The blood in the bamboo tube had transformed into a new community of people, ancestors of those who live in the same region today. Realizing that a large number of people had appeared who were strangers to them, and thus potentially dangerous, they decided go no further, but turned back and continued on their way.

When night fell a second time they again slept on the track. The next morning when they resumed their journey, the younger brother accidentally left one of his containers of blood behind. When he realized what he had done, he told his older brother that he wanted to go back and get it. However, when they were approaching the spot where they had slept, they heard the voices of a large number of people. The blood in this container had similarly transformed into a new community of people, ancestors of those who live in the same area today. Realizing that the sounds they could hear were those of a substantial group of people who were unknown to them, they decided to forget about the container and continue on their way.

Each time they slept on the track, one of the brothers accidentally left another of his containers of blood behind, and on every occasion the blood transformed into a new group of people. Eventually, they left behind every one of the containers, each one of which gave rise to a new community on the route they had taken. All they had left was Wolitakwa's head.

The brothers discover an all-weather track to the Sepik made by a cassowary

After several days, the brothers came to the end of the rolling foothills and found themselves on the edge of a huge area of low-lying swamp country. This is the country between the southern edge of the Torricelli Mountains and the northern end of the Washkuk Hills. There are many hills scattered throughout this region, such the Washkuk range, but there is no all-weather track to the Sepik. Originally, there was an all-weather track. A woman, a cassowary (*miida*), had constructed a walkway of stout poles laid end to end through this swampy region. The brothers found the walkway and followed it as far as the Washkuk Hills. While they were doing so, blood from Wolitakwa's severed head dripped on to the logs.

When the cassowary who had constructed the walkway found the blood on the logs, she was beside herself with rage. She assumed that someone had been carrying a pig they had just killed and carelessly allowed its blood to drip on to the logs. She said to herself that she hadn't gone to the immense trouble of constructing this all-weather walkway just to have someone carelessly drip blood all over it. She was so angry, she tore up the track and scattered the logs far and wide around the forest. The consequence is that today there is no longer a solid, all-weather track from the coastal mountains to the Sepik through the Washkuk Hills. If the two brothers hadn't thoughtlessly dripped blood on to the logs, you could have walked today in all seasons on solid ground from Ambunti on the Sepik to the townships of Dreikikir and Nuku in the mountains to the north, and from there to the north coast. But this region is now too swampy to pass through for much of the year. The many small hills that are scattered throughout this swamp country, such as those named Tiip and Njambichuwi at the northern end of the Washkuk Hills, are formed from some of the pieces of timber this cassowary scattered around the forest when she destroyed her walkway. There are many other small hills formed from this timber scattered throughout our territory, between the Washkuk Hills and the Yimi River. These have the same origin. They are found right up to the edge of the southern foothills of the Torricelli Mountains. In the past we built many of our settlements on these hills.

When the brothers reached the Washkuk Hills, they decided to settle on the top of one of its highest ridges, named Ndukupa. This later became the location of the main settlement of the Kwoma Sasaraman

Figure 13.4 Wombok of Bangwis village (Honggwama Kwoma) repairing a hand-held fishing net, 1973. The nets are made from recycled woman's net bags stretched over an oval rattan frame. A rattan handle runs across the centre of the frame. Yalaku women use similar nets when fishing in shallow streams and lagoons. A bundle of palm spathes used as wrappers, and mats, can be seen on the right.

people, one half of the larger Kowariyasi tribe. Today the Sasaraman have their main settlement at Meno village on the edge of the Meneenjipa (Sanchi) River (see Figure 1.1). The adjacent ridge is named Achiikap. This was the ancestral home of the other half of the Kowariyasi tribe, which now has its main settlement at Beglam village.

After choosing a level area on top of Ndukupa ridge, they set three stones (*stov*, TP) on the ground to make a hearth and lit a fire. But they had no cooking pot and wondered where they might find one. They needed one to boil Wolitakwa's brain and make a soup from the broth. So, the brothers set off to see if there were any other people living in the vicinity and, if so, whether they would lend them a pot. Lower down the hills they found a man named Kamasiik sitting outside his house. They told him they had come to borrow a cooking pot. He agreed to lend them one. They took it back to their new settlement, set it on the hearthstones and filled it with water.[119] They removed the scalp from Wolitakwa's head, broke open the skull and put the entire head in the pot. When it was cooked, they took it out and set it to one side on a sheet of palm spathe. Then they cut up the bananas and yams that Kamasiik had also given them, cooked them in the broth and made a soup. When the vegetables were cooked, they mashed them and consumed the soup together with pieces of brain. After finishing their meal, the brothers began performing a song cycle similar to the Kwoma 'Song of the Ngala' (*Gala Hokwa*).[120] This celebrated

119 The myth does not say so, but the tops of even the highest mountains in the Washkuk range are the locations of permanent springs from which people obtain water all year round. In the past, the sites for hill-top settlements were chosen on the basis of the existence of such springs. The springs reportedly continue to flow even during the worst droughts.

120 The Kwoma 'Song of the Ngala' celebrated the killing of enemies in intertribal fighting. Its themes included the right of

the killing of an enemy in warfare and took all night to perform. The brothers were the first to perform it. It was one of the ceremonies Wolitakwa had taught them.

Shortly after they began singing, a long line of Striped Possum men (*yirin*) arrived at their new settlement. They had heard the singing in the distance, from where they lived, and were keen to join in. In anticipation of doing so, they had all painted white stripes on their faces. These decorative stripes are the source of the same white markings on Striped Possums today.[121]

When the Striped Possum men arrived, the younger brother, Mbapan, curtly demanded to know what they wanted. They replied that they had heard the singing and wanted to join in. But Mbapan treated them with contempt. He asked whether they had fought alongside him and his brother when they were battling with the woman Wolitakwa, whose killing they were now celebrating and whose brain they had just finished eating. No they had not, he aggressively told them, and they were therefore not welcome. He ordered them to make themselves scarce, and threatened to get an adze and chop off their long tails if they did not.

The Striped Possum men were deeply humiliated by the way the younger brother spoke to them, and promptly climbed back into the forest canopy and left for home. The brothers continued with their singing.[122]

Not long afterwards a group of Black Millipede men (*morituk*) arrived to participate in the ceremony. In anticipation of doing so, they had painted stripes of bright white paint on their faces. However, when the younger brother saw them, he reacted with disgust. Confronting them, he accused them of being loathsome things and told them that they had no right to be there, as they had not fought alongside him and his brother when they had done battle with Wolitakwa, whose killing they were celebrating. He then picked up his stone adze and threatened to pulverise them with it if they did not disappear. The millipede men quickly scrambled out of the way and fled down the mountain to the edge of a lagoon, where they had their home in the hollow trunk of a dead tree.

This kind of black millipede can still to be found here today. There are several types. This is the one Kwoma call *mageyakow yeyi*, a name that literally means 'millipedes descend'. The name refers to the way they fled downhill from Ndukupa to escape the younger brother and the stone adze he was wielding.

The Millipede Men lived in the hollow trunk of a tree that we call *chaw*, or *reka chaw* ('a dead *chaw* tree). Kwoma call it *savaka*.

The older brother looked on in dismay at the way his younger brother treated their visitors. Later he reprimanded him. He said that a song cycle like the one they were performing takes a whole night to complete and the more men there are to help the better. But he, the younger brother, had wrongly chased away two entire communities of men whom he should have welcomed: a community of Striped Possums and then a community of Black Millipedes. That way of behaving, the older brother told him, was totally unacceptable.

When the two brothers had earlier sat down to consume the thick vegetable soup they had made, the older brother had suggested they save a portion for the man who had lent them the clay pot. But the younger had contemptuously dismissed the suggestion, saying that the man had not fought alongside them when they had done battle with Wolitakwa. So, the younger brother made sure there was no soup left, by finishing it off himself. Later, he made his contempt for their neighbour even plainer. After relieving himself in the forest, he collected up his faeces and put them in the pot. When the neighbour arrived to retrieve the vessel, the younger brother told him there was no soup left and handed him the pot. The neighbour could see that it was full of faeces, but said nothing and took the pot home.

The brothers continued to sing and dance throughout the night. Establishing the precedent for what we have done ever since, they only brought the ceremony to an end the following morning, at daybreak. Ndukupa was now their home. The Sasaraman people today acknowledge that these two men established the first settlement on this site.

Sometime later, the brothers saw from their mountain-top home two women fishing from a canoe on the river that runs along the western side of the Washkuk Hills. This is the Meneenjipa (Sanchi), the route people take today when travelling in motorized canoes from the Sepik to Meno, Tongwinjamb and the other Kwoma villages located along it (see Figure 1.1). They could clearly see the two women way down below them. Lacking wives, they hurried down to the river, called the women over and took them back to their hilltop settlement, where they became their wives.

---

a man who had killed for the first time to decorate himself with shell and feather ornaments, and the shame felt by men who had not yet achieved the same status when they watched him being welcomed into his community's men's house following his first kill.

121 This is a type of sugar glider; it has wing-like areas of skin between its front and rear limbs that enable it to glide from tree to tree.

122 The myth does not say so explicitly, but listeners are well aware that the younger brother's behaviour is outrageous. The convention in this society was that everyone who wished to participate in a ceremony, provided they were ritually qualified, was welcome to do so.

Figure 13.5 A man at Brugnowi village (Iatmul language group) making a woman's canoe paddle, 1982. The Sepik is in the background.

Figure 13.6 Women from a river village downstream from Ambunti fishing along the edge of the Sepik, 1978. The banks are covered by wild sugar cane (right) and other reeds (left). Mature forest grows further inland. This is the kind of river-based environment in which the culture hero Mbapan established a new village on the south side of the Sepik when he left the Washkuk Hills.

Before long, both women became pregnant and had children. The older brother's wife became pregnant first and gave birth to a boy. He was already walking and talking when the younger brother's wife gave birth to her child, a girl. The Black Millipede men soon learned that the younger brother's wife had given birth when they saw her with her child fishing in nearby lagoons. They were still burning with anger about the way the younger brother had humiliated them when they attempted to participate in the ceremony he and his brother had performed. They decided that this was the time to take revenge. For this purpose, they transformed themselves temporarily into fish.

One day, while hunting and foraging, Mbapan, the younger brother, came across a forest stream (*hul wara*, TP) that had almost run dry. This was close to where the millipedes lived. The stream had been reduced to a few isolated pockets of water. One was brim full of fish. They weren't real fish. They were the millipedes disguised as fish. When Mbapan returned to his house that afternoon, he told his wife he had found a waterhole full of stranded fish and suggested that she and her sister-in-law take nets the following day and catch some.

She agreed, and the following morning the two women made new hand nets (Figure 13.4). Each cut open an old net bag, stretched it over a large loop of rattan (*kanda*, TP), stitched the edges to the frame and then set off. The younger brother's wife took her child with her, but the other woman left hers at home with her husband.

When they arrived at the stream, the younger brother's wife folded a sheet of palm spathe into a waterproof tub, put a little water in the bottom and sat her girl in it to play while she went fishing. The girl was still too young to walk, but she could sit.

The two women climbed into the pool with their hand nets. Each time they scooped up fish they dropped them into the bark holdalls (*hapabey*) they were carrying on their backs. To entertain her daughter, Mbapan's wife at one point put some of the smaller fish into the bark tub in which she was sitting. As soon as she did so, the fish transformed back into millipedes. They swarmed all over the girl and began devouring her. When the child's mother heard the screaming, she quickly climbed out of the waterhole to investigate. At that very moment, the fish in her holdall similarly transformed back into millipedes, swarmed all over her and began devouring her as well. This was their revenge for the shameful way Mbapan had treated them.

When the older brother's wife saw what was happening, she scrambled out of the pool and began to flee. But the Millipede Men called to her and told her that she was safe. Her husband, they said, was a welcoming and generous man and she therefore had nothing to fear. Her husband, they told her, was not quarrelsome nor inclined to anger and hence was no enemy of theirs. But his younger brother was, they insisted, and that is why they had decided to kill and eat both his wife and child. Hearing their assurances, the older brother's wife stood and watched in horror from a distance as the Millipede Men finished devouring the other woman and her daughter. All they left were bones.

After eating their two victims the Millipede Men retreated to the hollow tree in which they lived. Seeing where they went, the older brother's wife broke off a branch and propped it against the tree as a marker. She then hurried home. Back at her house she didn't immediately tell Mbapan what had happened, but berated him for relaxing at home while his wife was out catching fish. Realizing that something very serious was wrong, Mbapan asked her what had happened.

She now revealed, angrily, that the Millipede Men he had been so grievously offended by the way he had treated them that they had killed and eaten his wife and child. She had wanted to run away but they had stopped her and told her that she had nothing to fear. They had told her that her husband, Wantan, was a good man, but that Mbapan was unsociable and permanently angry. They had then asked her to tell him that when he came to search for his wife and daughter all he would find was their bones. This is how the Millipede Men had spoken to her, she told him. However, she added that she had discovered that they lived in an old hollow *chaw* tree, and had marked it with a branch.

Stunned by what he heard, Mbapan immediately went down to the stream where the women had been fishing. There, he had no trouble finding the hollow tree with the marker propped against it. Standing next to it he could hear the Millipede Men inside singing in celebration of their two kills. He sat down next to the tree and listened to the singing for the whole of that night.

The leader of the Millipede Men was a massive animal with a body as stout as one of the slit-gongs we keep in our men's houses. He was truly huge.[123] During the night he dug a tunnel leading from the bottom of the hollow tree to Kwayangga Lagoon.[124] This Millipede Man dug a tunnel all the way from the foot of Mt. Ndukupa to Kwayangga Lagoon (several kilometres away). That particular Millipede Man is still alive today

123 This is rhetorical hyperbole.

124 Kwayangga is an old cut-off section of the Sepik at the south-western corner of the Washkuk Hills. Melawei, one of the three Kwoma villages that belong to the Honggwama tribe, is located on its eastern edge. It is also known as the 'Washkuk Lagoon' (Figure 1.1).

and lives in the underworld beneath one especially deep section of that lagoon.

When dawn broke, Mbapan found a number of dry sago-palm branches and heaped them up around the base of the hollow tree. He then lit them. The dead tree was soon engulfed in flames. The intense heat caused the Millipede Men inside, bloated on human flesh, to explode like shotguns being fired. Every one of them was burnt alive, except for their leader. He escaped through his tunnel into Kwayangga Lagoon. Today, when they are fishing from canoes, people stay well away from the section of the lagoon where he is located.

When the hollow tree and the Millipede Men caught inside it had been reduced to ashes, Mbapan returned home. During the night, while listening to the Millipede Men singing, he had decided to make a canoe and migrate south on to the Sepik River. The following day he went down to another of the many lagoons that flank the Washkuk Hills, and there felled a tree and began hollowing it out. His nephew, Wantan's son, went with him for company and watched. Mbapan made the boy promise he would say nothing to his father about what he was doing until he indicated it was time to do so.

When he had finished hollowing out the hull, he placed dry sago-palm fronds along its two sides, lit them and scorched its outer side. This was to prevent the hull from rotting when it was placed in the water. Because his wife and child had died, Mbapan was in deep mourning and had given up eating boiled sago. Instead, he was exclusively eating sago in the less palatable form of pancakes (*praim*, TP) baked on a broken segment of a large sago-storage pot. His older brother, in contrast, continued to eat sago jelly.[125] After finishing the canoe he made several paddles (Figure 13.5).

Mbapan had decided to leave the following day. The next morning his older brother announced that he and his wife would be working in the forest that day, and asked Mbapan if he would babysit their son. Mbapan agreed. After the two set off for work, Mbapan revealed to the boy that he was now going to leave their settlement permanently. To ensure his older brother did not try to stop him, he instructed the boy to say nothing about what he had done until after dark. Then it would be too late for Wantan to do anything. He instructed the boy, when he did speak to his father, to tell him that he, Mbapan, had gone to live on the far side of the Sepik, downriver from the Washkuk Hills. He was also to tell his father that he was leaving a knotted cord (*tanget*, TP) at the place he had made his canoe, and that his father was to make an identical canoe. He told the boy he could teach his father how to do so, as he had watched him make his. When the *tanget* was 'finished', his father was to follow him down to the Sepik and look for him.[126] He would know where he had stopped because Mbapan would bend over the tops of a number of wild sugar-cane plants and tie them together. That was where his father should bring his canoe ashore and go inland to find him. Having given his nephew these detailed instructions, Mbapan went down to his canoe, launched it and paddled off.

He paddled down the Meneenjipa River into Kwayangga Lagoon. From there he passed through the narrow channel that gives access to the Sepik. Once on the main river, he followed its course until he reached the mountain named Yambanokwan. This is the mountain that is known today as Mt. Garamambu. It is located at the western end of the Chambri Lakes, several kilometres south of the main course of the Sepik, but at that time the Sepik ran directly past it. This mountain was formerly the home of the people who now live at Yambon village on the Sepik. They originally spoke a different language, but acquired Manambu when they moved onto the main course of the Sepik – a little upriver from where Ambunti is now located (Bragge 1990). They made this move not long before the patrol post was established at Ambunti. Later, Yambanokwan became the home of the (Yerikai-speaking) Yerakai and Garamambu peoples (Laycock 1973:23).[127] When Mbapan founded his new settlement at the base of Mt. Yambanokwan no one else was living there.

Having reached the site of his new home, he tied up his canoe. As he had promised his nephew, he bent over the tops of a number of the wild sugar-cane plants (*sowaga*) growing on the bank and tied them together.

125 As the story later indicates, Mbapan leaves the Washkuk Hills and migrates in his new canoe down to the Sepik, where he establishes a new community. The fact that he is in mourning when he leaves for the Sepik explains, for the Yalaku, why neighbouring river peoples eat sago in 'fried' form. They, in contrast, only eat sago in this form when they are in mourning as an act of self-abnegation. Normally they eat 'boiled' sago (i.e. in the form of a jelly).

126 A tanget is 'finished' when there are no more knots left in it.

127 The mountain traditionally named Yambanokwan dominates the western end of the Chambri Lakes. It is the highest peak in the group of hills located directly to the south-east of Ambunti. The Sepik has changed its course many times in the past, and continues to do so today (Swadling 1990, 2010; Swadling and Hide 2005). The myth might well recall a time when the Sepik did flow directly past the base of Mt. Yambanokwan through what is now the western end of the Chambri Lakes. Communities at the other end of the Chambri Lakes were the scene of some of Margaret Mead's pioneering fieldwork in the Sepik (Mead 1950, 1972). Mead spells the name of this lake 'Tchambuli', but the pronunciation is the same.

Figure 13.7 Kwoma women and girls (standing) trading with women from the Sepik River village of Brugnowi (Iatmul language group), 1987. The market site was on the edge of Napu Lagoon (see Figure 1.1).

That afternoon, when Wantan and his wife returned from the forest, their son initially said nothing to them, as his uncle Mbapan had requested. When night fell and Mbapan had not returned to his house, Wantan became anxious about him. He asked his son where he had gone. His son now told him what had happened. He told him that his uncle had made a canoe in secret and earlier that day had departed to create a new settlement on the far side of the Sepik.

Wantan was shocked to hear this news. He had no idea his brother had been making a canoe, and asked his son when and where he had made it. The boy told him, and added that he had helped him. His uncle, however, had insisted that he say nothing about it until now. He said his uncle had also told him that he, Wantan, must make a canoe of his own, and that he could show him how. Furthermore, when the *tanget* his uncle had left at the work site was 'finished', he was to follow Mbapan down to the Sepik and make contact with him. The boy told his father that Mbapan would mark the exact spot where he had gone ashore by bending over the tops of a number of wild sugar-cane stalks and tying them together. When Wantan found this marker, he was to go ashore and look for his brother. After hearing all of this, Wantan agreed to do what his brother had suggested.

The next morning Wantan and his son went down to the place where Mbapan had made his canoe. There they found the *tanget* and the potsherd on which Mbapan had cooked lumps of raw sago to make flat bread.

Wantan and his son took the *tanget* back to their house. A *tanget* is like a European calendar, or 'day book' as we call it, which people use to count off the days. Each morning one knot on a *tanget* is cut off or untied. This indicates how many nights remain before a meeting is to take place. When only one knot remains, this indicates that the meeting is to take place the following day.

While he was waiting for the *tanget* to finish, Wantan made a new canoe. His son instructed him how to do so, based on what he had seen his uncle Mbapan do. Wantan felled a tree of appropriate size, hollowed it out, scorched the outer side of the hull with fire to prevent it from rotting, and made several paddles. Having completed the canoe, Wantan launched it to try it out. He paddled back and forth in the lagoon. After finding that it was usable, he moored it.

On the morning when the last knot on the *tanget* was cut off, Wantan pushed his canoe out into the lagoon and set off to find his younger brother. Mbapan in the meantime had cleared a section of forest for a new settlement inland from where he had gone ashore. When he was clearing the forest, he found to his great surprise that whenever he felled a tree and split it open to make planks for various purposes, people emerged from the trunk. The first tree he cut down was of the type named *magi* (*malas*, TP); the people who emerged from it consequently had this tree as their main totem. This type of tree belongs to the Tek totemic division. These people therefore became part of that division.

The next tree he felled was a *nyaba* (*garamut*, TP). The men and women who emerged from this tree consequently had the *garamut* tree as their totem. There are several varieties of this tree. The particular variety from which this second group of people emerged belongs to Keyava, the totemic division to which my clan Rama belongs, along with several of the other Yalaku clans. Mbapan also felled and split open a breadfruit tree. This tree is a totem of the group that Kwoma name Wurambanj. It was the same with all of the other trees he felled. The people who emerged from them belonged to the totemic divisions to which the trees belonged. All of the people who emerged from these trees became part of Mbapan's new community. It was a community made up of people belonging to many different totemic divisions.

Wantan had no trouble finding the wild sugar-cane stems his brother had bent over and tied together. He moored his canoe among the tall grasses growing on the side of the river. When he climbed up on to the bank he could hear the sounds of a large village – of people talking and shouting and dogs barking. The language they were speaking was unintelligible. He listened carefully to see if he could make out his brother's voice, but could not. Not knowing who the people were, he approached cautiously, keeping under cover among the surrounding trees. Eventually he heard his brother talking, but in another language. He came out of hiding and walked straight up to him in the centre of the village.

His brother greeted him joyously. Wantan asked in a low voice who the people were. Mbapan told him that they were his 'children'. When Wantan asked what he meant, Mbapan said that when he arrived, there were no other people living there and that he had had created them all. Wantan asked how he had done that. Mbapan told him that when he felled trees of different varieties and split them open to make planks, men and women had emerged from them. When he split open a *garamut* tree, people of the *garamut* totem emerged. When he split open a *ton* tree (TP; Mihalic 1971:196), people of the *ton* totem emerged. He advised his brother that when he returned home he should do the same and create his own community on Mt. Ndukupa.

The two men agreed to meet at a later date to trade, and set the date by exchanging *tanget* that had

an identical number of knots in them.[128] After doing so, Wantan returned to Ndukupa. There he did exactly as his younger brother had suggested. He felled and split open a *garamut* tree. Out came people of the Keyava totemic division. He split open a *magi* (*malas*, TP) tree, and out came people of the Tek totemic division. This is how people belonging to the different totemic groups all originated.

We are getting close to the end of the story now. When the two *tanget* the brothers had exchanged had 'finished', they met at a prearranged market site at the southern end of the Washkuk Hills. Wantan and other members of his new community travelled to the market site on foot. They brought raw sago flour extracted from the sago palms that grow in abundance in the Washkuk Hills. Mbapan and other members of his community reached the market site in their canoes. They brought fish, both smoked and fresh, and other river products. This trade between river and hinterland peoples continues to this day. Wantan and Mbapan created it. People like us, the Yalaku, who live well away from the Sepik, take sago and other forest products that we have in abundance to these markets, and exchange them for fish and other products that river peoples have in abundance. Women are the main traders (Figure 13.7) but when we were still practising warfare armed men would accompany them, in case men on the other side launched a sudden attack. The story of Wantan and Mbapan tells how this trade between river and hill peoples originated. That is the end of the story.[129]

128 In TP, singular and plural nouns have the same form. Hence 'tanget' could refer to one or several objects.

129 For an account of trade between the people at Bangwis and the Iatmul-speaking people at Brugnowi village on the Sepik (Figure 1.1) see Bowden 1991.

14

The origin of tobacco and other stories

The three stories in this chapter are 'myths' in that they focus on the activities of spirits (*wari*). But unlike the majority of stories about spirits, they deal with events that are thought to have taken place relatively recently in history. Like all Yalaku myths, they are believed to be factually true.

Myth 1: the origin of tobacco

(Narrator: Ayam of Rama clan. Recorded at Yelogu village, 1973.)

A spirit makes a woman pregnant while her husband is participating in an initiation rite

Not so long ago our community held an initiation rite for boys approaching manhood. In the customary manner, both the young male initiates and the older men supervising them were incarcerated for several months in a specially built enclosure next to one of our men's houses. For the duration of the rite, none of the boys or men were permitted to have any direct physical contact with women. The mothers and wives of the participants cooked food for them daily, but left it outside the ceremonial enclosure. Senior men would then take it inside.

One night, a spirit emerged from the underworld through a waterhole close to the settlement. It had seen a woman visiting a stream to bathe and had become overwhelmed with desire for her. When it emerged from the underworld it took the form of the woman's husband, who was in seclusion in the ceremonial enclosure. In this guise it approached the woman's house, tapped on the locked door and whispered that it wanted to come inside to play.[130] The woman peered through a crack in the door. Thinking it was her husband, she let him in. After this, the same thing happened every night. Soon the woman became pregnant and her belly visibly began to swell. Seeing the swelling, other women in the village wondered how she had become pregnant when her husband was confined to the initiation enclosure.

The husband spears the spirit; tobacco grows from the blood it sheds

Before long, her husband heard the village gossip. As soon as the ceremony was over, he returned to his house and demanded to know how his wife had become pregnant while he was involved in the rite. His wife insisted that he himself had made her pregnant during his nightly visits. Knowing that he had not left the enclosure at any time, other than to relieve himself in the forest, he assumed that someone had been taking advantage of his absence. He decided to wait and see if the same thing happened again. When night fell, he armed himself with a spear and shield and hid behind shrubbery close to his front door. Soon the unknown visitor appeared. He tapped on the door, but before his wife could let him in the enraged husband emerged from his hiding place and hit him hard with his spear. Bleeding profusely but still mobile, the spirit struggled back into the forest and plunged into his waterhole, where he disappeared. Over the following days tobacco plants grew from the blood the spirit had shed on the ground while struggling back to his waterhole. This was a new type of plant. The spirit's name was Sokwanjera.

When the couple saw the plants growing from the places the blood had spilt, they had no idea whether they would be of any use. Thinking the leaves might be edible, they tried boiling them. But the taste was so bitter they had to spit them out. One day the woman threw some of the leaves into the kitchen fire. The smoke was wonderfully aromatic. She therefore tried smoking a leaf. She dried one over the kitchen fire, rolled it in a piece of dry banana leaf and lit it. The taste was delicious. She immediately told her husband and both began smoking the leaves. But they did not want to share the leaves with anyone else, so kept their discovery secret.

130 'Play' is the euphemism used both in TP and in indigenous languages throughout the Sepik for sexual activity. Bateson noted the same for the Iatmul in the 1930s (Bateson 1958:68).

The woman gives birth to a ceremonial clay pot

> The woman eventually gave birth to the child she had conceived with the mysterious visitor. This turned out not to be a human, but an incised clay pot of the kind men formerly used to serve food during ceremonies. The pot had a design incised on it that depicted the spirit who had made the woman pregnant. Ritually, the pot was the equivalent to the sculptures Kwoma display during the Yena ceremony and refer to as 'Yena heads' (Kwoma: *Yena masek*). These similarly depict spirits (see Bowden 1983a). After giving birth, the woman placed it in the sun to dry. Her husband then carefully placed it in storage, so that it could later be used in rituals.
>
> Originally this couple were the only people who owned tobacco. Others acquired it through theft. One day the woman's brother paid her a visit. Sitting in their kitchen he detected the wonderful aroma of the tobacco they had been smoking. He noticed partially smoked cigars poked behind the rafters for safekeeping. He asked if he could have some of the leaves, but the couple refused. Later, in the course of another visit, the brother came across tobacco plants the couple were growing in one of their gardens. They had gone to seed. He quickly collected a handful of the seeds and hid them in his thick bushy hair. When he returned home, he shook the seeds out and planted them. That is how tobacco spread and now everyone in the Sepik grows tobacco.
>
> We Yalaku call tobacco *nyiigwin*. We believe that our term for this plant, whatever Europeans might tell you, is the origin of the name the government has given this country: 'New Guinea'.

Myth 2: the origin of a branch of the Wupa river

(Narrators: Ayam of Yelogu and Mburunggay of Melawei village. Recorded at Melawei, January 1982.)

The following myth was recorded at the Kwoma-speaking village of Melawei in January 1982. It was narrated jointly by Ayam and the Melawei man Mburunggay (Figure 14.1). It tells of the origin of the spring that is the source of one branch of the Wupa River, a major watercourse that flows south through Yalaku country. This spring is the subject of the bark painting by Mburunggay on the far right in Figure 14.1.

Mburunggay (now deceased) was a member of Amachey Keyava clan at Melawei. As indicated earlier (Chapters 3 and 12), this clan traces descent from a man named Mbam,[131] who was originally a member of the Yalaku tribe, but migrated early in the group's history into the Washkuk Hills. There he was incorporated into the Honggwama tribe and became the founding ancestor of Amachey clan. The design in Mburrungay's painting is owned, and copyrighted, by the Keyava totemic division, the totemic group to which Amachey clan belongs. The myth was recorded during one of Ayam's periodic visits to that village to catch up with totemic kin. Among both the Yalaku and the Kwoma, it is common for two (or more) men to tell a story jointly, either a myth or some other aspect of their community's history. They take it in turn to narrate different sections; in this case, each section corresponded roughly to a separate paragraph of the text.

A man finds a deep waterhole filled with fish in the forest

> This is the story of the design in Mburunggay's painting (on the right, Figure 14.1). The design is an ancestral one of Yalaku origin and is named Takwarum (*takwa*, woman). A man went into the forest to search for food. On his way home he came across a large tree that had been blown over in a storm. The hole made when its roots were lifted out of the ground had filled with water and was full of fish. He went home and told his wife about it. He asked if she would take her hand net the following day and catch some of the fish. She agreed, and arranged to take another woman with her.

The two women travel to the pool, and the wife is captured by cannibal spirits

> The following morning the two women set off for the waterhole. When they reached it, they climbed in and began scooping up the fish in their nets. At that time this waterhole was not part of a stream. It was an isolated waterhole that had formed when strong winds uprooted a giant forest tree.[132]
>
> While the women were wading around in the pool, the water level began to rise. When it reached the height of their chests the women became alarmed and made for the bank. One, the companion, managed to climb out. But something caught hold of the other by the leg and dragged her under. When she did not re-emerge her companion, fearing that she had drowned, hurried home. There she told the woman's husband how the water level had inexplicably risen while they were fishing, and that his wife had disappeared below the surface.

131 Pronounced 'mbarm'.

132 The story does not say so explicitly, but everyone listening understands that it was the cannibal spirits living in the underworld below the waterhole that caused it to fill with fish, precisely to lure a woman to it, so that they could capture her and take her down to the underworld to eat.

Figure 14.1 Mburunggay of Melawei village (Honggwama Kwoma) standing beside six bark paintings produced for the author in January 1982. All are now in the Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery. The subjects of the paintings are discussed in Creative Spirits (Bowden 2006).

The missing woman's husband immediately suspected that cannibal spirits living in the underworld beneath the waterhole had captured his wife. If he was to save her, he knew that he would have to act quickly. He beat out a signal on a slit-gong in the local men's house, asking all of the men in the village to meet immediately. After discussing their different options they decided to put together a huge parcel of their choicest foods and offer it to the spirits in exchange for the woman.

They killed a chicken, boiled sago, cooked yams of both the big and small varieties and, together with betel nuts and betel peppers, wrapped the food in a huge palm-spathe holdall. Together, they took the parcel back to the waterhole. One man, the woman's brother, brought an immensely long bamboo pole with him, the type used to dislodge coconuts from the top of a palm. When they reached the pool, they found that the water had not only continued to rise but was now spilling over the edge of the hole and flowing away through the forest. Water continues to flow out of this hole today. This is how a new branch of the Wupa River was created. Previously there was no stream in this section of the forest.

These events occurred when the Yalaku had their main settlement at Walawili (4, Figure 6.1). The people involved were Yalaku living at that settlement.

When the men reached the waterhole, they set the parcel of food on the ground and the woman's brother poked one end of the bamboo pole into the water to see what he could feel. He found that the water was so deep in the middle that he couldn't reach the bottom. While he was probing its depths, others shouted to whatever was beneath the pool that they had come to retrieve the missing woman. They also asked repeatedly where she was. Suddenly a stream of bubbles rose to the surface. Some took this to be a sign that the woman had drowned and that her brother had unwittingly prodded her body, causing it to release air.

Her brother, however, was still hopeful that she was still alive. He was determined to find her. Leaving the bamboo pole protruding from the water he picked two small ball-like *pwadi* fruit off a nearby tree, one bright red and the other green (Figure 14.2). He told the others that he was going to submerge himself in the pool and follow the bamboo pole down into its depths to try to locate his sister. He would take both fruit with him. If he encountered spirits in the underworld at the bottom of the pool and they killed him, both fruit would rise to the surface. But if they did not kill him and he found his sister, he would release the green one and allow that to float to the surface. Having told the others what he was going to do, he waded into the pool and, guided by the bamboo pole, sank down into its depths.

Figure 14.2 Fruit of one of several varieties of pwadi tree, 1978. The mature fruit are the size and colour of small oranges.

The woman's brother descends to the underworld and finds a men's house filled with cannibal spirits

After descending only a short distance, he passed right through the water and found himself in a world identical in appearance to the one above ground. There was dry ground on which to walk, and fresh air to breathe. He was in a village occupied by spirits and ghosts of the dead. A huge men's house was standing nearby. He walked over and stood in its 'eye', the area outside at the front, directly below the projecting ridge pole. Looking inside, he could see that the building was full of powerful-looking men seated on stools. They included many of the spirits who were the ultimate progenitors of the different Yalaku clans, spirits such as Yeratokwiya, Takawus, Mbuluway (see Chapter 3). They were spirits (*masalai*, TP), not humans, though they had human form. They were all lavishly decorated with warrior insignia, such as cuscus-fur headbands and cassowary-pelt helmets.

Looking at the visitor standing outside, the spirits asked why he had come. He replied that he was looking for his sister. They replied, deceitfully, that they had not seen her. Turning to each other, they quietly discussed what they should do: kill their visitor or let him live? Deciding for the moment to let him live, they said that if he doubted what they were saying he was welcome to look around their village.

The man took up their offer. Guided by a large group of village children (Hamson 2011:27), ghosts of dead children, he visited each house in turn and asked the occupants if anyone had seen his sister. They all

denied having any knowledge of her. After walking from one end of the village to the other he returned to the men's house. In fact, the spirits had his sister and fully intended to eat her. They had imprisoned her in a deep hole in the middle of the earth floor in the men's house, and had covered the hole with a large slab of wood cut from the buttress root of a forest tree.

When he returned to the men's house, the spirits asked if he had found his sister. He replied that he had not. They then invited him to take a seat on the slab of wood in the centre of the building. He walked over and sat down. The spirits found the fact that he was sitting directly above his imprisoned sister humorous, and had to cover their mouths to hide their smirks.

The spirits agree to give up the man's sister in exchange for a large parcel of choice foods

The visitor looked at the spirits, one after another. He then informed them that he and the other men in his village had prepared a substantial gift of their choicest foods to give them, if they were holding his sister. The food was at the top of the waterhole and the men waiting there would send it down as soon as the woman was released. The spirits turned to each other and talked in low voices. One then invited their visitor to look underneath the slab of wood on which he was sitting. He stood up, moved the heavy slab to one side and there found his sister. She was crouching, terrified and dirty, at the bottom of hole. The spirits asked if he could see anything. He said he could. In that case, they told him, he should help his sister out. So, the visitor took his sister by the hand and helped her out. Seeing that she was not injured, he took her over to the bottom of the waterhole through which they had both descended into the underworld. There he threw the green *pwadi* fruit up into the water, so it could float to the surface and indicate to those above that he was still alive. He squashed the other one underfoot and kicked the pieces to the side of the men's house. One of the seeds took root and later grew into a *pwadi* tree. He then helped his sister up into the water and told her to use the bamboo pole to guide herself to the surface.

Turning to the assembled group of spirits, who had followed him out of the building, he said that as soon as he reached the upper world he would send the parcel of food down to them. He then climbed into the water and followed the bamboo pole up to the surface. The men waiting up top greeted the brother and sister with shouts of joy.

The man immediately gave the others an account of what he had seen, and how the spirits had agreed to accept the parcel of food in exchange for his sister. Hearing this, they promptly threw the huge parcel into the water and watched it slowly disappear. After doing so, they pulled the long bamboo pole out of the pool and returned home.

Water continues to flow out of this same hole today. The Wupa River is located to the north of the Washkuk Hills, about a day's walk from the Kwoma village of Tongwinjamb (see Figure 1.1). The same spirits still live below this waterhole in the underworld, but no one living today has ever seen them. We have only heard accounts of them in stories such as this one, which our fathers passed down to us.

Myth 3: The origin of a new way of decorating cross-beams in Yalaku men's houses

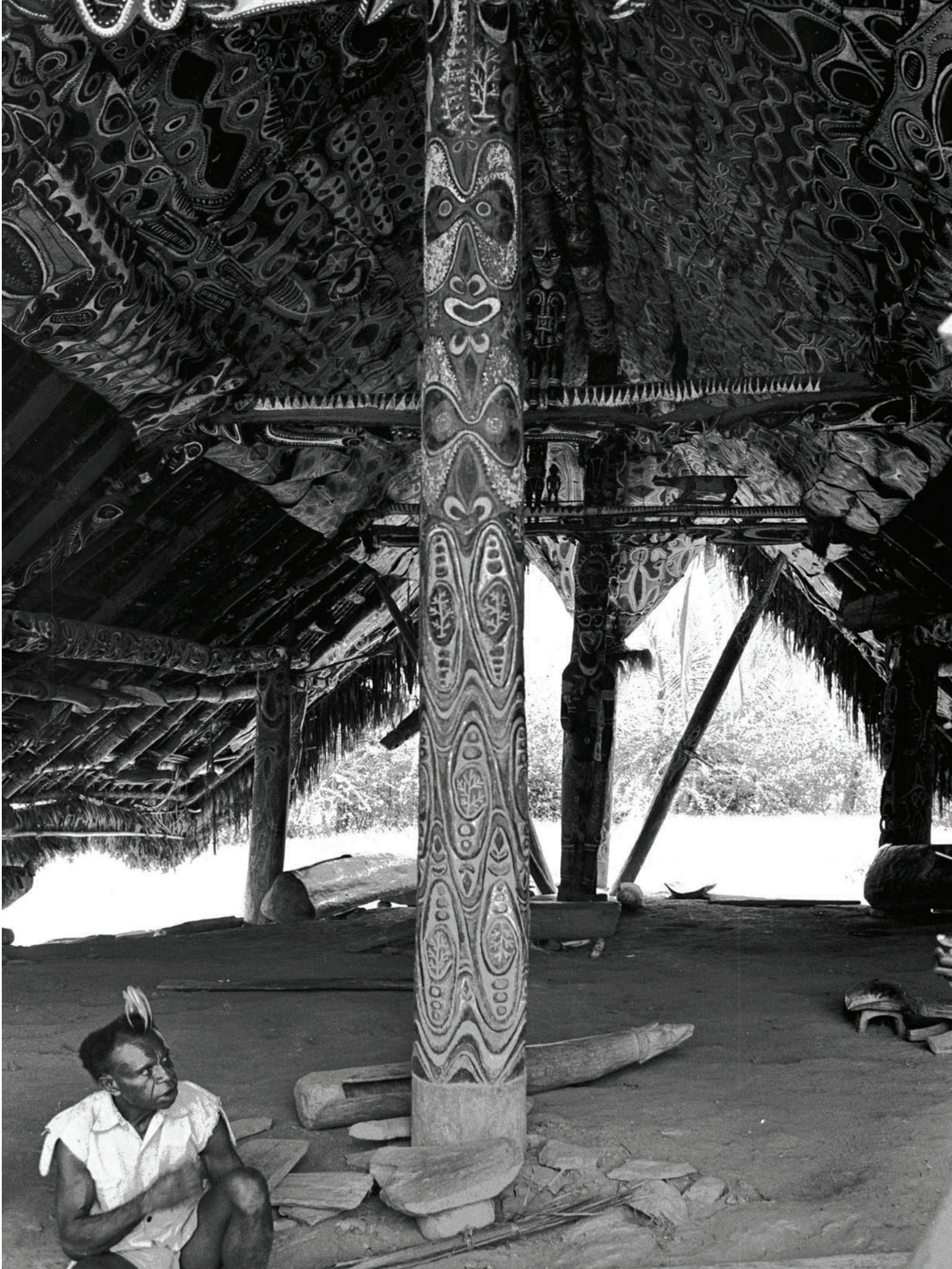
(Narrator: Ayam of Rama clan. Recorded at Yelogu village, 1973.)

The following myth describes the origin of a new style of decorating cross-beams in Yalaku men's houses. As discussed in Chapter 12, it provides an example of the way people see their society as changing in certain ways – in this case through the introduction of a new decorative element in their men's houses. But the change that does occur takes place within the overall structure of their society as laid down by spirits at the beginning of history. Ayam stated that the events described took place not long before first contact with Europeans, when his community was located close to Tongwinjamb at the northern end of the Washkuk Hills. At that time the Tongwinjamb were their community's major Kwoma ally.

A man has a chance encounter in the forest with a hitherto unknown spirit

A man named Kayimeni, who belonged to H2 clan – but not the clan's founding ancestor (*kwul*) of the same name – went hunting and foraging one day with his dog. The dog soon detected and chased down a small pig, which Kayimeni successfully speared. After butchering the animal and wrapping the meat in a palm spathe he set off for home. While he was passing through an area of forest known as Siyapambonggi he reached the stream named Werima, which he had crossed earlier that day without difficulty. Since crossing it, the stream had become swollen with water from heavy rains and it was now too deep, and flowing too swiftly, for him to wade across safely. He decided to search for a tree that had fallen across the stream and

Figure 14.3 View from the front of the interior of the men's house Wayipanal at Bangwis village showing several of its cross-beams, 1978. The man is Wachongg of Nggiley clan, the author's main Kwoma field assistant (see also Bowden 1983a and 2006).



could be used as a bridge. He explored upstream first and then downstream. Eventually he found a substantial log, the remains of an old hardwood *kwila* tree, that had fallen into the river and would make a suitable bridge. It was an ancient log and only the core of its trunk remained. The sap-wood and branches had all long ago rotted away.[133] It was lying on the surface of the water. Kayimeni thought it odd that although he had hunted in this part of the forest many times before he had never seen this particular log, and wondered how it came to be there. The log was actually a spirit that had just emerged from the underworld at the bottom the stream.[134]

Kayimeni's dog crossed the bridge first. He then followed with the load of pork on his shoulder. While he was crossing it, the log began to vibrate vigorously and almost threw him into the water. It was as if it was being shaken by a powerful earthquake. When he reached the other side, he turned around and found to his astonishment that the log was alive and had rolled over to reveal a brilliantly colourful human-like face on its underside. He realized immediately that the bridge was a spirit and that he had unwittingly walked across its undecorated back. The spirit had vibrated to attract his attention.

The spirit spoke to him and revealed its name: Hasakwa Kalawunyi. Kayimeni was immensely impressed by the unusual and highly distinctive form of the spirit's face. He asked Hasakwa whether, if he and some other the other men from his village returned the following day, and brought a substantial quantity of their choicest foods to give him, he would agree to remaining face-up long enough for them to sketch copies of his face. Kayimeni said he was keen to incorporate the form of his face into a new design on cross-beams in his men's house. The spirit agreed. It then rolled back into its original position and disappeared into the depths of the stream.

Kayimeni and a group of his co-villagers copy the distinctive form of the spirit's face

When Kayimeni arrived home he immediately told the other men about the spirit he had encountered, and that it had agreed to them making copies of its very distinctive face. They all set about preparing the food they needed to give it in exchange.

At first light the following morning, Kayimeni and a large group of other Yalaku men went back to the river with the parcel of food. They took with them slabs of flattened sago-palm bark, on which they could sketch, together with lumps of charcoal and coloured pigment.

When they arrived the bridge was nowhere to be seen. Kayimeni therefore called to Hasakwa and asked him to rise to the surface. The huge log slowly emerged from the water's depths, like a giant crocodile surfacing. The ground shook as it did so. Kayimeni then requested that it roll over. The spirit complied. The men then quickly set about making copies of the highly distinctive form of its face. When they had finished sketching it, they threw the parcel of food into the stream. The spirit rolled over, hiding its face once again, and disappeared below the surface. There, in the depths of the water, it consumed the food the men had given it. That is the end of the story

133 The is an obvious metaphor for the antiquity of the spirit itself.

134 The myth does not say so explicitly, but the clear implication is that the spirit emerged from the underworld to reveal itself to Kayimeni. The myth also clearly implies that it was this spirit that caused the heavy rains to fall and swell the river to force Kayimeni to go in search of a bridge, and hence find him.

Figure 14.4 View of the front of a Kwoma men's house at Tongwinjamb village with a cross-beam behind the front centre post, 2006. David Kayipok of Tongwinjamb is on the left.

The design is incorporated into the architecture of Yalaku men's houses

After telling this story, Ayam added that designs based on the very distinctive form of this spirit's face were first used to decorate cross-beams in Yalaku men's houses when his paternal grandfather was alive, in the second half of the nineteenth century. These cross-beams were similar in length and width to the log bridge Kayimeni had found. As in Kwoma men's houses, cross-beams are not structural elements, as undecorated buildings lack them.

When the first men's house to be decorated with designs based on Hasakwa's appearance was formally opened, people from all of the surrounding tribes participated in the ceremony. The visitors included other Kaunga, as well as Apukili and Kwoma. According to Ayam, the visitors were so impressed by the new design that they all subsequently asked permission to incorporate it into the decorations in their own buildings. In time, the Yalaku agreed and the design eventually spread to all of the neighbouring tribes and language groups.

The first Yalaku men's house to be decorated with designs based on the form of this spirit's face was the one named Apokolesa. This stood at the settlement at Mbalay (10, Figure 6.1).[135]

135 Many Yalaku and other Sepik proper names have translatable meanings, of which several examples have been given. People emphasize, however, that these are not necessarily relevant to their use in particular contexts, and indeed might be completely irrelevant. Many Yalaku proper names, furthermore, appear to be of Kwoma, or possibly Kwanga, origin. The men's house name 'Apokolesa' is a case in point. This is a traditional Yalaku name for men's houses owned by the Keyava totemic division. In Kaunga it has no translatable meaning, but in Kwoma it literally means 'looking for a father' or 'orphaned' (Kwoma: *apoko*, father; *lesa*, look for, search). Ayam acknowledged that its literal meaning in Kwoma makes it humorous. But he also said that its origin was not known and its meaning in Kwoma was not relevant to its use as a name for Yalaku men's houses. The Yalaku equivalent of the name, he said, would be 'Nyapahoko' (*nyapa*, father). The TP equivalent would be '*lukautim papa*'. In TP, '*lukautim*' means both 'look for' and 'look after' (something).

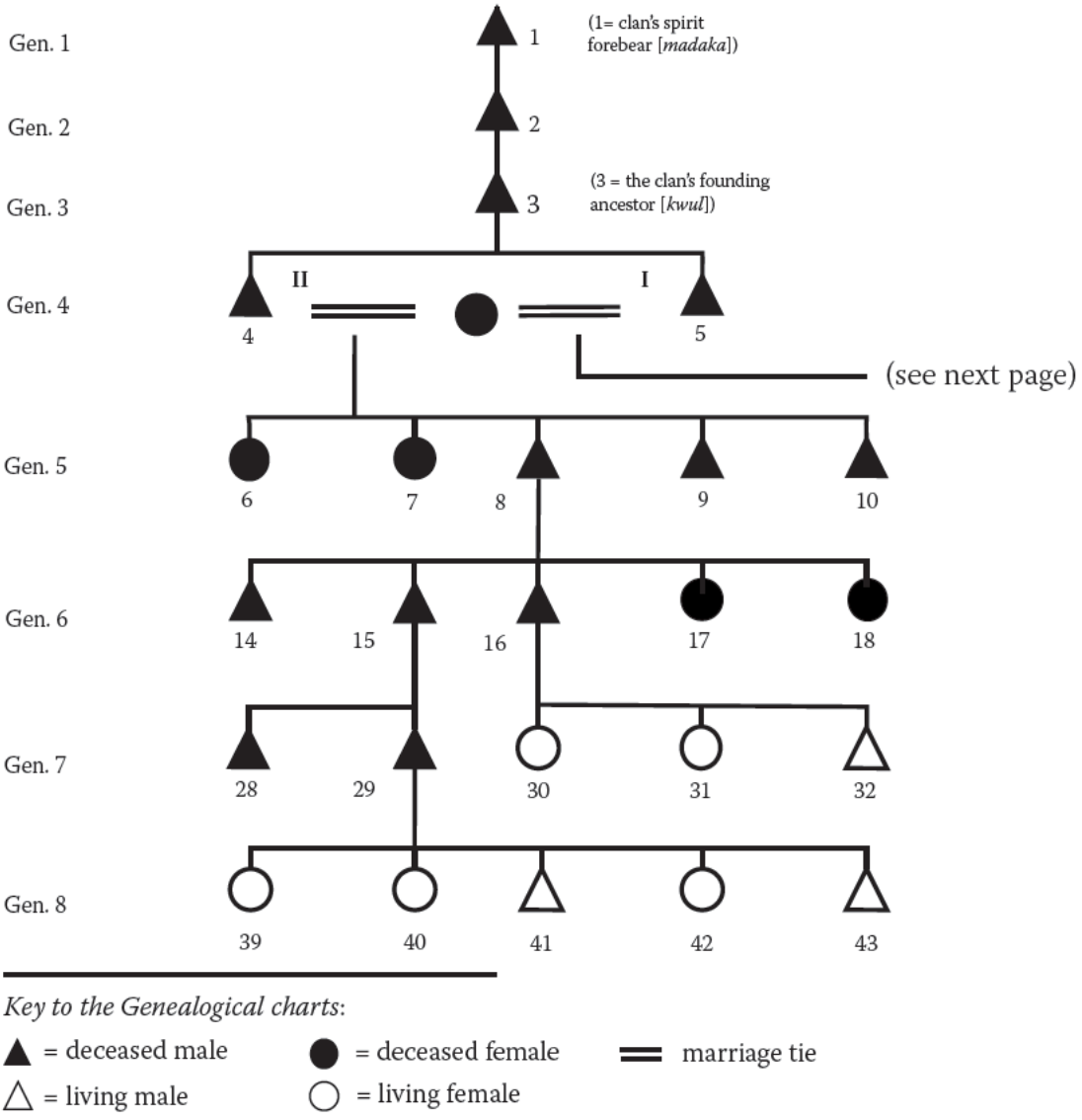
Figure 14.5 Detail of the cross-beam in the Tongwinjamb men's house shown in Figure 14.4, 2006.

APPENDIX A

Genealogical charts

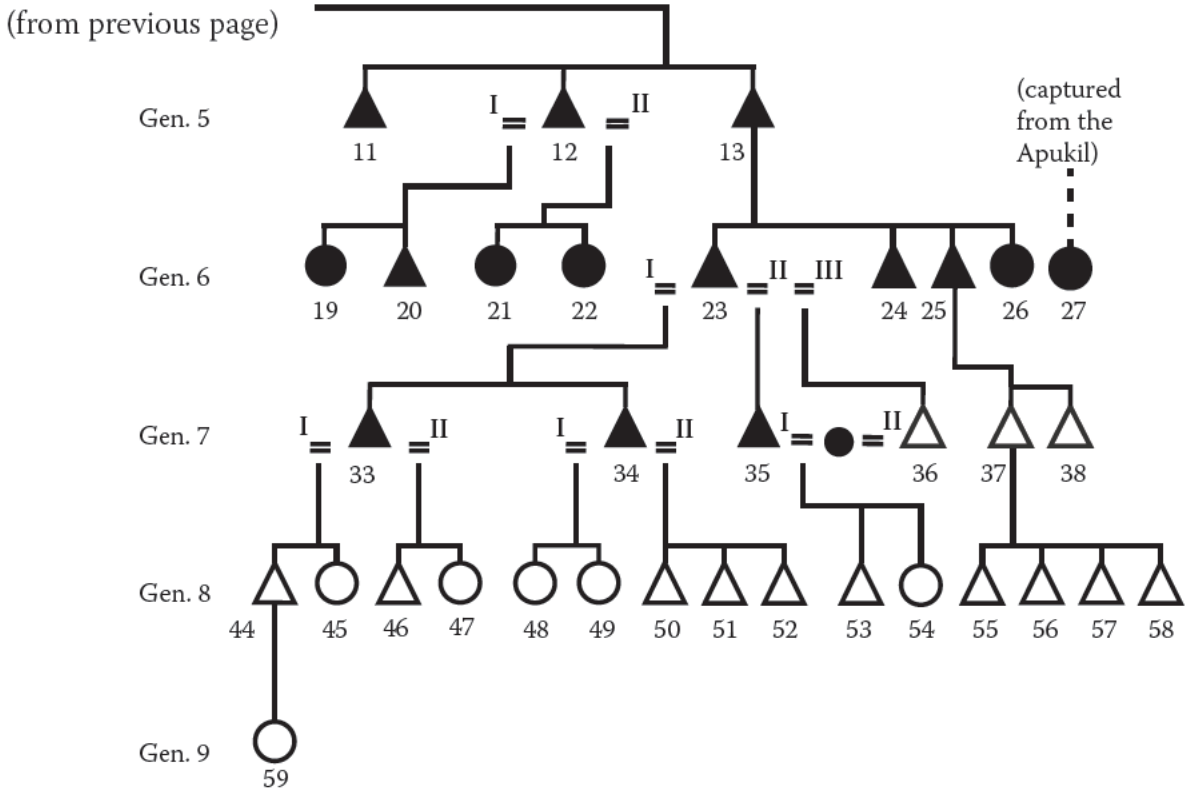
Genealogical chart 1

Rama clan (part 1)



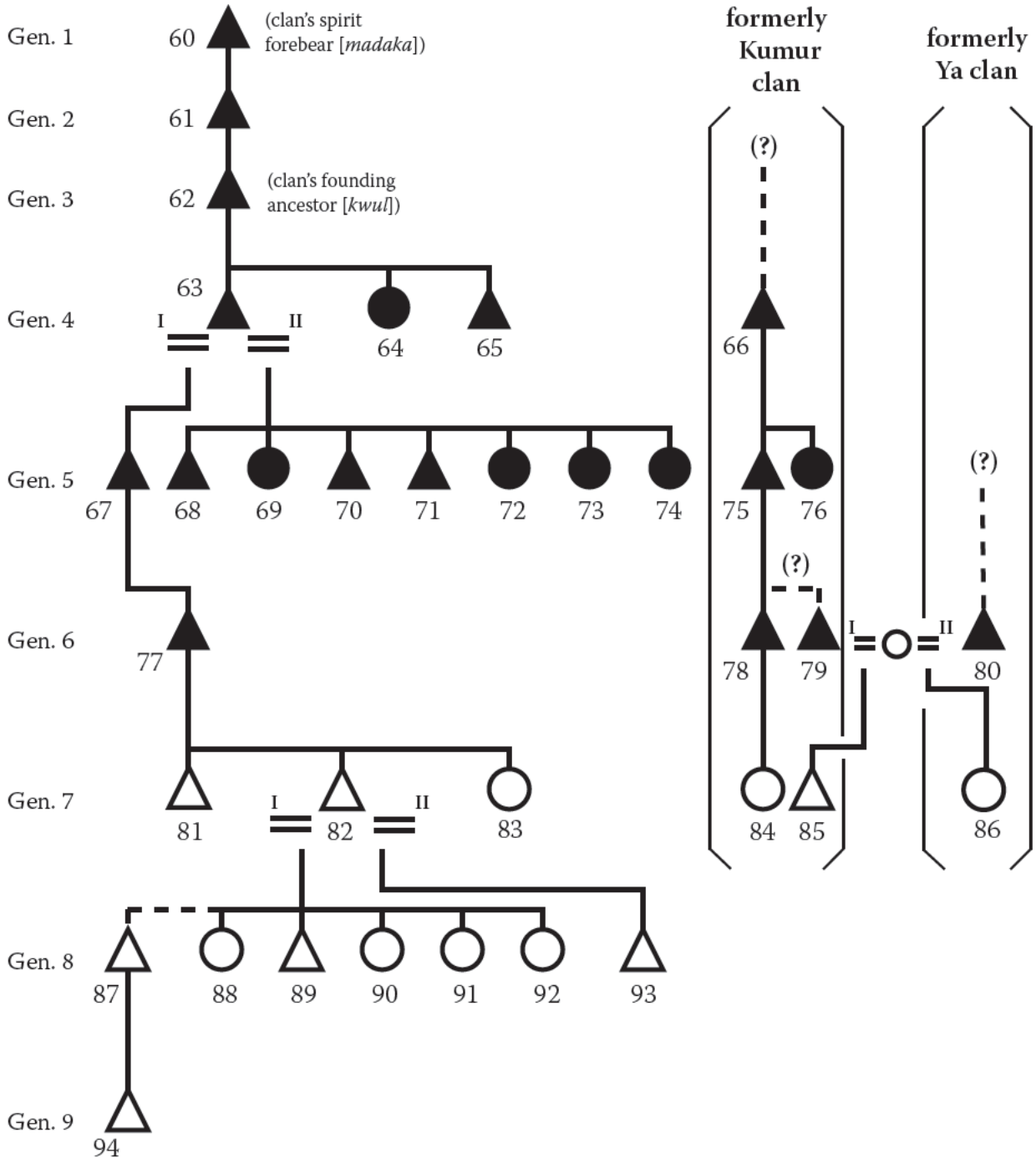
Siblings are represented according to relative age, the oldest to the left. Where known, full and half-siblings are distinguished. A **dotted vertical line** indicates adoption. A **question mark** next to a dotted line indicates that the genealogical connection is not known. **Arabic numerals** refer to Appendix B, where clan members are numbered and named. **Roman numerals** indicate the chronological order of the spouse. Hence the man numbered 4 was his wife's second husband and the man numbered 5 (4's younger full brother) the same woman's first husband.

Rama clan (part 2)



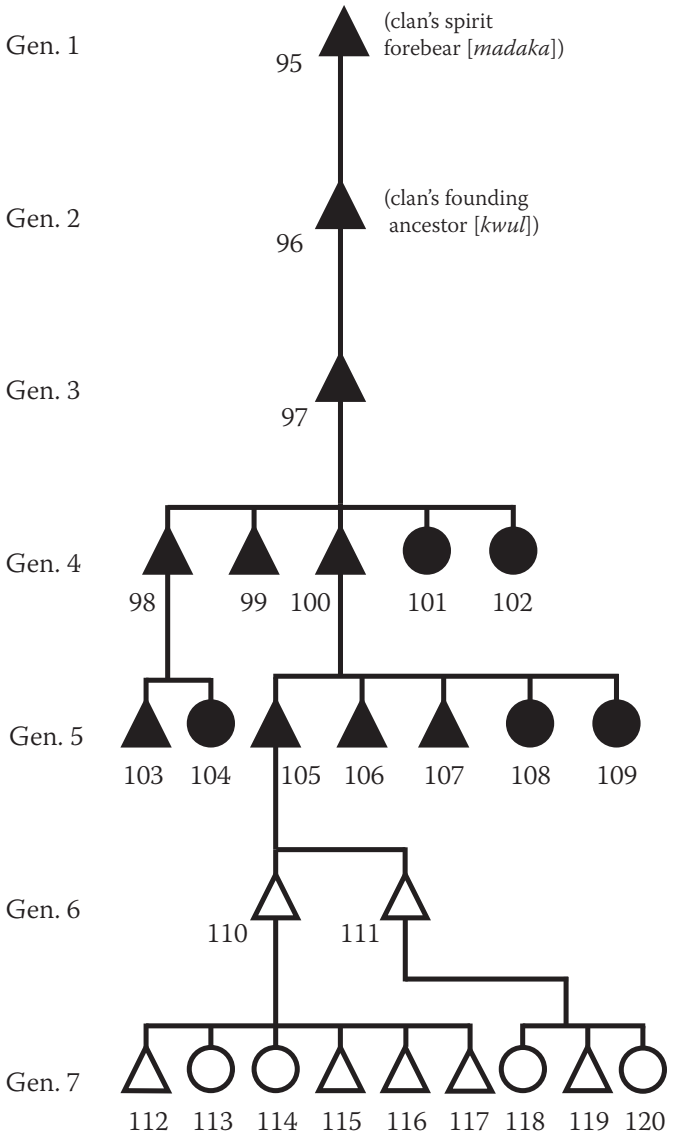
Genealogical chart 2

Yalaku Keyava clan

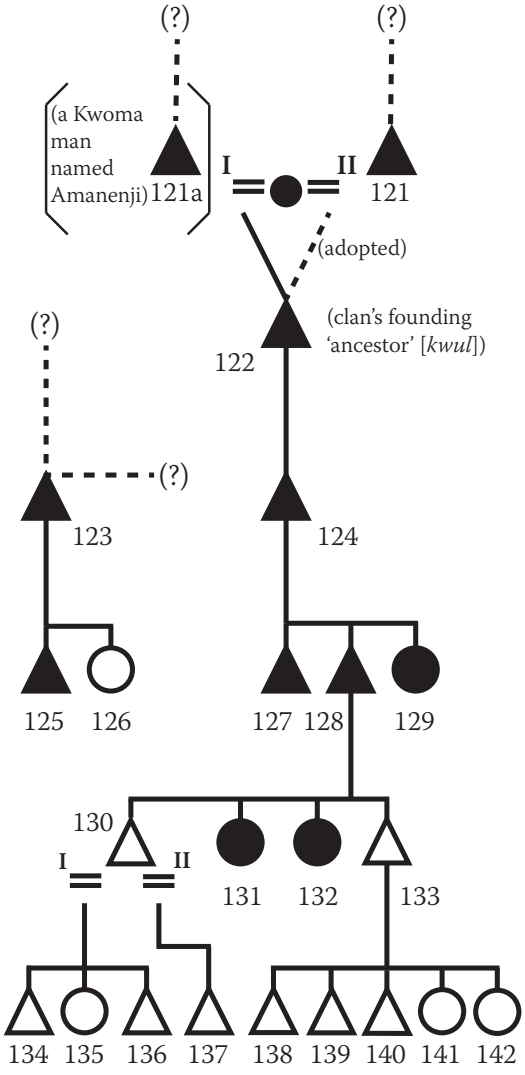


Genealogical charts 3 and 4

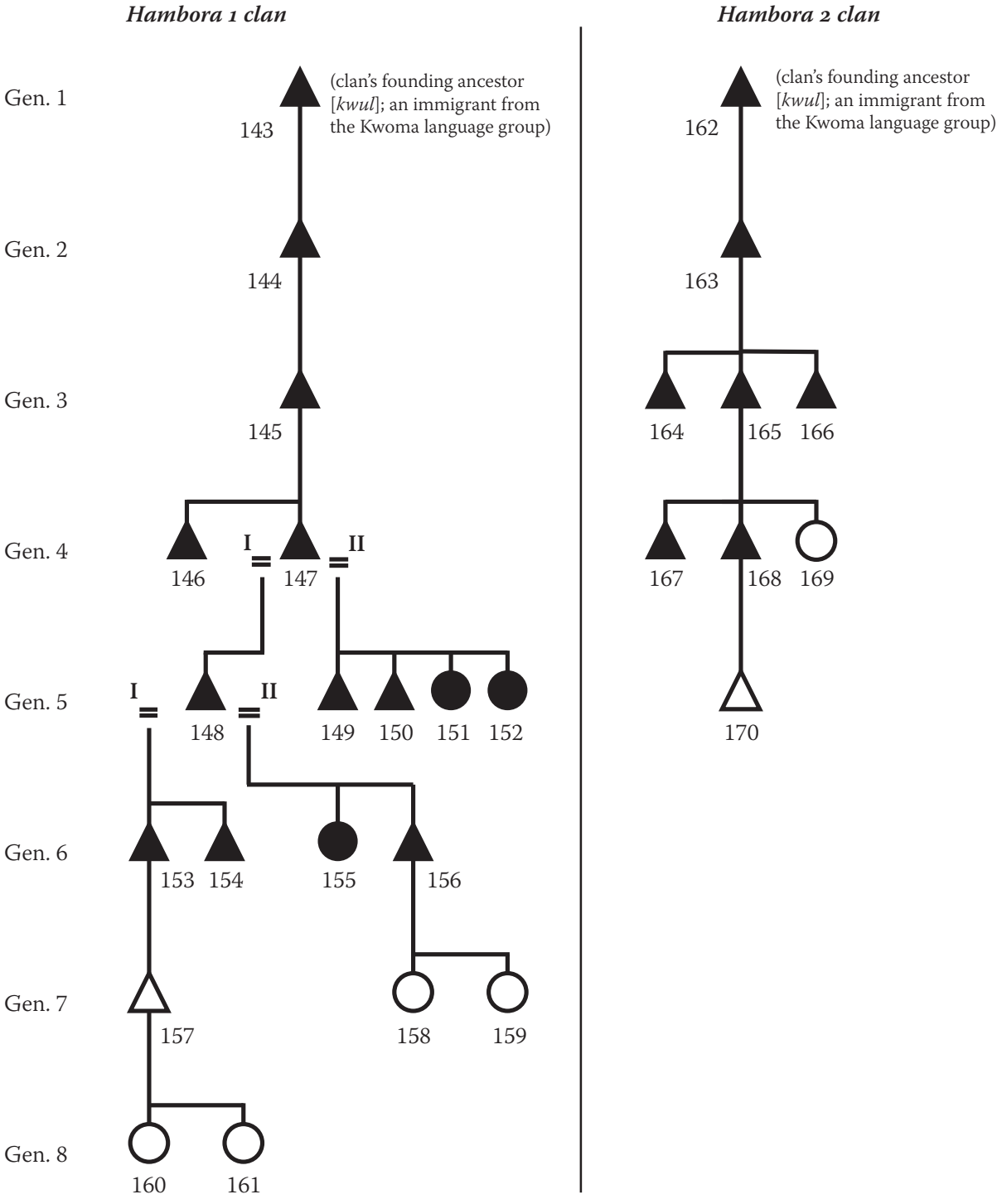
Yombu Nyininggu 1 clan



Yombu Nyininggu 2 clan



Genealogical charts 5 and 6



APPENDIX B

Index to the genealogical charts

Abbreviations
md = male deceased;
ml = male living;
fd = female deceased;
fl = female living;
aet. = the estimated age of the person in 1973.
YK = Yalaku Keyava clan;
YN1 = Yombu Nyininggu 1 clan;
YN2 = Yombu Nyininggu 2 clan;
H1 = Hambora 1 clan;
H2 = Hambora 2 clan.

Clan 1: Rama (a member of the Keyava totemic division)

Generation 1

1. Waspen (md). Chthonian spirit forebear (*madaka*) of Rama clan.

Generation 2

2. Muliyen (md). The first human, as distinct from spirit, forebear of the clan (also termed '*madaka*').

Generation 3

3. Nyakaw (md). The '*kwul*' or founding ancestor of Rama clan.

Generation 4

4. Nansukiira (md). Second husband of Wanjiisow (fd) of the Apukili tribe; with her had the children numbered 6-10.
5. Hopuyaw (md). First husband of Wanjiisow (fd); with her had the children 11–13. When Hopuyaw died Wanjiisow married his older brother Nansukiira (4).

Generation 5

6. Wanggasiimba (fd). Husband Teyikwal (63), YK clan.
7. Tawi (fd).
8. Kayipanggu Yepiyuwi (md). Killed in warfare with the Sawos-speaking Mowi (see Chapter 7).
9. Kambar (md).
10. Mburunggay (md).
11. Muwik Wapik Waspen (md).
12. Woranggen (md). Killed in warfare with the Sawos-speaking Mowi (see Chapter 7).
    First wife Nambakaya (fd), tribe of origin not identified; with her had the two children 19 and 20.
    Second wife Yuwinala (fd) of the Yalaku tribe. With her had the two daughters 21 and 22.
13. Hapewi (md).

Generation 6

14. Nyakay (md).
15. Manggimal (md). Married to Manggimonggo (fd) of the Honggwama Kwoma tribe, Manggiir Hamikwa clan (Washkuk village).
16. Mbaranyamba (md).
    First wife Nokway, a Kwoma woman and member of Honggwama tribe's Wapiyupu Keyava clan, Melawei village. She was killed shortly after she married during warfare with the Nowiniyen tribe.
    Second wife Apokwala (fl); like Mbaranyamba's first wife, Apokwala was a Kwoma woman and member of Wapiyupu clan. Apokwala's kinsmen gave her to Mbaranyamba as a substitute wife following his first wife's premature death. Apokwala and Mbaranyamba (655) had two daughters (664 and 665). When Mbaranyamba died his widow Apokwala, still living at Yelogu in 1973, decided not to remarry but stay with her young children under the care of Mbaranyamba's clan 'son' Ayam (36). She and her children remained in the house they had shared with her deceased husband (Household 1, House 1a; see Chapter 2). As members of Ayam's extended household, Apokwala and her two unmarried children (31 and 32) lived off the resources he controlled. Ayam referred to Apokwala as 'mother' (i.e. the wife of a clan 'father'). In 1973, Apokwala's oldest child, a married daughter named Niikiiriikay (30), was living at Yelogu as a member of Household 3.
17. Yepimangga (fd).
18. Niikiiriikay (fd).
19. Tiimbiimay (fd). Married to Kapakeli (128) of YN2 clan, Yelogu, and with him had Kiriyas (130) and Kapay (131), two of Yelogu's senior men in 1973.
20. Yuwiyaku (md). Married to a woman named Apakiipiika (fd); with her had two children but no living descendants.
21. Siindiimbay (fd).
22. Nambakaya (fd).
23. Waspen (md).
    First wife Manjimelo (fd) of YK clan. (Her genealogical position is not known.)
    Second wife Yepimangga (fd; 104) of YN1 clan.
    Third wife Woyenduway (fd; 108) of YN1 clan. With Waspen had the child Ayam (36), the main source of information in this book. Woyenduway, a Yalaku woman, was first married to Somboyap of the Kwoma-speaking Awokapa Nggiley tribe. The Yalaku killed Somboyap during intertribal fighting (see Chapter 9). Following her husband's death Woyenduway returned to her natal community and married Waspen.
24. Liikiimbay (md). Married with children but no surviving descendants.
25. Nyawuraman (md). Married to Kwaruk (fl. 126) of YN2 clan (living; see Household 2).
26. Siilumu (fd).

27. Apochey (fd). As indicated in Chapter 4, this woman was captured as a child from the Apukili tribe during warfare and raised by her Rama clan captors as a member of their clan.
    First husband Mesipoko (165) of H2 clan, with whom she had Hopokos (169). Following Mesipoko's death she married Apwi (153) of H1 clan.

Generation 7

28. Nggayimes (md).
29. Wanenggwa (md). Married to Hopokos (fl; 169) of H2 clan, Yelogu; with her had the children 39–43.
30. Niikiiriikay (fl; aet. 30).
    First husband Kuriyanjaw (85) of YK clan. The two married in the 1960s, but Niikiiriikay divorced him when he left for Rabaul and never returned.
    Second husband Haraw (44), a member of her own clan (see Chapter 4).
31. Siingganiimba (fl; aet. 15).
32. Yatuk (ml; aet. 10).
33. Kiyanombo (md).
    First wife Manuwiya (83) of YK clan.
    Second wife Siisuk (fl), Siisuk, was one of two young women that a combined Yalaku and Bangwis village war-party captured during warfare in the 1940s when they killed her then husband, Pakiya of the Apukili tribe (see Chapter 10).
34. Siiriinjuwi (md).
    First wife Yowusaman (fl; clan of origin not known). Following Siiriinjuwi's death Yowusaman remarried into the Tongwinjamb Kwoma tribe where she was still living in 1973. With Siiriinjuwi she had the two daughters Hekilap (48) and Nambakaya (49).
    Second wife Yowembwiya (fl). Yowembwiya derived from the now defunct Kwoma-speaking Awokapa Nggiley tribe. Yowembwiya and Siiriinjuwi had three sons (50–52). Following her husband's death she married Ayam (36) leviratically.
35. Yuwiyaku (md). Wife Nerikiira (fd) of the Awokapa Nggiley tribe. Their children: 53 and 54.
36. Ayam (ml; aet. 40). Ayam had been married four times; in 1973 he had two wives.
    First wife Wapiyalum (fl; 84) of YK clan. Each was the other's first spouse. Ayam reported that this marriage ended soon after it commenced due to 'incompatibility'. Wapiyalum subsequently married a Honggwama Kwoma man, Wana of Yanggaraka clan, to whom she was still married in 1973.
    Second wife Nerikiira (fd). Nerikiira was one of the few surviving members of the defunct Kwoma-speaking Awokapa tribe. She had previously been married to one of Ayam's clan 'elder brothers' (*omo*), Yuwiyaku (35), an actual paternal half-brother. (Yuwiyaku and Ayam were sons of their father's second and third wives respectively.) Yuwiyaku had two children with Nerikiira (53 and 54). Ayam adopted these children when he married Nerikiira leviratically following Yuwiyaku's death.
    Third wife Yowembwiya (fl), the first of his two current wives in 1973. Ayam married Yowembwiya leviratically following the death of her previous husband, one of Ayam's elder half-brothers: Siiriinjuwi (34). Ayam was Yowebwiya's sixth husband. She was a natal member of the now defunct Kwoma-speaking Awokapa tribe. Her first husband was an Awokapa man named Ndowapa (see Chapter 10). Her second and third husbands were both Apukili men. The third was killed in warfare with the Yalaku (see Chapter 10). Her fourth husband, the Yalaku man Apwi (153), died soon after the marriage took place. Her fifth was the Rama clan man Siiriinjuwi (34), with whom she had three sons (50–52). Siiriinjuwi was one of killers of her third husband (see Chapter 10). When Siiriinjuwi died, Yowembwiya chose not to marry into another clan so that she could stay with her three young children, and married Ayam leviratically; he became the children's legal father (see Chapter 2, Household 1). Ayam's fourth wife chronologically, and the second of his two current wives in 1973, was Hopokos (169) of H2 clan (see Chapter 3). Hopokos was previously married to Ayam's clan 'eB' Wanenggwa (29). Wanenggwa and Hopokos were each other's first spouses. The two had five children (39–43). When Wanenggwa died Hopokos indicated that she wished to stay with her young children, rather than marry into another clan or tribe, and married Ayam leviratically. Through his marriage, Ayam became the legal father of the children. In 1973 three of these five children formed part of Ayam's household (40, 42 and 43). The other two (39 and 41) were living at Yelogu under the care of one of Ayam's terminological 'sisters', Awomay (173), married to Ambareka (82) of YK clan. (See the entry under Ambareka below for an account of Ayam's relationship to this woman.)
37. Ayambaminja Waspen (ml; aet. 40).
    First wife Maparakwa (fd; 131) of YN2 clan.
    Second wife Apochey (fl; 158) of H1 clan.
38. Liikiimbay Yapayeka (ml; aet. 20). Not married.

Generation 8

39. Yimbiika (fl; aet. 10). Not married. Lives as part of Household 13; see entry under Ayam (36) above.
40. Wanggasiiba (fl; aet. 8). Not married. Lives with Ayam, Household 1.
41. Nyakawi (ml; aet. 5). Not married. Lives as part of Household 13; see entry under Ayam (36) above.
42. Menjuwar (fl; aet. 2). Not married. Lives with Ayam, Household 1.
43. Nowunanggamba (ml; aet. 1). Not married. Lives with Ayam, Household 1.
44. Haraw (ml; aet. 35). Married to Niikiiriikay (30) of the same clan. This was the only intra-clan, and 'wrong', marriage at Yelogu in 1973 (see Chapter 4).
45. Kwariyangg (fl; aet. 30). Married to Michael Kisala Wopureka (111) of YN1 clan, Yelogu.
46. Honjin (ml; aet. 15). Not married.
47. Siilumu (fl; aet. 10). Not married.
48. Hekilap (fl; aet. 30). Married to Womadu (157) of H1 clan.
49. Nambakaya (fl; aet. 26). Married to Sor (170) of H2 clan.
50. Kiriyas (ml; aet. 12). Not married.
51. Siimala (ml; aet. 10). Not married.
52. Wayananggi (ml; aet. 6). Not married.

53. Tusiiwiil (ml; aet. 6). Not married.
54. Yepimangga (fl; aet. 10). Not married.
55. Woyipa Wuriye (ml; aet. 15). Not married.
56. Yuwiyaku (ml; aet. 13). Not married.
57. Hasawa (ml; aet. 10). Not married.
58. Pakiya (ml; aet. 6). Not married.

Generation 9

59. Hangguniiba (fl; aet. 3). Not married.

Clan 2: Yalaku Keyava (a member of the Keyava totemic division)

This clan is also known as 'Asakwa Keyava'. *Asakwa* is a type of yam. The Yalaku people said they had no idea why the clan had this name, as it implied that its spirit forebear had emerged from a yam tuber. Their spirit forebear, they said, was in fact one of many supernatural beings that emerged from a *garamut* tree (see Chapter 3).

Generation 1

60. Mbuluway (md). Mbuluway was a 'spirit' (*wari*) who emerged from a *garamut* (*nya'aba*) tree, the clan's principal totem.

Generation 2

61. Woyamaka (md). The clan's first 'human' (*du*) ancestor (*madaka*) – as distinct from a spirit forebear.

Generation 3

62. Hikisaw (md). The clan's founding ancestor (*kwul*); see Chapter 3.

Generation 4

63. Teyikwal (md).
    First wife Wanggasiimba (6) of Rama clan. Their son Yuwayembi (67).
    Second wife Yeniiku (fd; Wurambanj Kwoma tribe?); with her had the children 68–74.
64. Kiirawaniimbiira (fd).
65. Yuwayembi (md)
66. Kayiniir (md). This man was the founding ancestor of a separate Yalaku clan named Kumur. This group eventually declined in size to the point where, by 1973, it had no surviving male members and its two surviving female members had been incorporated into this clan: Yalaku Keyava. According to Yalaku tradition (see Chapter 3), Kayiniir arrived from an unknown place of origin at the Yalaku's main tribal settlement of the day, Walaminjuwi, and at the invitation of its leaders remained with the community.

Generation 5

67. Yuwayembi (md). Wife Kayimaka of Kiyech Keyava clan, Tongwinjamb (Kwoma) tribe.
68. Yakwandu (md). No issue.
69. Siikiilandi (fd). Married into the now defunct Awokapa Nggiley tribe (see Chapter 9).
70. Kasakawanyi (md; no issue).
71. Kisala (md). No issue.
72. Kiirawaniimbiira (fd).
73. Manggusa (fd).
74. Tiimwiyaniimba (fd).
75. Kisala Piyanombok (md).
    Wife Hoporeka (129) of YN2 clan.
76. Asamel (fd).
    First husband (*c*.1880) Minggilaw of Yanggaraka clan, Honggwama Kwoma tribe.
    Second husband Nokuwar Kulambu of Nowil clan, Honggwama Kwoma.

Generation 6

77. Sumunyi (md). Married to a Honggwama Kwoma woman whose name was not recorded.
78. Tawurendu (md).
    Wife Kiirangga (fd); clan of origin not known. With her had daughter Wapiyalum (84).
    Tawurendu, along with his clan 'brother' Kiiriimel (79) and the latter's son Kuriyanjaw (85) were the last male members of Kumur clan. When Tawurendu and Kiiriimel died, and Kuriyanjaw permanently left the Yalaku community in the 1960s to live and work at Rabaul on the island of New Britain (PNG), the clan became defunct and its only surviving female member (84) was absorbed into YK clan. The limited genealogical data I collected on this clan is included in Genealogical chart 2.
79. Kiiriimel (md).
    Wife Hoporeka (fl), Honggwama Kwoma tribe (Tokimba clan). (For more on Hoporeka's marital history see the following entry on Kapeli.)
80. Kapeli (md).
    Wife Hoporeka (fl), Honggwama Kwoma tribe (Tokimba clan). Hoporeka was previously married to Kiiriimel (79) of the now defunct Kumur clan. Kapeli was Hoporeka's third husband. Her first was a Honggwama Kwoma man of Nokwasamba Wanyi clan. When her second husband, Kiiriimel, died she married Kapeli with whom she had the daughter Monggowur (86). When Kapeli, died Hoporeka decided not to remarry, but having no adult son with whom she could live moved to the house of her daughter's Yalaku husband, Ukwaya (110; see Chapter 2, Household 6).
    Kapeli was the last remaining male member of the Yalaku clan named Ya ('Fire'). When he died his daughter, Monggowur (86), was absorbed into YK clan; Kapeli is included in Genealogical chart 2 along with his (living) daughter.

Generation 7

81. Mundik (ml; aet. 65). ('Mundik' is an abbreviation of 'Mundiiyiki'.) This man, although still alive in 1973, was not counted as a member of his natal clan or tribe and was omitted from his clan's genealogy (see Chapter 3), even though the man who narrated it, Yuwayembi (87), was his actual brother's (adopted) son. In 1973 Mundik was living at the Kwoma-speaking village of Melawei (Honggwama tribe). He had been living with the Honggwama since the 1930s. In 1936, Mundik killed his Yalaku wife (name not recorded) in a fit of rage; to escape being killed in retaliation by her clansmen he fled for protection to the Honggwama tribe. This was when the American anthropologists John Whiting and Stephen Reed were

doing fieldwork in the same community, where they met and photographed him (see Whiting 1941:144, 213, and photographs between pages 168 and 169). When the Honggwama discovered what Mundik had done, they decided to kill him rather than give him refuge. In preparation for this, they bound him hand and foot and put him in an empty house. Mundik managed to untie his feet and sought protection from Whiting and Reed. Whiting photographed him with his hands still bound. In 1973, Bangwis people stated that when Whiting and Reed became aware of Mundik's presence in their community, the men preparing to kill him feared that if they carried out their plan the two Americans would report them to the authorities at Ambunti, and the killers would be arrested and hanged. They therefore reluctantly freed Mundik and allowed him to remain in their community. He later married a Honggwama woman with whom he had a daughter.

82. Ambareka (ml; aet. 55).
First wife Hamikiipiika (fl), a Honggwama Kwoma woman of Kwowembi Wanyi clan, Washkuk village.
Second wife Awomay (fl; 173) of Korembikow clan, a now defunct Yalaku clan with no surviving male members.
In 1973, atypically for residence patterns in this region, Ambareka and his second wife Awomay were fostering two children belonging to another clan, notably two of Ayam's (36) adopted children (39 and 41). These children moved to Ambareka's house, with Ayam's agreement, when their father, Wanenggwa (29), died. They did so at the invitation of Ambareka's wife Awomay, one of Waneggwa's terminological 'sisters'. Awomay was a natal member of Korembikow clan but when the last male member of that clan died she invited Wanenggwa, the father of the two children, to become the 'brother' who would 'look after' her throughout her married life, an offer he accepted. When Wanenggwa died his widow Hopokos (169), the mother of the two children in question, married Wanenggwa's clan 'younger brother' Ayam (see Chapter 2, Household 1). By marrying Hopokos, Ayam became the adoptive father of all of the children she had had with Wanenggwa. In the normal course of events they would have become resident members of his household. But Ayam's was already a large family and Ambareka, at Awomay's suggestion, offered to take care of two of them. This was the only case I recorded among either the Yalaku or the neighbouring Kwoma of children being fostered by people belonging to another clan, in their case by a paternal aunt ('FZ') and her husband (see Bowden 1977:26–30).

83. Manuwiya (fl; aet. 70).
Formerly married to Kiyanombo (33) of Rama clam. Following her husband's death she chose not to remarry and in 1973 was living as part of Household 4 with her married son Haraw (44) of Rama clan.

84. Wapiyalum (fl.; aet. 50).
First husband Ayam of Rama clan, but divorced due to incompatibility.
Currently (1973) married to Wana of Yanggaraka clan, Bangwis village.

85. Kuriyajaw (ml; aet. 48).
Formerly married to Niikiiriikay (30) of Rama clan, but abandoned her when he left Yelogu in the 1960s to live and work at Rabaul (New Britain). He never returned to Yelogu. (He reportedly died at Rabaul in the 1980s.) By 1973 the Yalaku people no longer considered him a member of their community His name is based on the TP term for the Crowned pigeon: *guria* (= 'Kuriya…).

86. Monggowur (fl; aet. 40).
Married to Ukwaya (110) of YN1 clan. This woman was the daughter of Kapeli (md; 80) of the now defunct clan named Ya ('Fire') and his wife Hoporeka (fl; aet. 65), a Honggwama Kwoma woman of Tokimba clan, Bangwis village. Kapeli, was the last male member of his clan and when he died Monggowur was incorporated into YK clan.

Generation 8

87. Yuwayembi (ml; aet. 30).
Married to Siipwas (159) of H1 clan. This man was the actual firstborn son of Kiriyas (130) of YN2 clan but was given by Kiriyas (according to his own account) 'out of friendship' for Ambareka (82) of YK clan, whose clan Kiriyas feared might die out. At the time, Ambareka was his clan's only male member. Ambareka had a living older brother, Mundik (81), but the latter had permanently left the Yalaku community many years earlier after killing his wife in a fit of rage (see the notes above under Mundik's name). Ambareka gave Yuwayembi his name, one of his clan's traditional men's names, to symbolize his incorporation into this group. His son nevertheless retained his two birth names: Liikiimba Yiipiira. The last derives from the term for the *tulip* (*Gnetum gnemon*) tree, *yiipiira*, one of the totems owned by his natal clan. The tree has paired (and edible) leaves, hence its name in TP: '*tu* + *lip*', literally 'two', i.e. paired, 'leaves' (*lip*).

88. Handaniimba (fl.: aet. 26).
Married to the Kwoma man Hamki Kiiwas of Hipo Hamikwa clan, Bangwis village.

89. Kapakeli (ml; aet. 18). Not married.

90. Kayimaka (fl; aet. 15). Not married.

91. Monggisaniip (fl; aet. 11). Not married.

92. Sambamanu (fl; aet. 8). Not married.

93. Wanyinggi (ml; aet. 10). This boy was the actual son of Membangg (168) of H2 clan, but was adopted and 'paid for' with shell valuables by Ambareka (82) of YK clan, his adoptive father, when Ambareka married Awomay (173), Membangg's widow (see also Chapter 2, Household 13).

Generation 9

94. Nomokela (fl; aet. 6). Not married.

Clan 3: Yombu Nyininggu 1 clan (a member of the Keyava totemic division)

Generation 1

95. Kisala (md). The spirit forebear of this clan was one of many spirits that Waspen (1), the chthonian forebear of Rama clan,

released from a *garamut* tree when he fortuitously overheard them singing inside it (see Chapter 3).

Generation 2

96. Changg (md). This man is the clan's founding ancestor (*kwul*).

Generation 3

97. Asanembii (md). 'Asanembii' is a traditional Yalaku name but is possibly of Kwoma origin linguistically. In Kwoma it literally means 'dog's hair' (*asa*, dog; *nebii*, hair, fur).

Generation 4

98. Aposow (md).
99. Towapa (md).
100. Kalawen (md).
101. Nomakela (fd).
102. Panggiyen (fd).

Generation 5

103. Waramusa (md).
104. Yepimangga (fd). Second wife of Waspen (23) of Rama clan.
105. Asanembii Yakoman (md).
Married to the Honggwama Kwoma woman Wonyikowa (fl) of Nowil clan (Bangwis village). With her had the two sons, 110 and 111. Asanembii was killed *c.*1943–4 during fighting between the Yalaku and the neighbouring Manambu-speaking village of Avatip on the Sepik (see Chapter 10). Following Asanembii's death his wife returned to her natal tribe, the Honggwama, and married Kowanay of Wurambanj clan. She was still married to him in 1973.
106. Kisala (md).
107. Kapay (md).
108. Woyenduway (fd).
Married first to the Kwoma-speaking Awokapa Nggiley tribe man named Somboyap (see Chapter 9).
Following Somboyap's death in warfare, she returned to her home tribe (the Yalaku) and married, as his third wife, Waspen (23) of Rama clan. They were the parents of Ayam (36).
109. Nomakela (fd).
Married to Pakiya (172) of the defunct Yalaku clan Korembikow (see below); with him had the daughter Awomay (173).

Generation 6

110. Ukwaya (ml; aet. 40).
Married to Monggowur (86) of YK clan. (See Chapter 2, Household 6).
111. Kisala Michael Wopureka (ml; aet. 35).
Married to Kwariyangg (45) of Rama clan (see Chapter 2, Household 5).

Generation 7

112. Lopakili (ml; aet. 16). Not married.
113. Kihay (fl; aet. 13). Not married.
114. Hakos (fl; aet. 10). Not married.
115. Yanenggela (ml; aet. 8). Not married.
116. Tonmeri (ml; aet. 5). Not married.
117. Somboyap (ml; aet. 1). Not married.
118. Mwimbwi (fl; aet. 7). Not married.
119. Waramusa (ml; aet. 4). Not married.
120. Hangganambwiya (fl; aet. 2). Not married.

Clan 4: Yombu Nyininggu 2 clan (a member of the Keyava totemic division)

Generation 1

121. (739) Naniyas (md).
Married to Halop, a natal member of the Yalaku tribe (clan not recorded). She was first married to a Kwoma-speaking man named Amanenji of the Kowariyasi tribe (see Chapter 3).
121a. Amanenji (md). Kwoma man formerly married to the Yalaku woman named Halop; Halop later married Naniyas (121); her son Payap became the founder of this clan. See the notes to Naniyas above.

Generation 2

122. Payap Amanenji (md). The founding ancestor (*kwul*) of YN2 clan.

Generation 3

123. Kapay (md). Kapay was the last of the great Yalaku political and military leaders. He died *c.*1940. Kapay's exact genealogical position in his clan was not recorded.
First wife Awasow, of the Tongwinjamb Kwoma tribe.
Second wife, Naparuwe (clan and tribe of origin not recorded). Kapay captured this woman during an attack he led on a Tongwinjamb hamlet named Watiyombu (see Chapter 9). With Naparuwe had the daughter Kwaruk (126).
124. Yembiyowi (md).

Generation 4

125. Mowiyamun (md).
126. Kwaruk (fl; aet. 60).
Formerly married to Nyawuraman (25) of Rama clan. Following her husband's death she chose not to remarry and in 1973 was living with her married son Ayambaminja (37) (see Chapter 2, Household 2).
127. Manggimonggel (md).
128. Kapakeli (md).
First(?) wife Tiimbiimay (19), Rama clan.
Two other wives (see Chapter 9) were Mukwiyet (fd) and Wayinep (fd), respectively, but their clans of origin are not known.
129. Hoporeka (fd).
Married to Kisala Piyanombok (75) of YK clan.

Generation 5

130. Kiriyas (ml; aet. 50). See Chapter 2, Household 8.
First wife Moyindav, a Honggwama Kwoma woman, Nowil clan.
Second wife Monggisaniip, also a Honggwama Kwoma woman of Nowil clan.
131. Maparakwa (fd).
Formerly married to Ayambaminja (37) of Rama clan.
132. Pukalop (fd). Died as a child.
133. Kapay (ml; aet. 55).
Wife Kiisiik (fl; 174) of the defunct Yalaku clan Korembikow; children 138–142 (see Chapter 2, Household 7.)

Generation 6

134. Asanembii (ml; aet. 18). Not married.
135. Mambaruk (fl; aet. 15). Not married.
136. Nyakaw (ml. aet. 10). Not married.

137. Kasindimi (ml; aet. 25).
Wife Mowumbwiya (fl) of the Nowiniyen tribe, Kumanjuwi village. Her family derived from the Kwoma-speaking Awokapa Nggiley tribe (see Chapter 10). Kasindimi and his wife had only been married a few weeks when I first visited Yelogu. They had married against her parent's wishes. The marriage caused huge consternation simultaneously at Yelogu, Kumanjuwi and Bangwis. While still living with her parents, Mowumbwiya had announced that she intended to marry Kasindimi regardless of what they thought and one morning vanished from the family's home. The next her parents heard of her she had taken up residence with her new husband at Yelogu. Her parents immediately set off for Yelogu to try to retrieve her, but when they arrived she adamantly refused to leave. They also went to Bangwis to ask the local government councillor in charge of Yelogu to order her to return home. The councillor sent word to Yelogu recommending that she return home, but she ignored him as well. Eventually her parents were forced to accept that the marriage was a fait accompli.
138. Mbiwas (ml; aet. 15). Not married.
139. Kalawen (ml; aet. 12). Not married.
140. Angganepi (ml; aet 8). Not married.
141. Handaniimb (fl; aet. 5). Not married.
142. Nyinduwi (fl. aet. 2). Not married.

Clan 5: Hambora 1 clan (a member of the Tek totemic division)

This clan is also known as Mbondiiwa Tek (see Chapter 3).

Generation 1

143. Apwi Yambenwuti Nyakambaya (md). This man was the clan's founding ancestor. He was a Kwoma-speaker but migrated to the east to escape chronic warfare between the Kwoma and the Apukili. He joined the Yalaku when they had their main settlement at Walawili. No knowledge had been retained of Apwi's Kwoma ancestry.

Generation 2

144. Wokiyapan (md).

Generation 3

145. Yambenwuti (md).

Generation 4

146. Tokindu (md).
147. Kwoyasaman (md).
First wife Wasalanda. Her place of origin was not known to the members of this clan. She was the mother of 148.
Second wife Napaku. Her place of origin was not known to the members of this clan. She was the mother of 149–52.

Generation 5

148. Wayananggi (md).
First wife (fd) Masakiikiipa, a member of an unidentified and now extinct Yalaku clan. With Wayananggi had the children 153 and 154.
Second wife Sendepay (fd), a member of another unidentified and now extinct Yalaku clan. With Wayananggi had the children 155 and 156.
149. Hokwari (md).
150. Wachinggi (md).
151. Tanggen (fd).
152. Yarekwi (fd).

Generation 6

153. Apwi (md).
First wife Apochey (27) of Rama clan; with her had the son Womandu (157). Apochey was captured as a young girl during warfare with the Apukili.
Second wife Yowembwiya (fl). No children. In 1973 Yowembwiya was married to Ayam (36) of Rama clan.
154. Womandu (md). Killed as a young man, and still unmarried, in warfare with the Tongwinjamb Kwoma.
155. Woyipeki (fd). Married to an Awokapa Nggiley man named Sombochey (see Chapter 9).
156. Halakwosi (md).
Married to Awomay (173) of the now defunct Korembikow clan, and with her had two daughters, 158 and 159. Halakwosi died before his second daughter was born; the daughter was born after his widow, Awomay, married Membangg (168) of H2 clan, who adopted her.

Generation 7

157. Womandu (ml; aet. 30).
Wife Hekilap (48) of Rama clan, Yelogu (see Chapter 2, Household 10).
158. Apochey (fl; aet. 40).
Married to Ayambamija (37) of Rama clan (see Chapter 2, Household 2).
159. Siipwas (fl; aet. 30).
Married to Yuwayembi (87) of YK clan (see Chapter 2, Household 12).

Generation 8

160. Siipiimbay (fl; aet. 5). Not married.
161. Monggisaniip (fl. aet. 2). Not married.

Clan 6: Hambora 2 clan (a member of the Tek totemic division)

This clan is also known as 'Wanyinggi Tek' after one of its major totems, a type of fern that has edible leaves (*wanyigi*; *kumu*, TP).

Generation 1

162. Kayimeni (md). Kayimeni, like the founding ancestor (*kwul*) of Hambora 1 clan, was originally a member of the Kwoma language group but fled to the east to escape warfare between that tribe and the Apukili. He joined the Yalaku tribe when it had its main settlement at Walawili.

Generation 2

163. Watipuku (md).

Generation 3

164. Yuwanggen (md). No descendants.

165. Mesipoko (md).

Wife Apochey (fd; 27) of Rama clan. With her had the daughter 169 and probably also the sons 167 and 168.

166. Yanggimboy (md). No descendants.

Generation 4

167. Tonmeri (md). No descendants.

168. Membangg (md).

First(?) wife Kinyingga (fd) of Nggwiyishembi Hamikwa clan, Honggwama Kwoma tribe.

Second wife Awomay (173) of the defunct Yalaku clan Korembikow. With her had the son Wanyinngi (93), who was adopted following Membangg's death by Awomay's next husband, Ambareka (83) of YK clan (see Chapter 2, Household 13).

169. Hopokos Hoporeka (fl; aet. 55).

First married to Wanenggwa (29) of Rama clan.

Following Wanenggwa's death, married Ayam (36) of the same clan. (See also the entry under Ayam above.)

Generation 5

170. Sor (ml; aet. 30).

Wife Nambakaya (49, Rama clan). (See Chapter 2, Household 11.)

Clan 7: Korembikow (*korebi*, mango tree)

This clan is now defunct. Insufficient data was obtained to form a genealogy. The clan took its name from the native mango tree (*korebi*), one of its totems. Its fruit has a peelable skin of the type familiar to Europeans. In 1973 the only two surviving natal members of this clan were the women Awomay (173) and Kiisiik (174): see Chapter 2, Households 13 and 7, respectively. I have no information on which clan or clans absorbed these two women following the deaths of the last male members of this group and therefore list them here separately.

Generation 1

171. Tusiiwiil (md). This man was one of the Yalaku tribe's greatest warriors and political leaders during the first half of the twentieth century. He was the son of a man named Pakiya Manggimal (see Chapter 6).

Generation 2

172. Pakiya (md).

First wife Nomakela (fd; 109) of YN1 clan; with her had the daughter Awomay (173), married in 1973 to Ambareka (82) of Rama clan (see Chapter 2, Household 13).

Second wife Mepiyowar (fd), reportedly of YK clan but genealogical position not known; with her had the daughter Kiisiik (174) currently (1973) married to Kapay (133) of YN2 clan (see Chapter 2, Household 7).

Generation 3

173. Awomay (fl; aet. 55).

First husband Halakwosi (156), of H1 clan.

Second husband Membangg (168) of H2 clan; married him following her first husband's death.

Third husband Ambareka of YK clan (see Chapter 2, Household 13); married him following her second husband's death. Ambareka adopted the young son Wanyinggi (93) that she had had with her second husband Membangg.

174. Kiisiik Woyipeki (fl; aet. 35). Husband Kapay (133) of YN2 clan (see Chapter 2, Household 7).

Kiisiik's mother died in childbirth; she was breastfed and raised by her much older half-sister, Awomay (173). The latter had just given birth to a child who had died while she was still lactating. Because her older sister Awomay raised her, Kiisiik addressed her as 'mother' (*ayiwa*; '*mama*', TP) rather than 'eZ' (*omo*). In 1973 the two women were living close to each other at Yelogu (see Chapter 2).

APPENDIX C

Yalaku kinship terms

Key to abbreviations

F = father, M = mother, B = brother, Z = sister, D = daughter, S = son, W = wife, H = husband, C = child
'y' = younger, 'e' = elder
(m.s.) = male speaker
(f.s.) = female speaker

The Tok Pisin equivalents of the indigenous terms are given in brackets. Kinship terms defined by reference to particular individuals in single quotation marks, such as 'F', 'M' or 'MB', denote all of the persons referred to by the relevant terms, not just the specific individual indicated. Thus, the term glossed as 'MB' refers to (among other persons) all natal male members of MB's clan of MB's generation and below, including MB, MBS, MBSS etc., not just the MB. All terms are used in reference and address unless otherwise indicated.

1) *ay*a (*liklik mama*)
   i) term of address for MyZ or any other 'younger sister' of mother (the term of reference is '*nowa*');
   ii) FyBW, the wife of any other 'FyB'.
2) *ayiwa* (*mama*)
   i) term of address for mother and any other natal female member of mother's clan of mother's generation and below (e.g. MZ, MBD, MBSD) – the term of reference is '*nowa*';
   ii) the wife of any 'F' (*nyapa*).
3) *du* (*man*)
   i) H (see also *lan*), this is also the term for man, male person and human.
4) *hagiiri* (*tumbuna meri*)
   i) SW, the wife of any other 'S', e.g. (m.s.) FBS;
   ii) wife of any (male) *rawa*, e.g. (m.s.) ZSW.
5) *hay* (*susa man*, *susa brata*)
   i) (f.s.) opposite sex sibling (i.e. brother), this term can be qualified by either *nyimos* or *omo* to indicate a young or elder brother respectively, e.g. *nyimos hay*, (f.s.) yB; *omo hay*, (f.s.) eB.
6) *hay takwa* (*meri tambu*)
   i) WBW.
7) *kwul* (*tumbuna*)
   i) second ascending generation members of the speaker's clan and their spouses, e.g. FF, FFB, FFZH;
   ii) HF, HFZ.
8) *lan*
   i) (f.s.) husband (*man*);
   ii) (m.s.) ZH (*tambu*), the husband of any other 'sister' (*nyenegaya*);[136]
   iii) (m.s.) ZH of any male 'friend' (*nawa*).
9) *madaka* (*tumbuna*)
   i) third and higher generation ascendant, e.g. FFF, FMF, MFF, MMF;
   ii) husband of third and higher ascending generation natal female member of own patriline, e.g. FFFZH.
10) *nad* ('*tumbuna*' and '*tambu*' both offered as TP equivalents)
   i) DH, husband of any other 'D', e.g. (m.s.) BDH, (f.s.) ZDH;
   ii) husband of a female '*rawa*', e.g. (m.s.) ZDH, FZDH.
11) *naw*a (*pren*)
   i) (m.s.) 'friend' (i.e. a man with whom the speaker has publicly and ceremoniously exchanged a 'friendship' net bag);
   ii) (m.s.) friend's wife;
   iii) (f.s.) husband's male 'friend' and spouse;
   iv) (f.s.) co-wife.
12) *nel* (*tambu*)
   i) (f.s.) BC;
   ii) WBS (*tambu*), WBD (*meri tambu*).
13) *nowa* (term of reference for 'M', see *ayiwa*)
14) *nubatakwa* (*pikinini meri*)
   i) D, (m.s.) BD, (f.s.) ZD.
15) *nyach* (*liklik papa*, *was papa*)
   i) FyB;
   ii) any other 'yB' of father, e.g. MyZH;
   iii) father's younger paternal half-brother.
16) *nyapa* (*papa*)
   i) F, any other male first ascending generation member of own clan, e.g. FB, FFBS;
   ii) husband of any 'M', e.g. MBDH.
17) *nyenegaya* (*susa*)
   i) male speaker's opposite-sex sibling (i.e. sister) and any other same-generation natal female member of a male speaker's clan – this term can be qualified by either *omo* or *nyimos* to refer to an elder or

136 In response to a question from the ethnographer, Ayam acknowledged that it was perhaps surprising that a man should use the same term for his ZH as a woman uses for her husband, but rationalized it on the grounds that that a ZH is 'like a husband' in that he provides a man with many of the same economic services he provides his wife, such as assistance with gardening.

younger sister respectively, e.g. *omo nyenegaya* ('eZ'), *nyimos nyenegaya* ('yZ');
ii) the daughter of any 'M', e.g. MZD, MBDD;
iii) (m.s.) sister of a 'friend' (*nawa*).

18) *nyenegu* (*pikinini*, see also '*padi*' and '*nubatakwa*')
i) S, D, 'child', (m.s.) any other first descending generation member of the speaker's clan (e.g. BC);
ii) WZC;
iii) (f.s.) ZC.

19) *nyiduk* ('*tambu*' and '*tumbuna*' both given as TP equivalents)
i) FZH;
ii) (f.s.) HZH.

20) *nyimos* (*liklik brata* for males, *liklik meri brata* for females)
i) younger same-sex sibling and their spouse, e.g. (m.s.) yB, yBW; (f.s.) yZ, yZH;
ii) same-sex child of younger same-sex sibling of parent, e.g. (m.s) FyBS, MyZS;
iii) spouse's younger same-sex sibling, and their spouse, e.g. WyZ, WyZH, HyB, HyBW;
iv) qualifier meaning 'younger', e.g. *nyimos hay*, (f.s.) 'younger brother'.

21) *nyipa* (*bikpela mama*)
i) MeZ;
ii) spouse of any 'eB' of father, e.g. FeBW.

22) *nyisapa* (*bikpela papa*, *was papa*)
i) FeB, any other 'eB' of father;
ii) MeZH.

23) *omo* (*bikpela brata*)
i) elder same-sex sibling, and spouse, e.g. (m.s.) eB, eBW; (f.s.) eZ, eZH;
ii) spouse's elder same-sex sibling, and spouse, e.g. (f.s.) HeB, HeBW; (m.s.) WeZ, WeZH, FeBS, FeBSW;
iii) qualifier meaning 'elder', e.g. *omo hay*, '(f.s.) elder brother'.

24) *pabu* (*tumbuna*)
i) any member of the second-ascending generation connected through mother, and their spouses, e.g. MF, MFW, MM, MMB, MFZ;
ii) any member of the first-ascending generation connected through wife, e.g. WF, WM, WFZ, WMB, WMBW;
iii) HM;
iv) qualifier meaning 'matrilateral', e.g. *pabu madaka*, 'matrilateral third generation ascendant', e.g. MFF, MMF.

25) *padi* (*pikinini, pikinini man*)
i) S;
ii) son of a same-sex sibling, e.g. (m.s.) BS, BD; (f.s.) ZS, ZD.

26) *poti* (*kandere meri*)
i) wife of any '*waw*' ('MB'), e.g. MBW, MBSW.

27) *rawa* (*kandere*)
i) (m.s.) the child of any same or ascending generation natal female member of the speaker's clan, e.g. ZS, ZD, FZS, FZD;
ii) (f.s.) husband's *rawa*, e.g. HZC.

28) *takwa* (*meri*)
i) W, this is also the term for woman and female person.

29) *towo* (*tambu*)
i) WB.

30) *waw* (*kandere*)
i) male members of MB's clan of MB's generation and below, e.g. MB, MBS, MBSS;.
ii) the brother of any 'mother' (*ayiwa*).

31) *yanan* (*tumbuna*)
i) second and third generation descendants (to distinguish in TP a '*tumbuna*' who is a descendant from a '*tumbuna*' who is an ascendant, such as a FF or FFF, the term can be qualified by adding '*pikinini*', i.e. *tumbuna pikinini*);
ii) the child of a *rawa*, e.g. (m.s.) ZSC or ZDC;
iii) WB's second- and third-generation descendants, e.g. WBSC, WBSSC.

32) *yay* (*tumbuna* for male referents, *tumbuna meri* for female referents)
i) members of FMB's clan of FMB's generation and below, and spouses, e.g. FMB, FMBS, FMBSS;
ii) HM, HMB;
iii) qualifier meaning 'patrililateral', as in '*yay madaka*', 'patrilateral third generation ascendant', e.g. FFF, FMF.

33) *yow* ('*tumbuna*' and '*meri tambu*' both offered as TP equivalents)
i) FZ (father's sister), any other 'sister' (*nyenegaya*) of father;
ii) (f.s.) HZ.

REFERENCES

Aikhenvald, A.Y. 2008a. *The Manambu Language of East Sepik, Papua New Guinea*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

——– 2008b. 'Language contact along the Sepik River, Papua New Guinea', *Anthropological Linguistics* 50 (1): 1–66.

——– 2014. '"Double talk": parallel structures in Manambu songs, and their origin', *Language and Linguistics in Melanesia* 32(2):86–109.

——– 2018. 'Worlds apart: language survival and language use in two Middle Sepik societies', *Le Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 146:203–12.

——– 2020. 'Language contact and language change in the Sepik region of New Guinea: the case of Yalaku'. In K. Allan (ed.), *Dynamic Language Change: Looking Within and Across Language*. Singapore: Springer.

——– in press. 'Word in Yalaku'. In A.Y. Aikhenvald, R.M.W. Dixon and N.M. White (eds), *Phonological and Grammatical Word: A Cross-linguistic Typology*, pp. 147–75. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Allen, M.R. 1967. *Male Cults and Secret Initiations in Melanesia*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.

Allied Geographical Section. 1943. *The Sepik District, Vol. 1: Text and Maps*. Southwest Pacific Area, Terrain Study No. 65.

Barnes, R.H. 1984. *Two Crows Denies It: A History of Controversy in Omaha Sociology*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Bateson, G. 1932a. 'Social structure of the Iatmul people of the Sepik River. *Oceania* 2:245–91.

——– 1932b. 'Social structure of the Iatmul people of the Sepik River (concluded)', *Oceania* 2:401–53.

——— 1958 [1936]. *Naven*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Beran, H. and Craig, B. (eds) 2005. *Shields of Melanesia*. Adelaide: Crawford House Publishing Australia.

Borchard, T. and Gibbs, P. 2011. 'Parallelism and poetics in *Tindi* narratives sung in the Ipili language'. In A. Rumsey and D. Niles (eds), *Sung Tales from Papua New Guinea*, pp. 165–95. Canberra: ANU E-Press.

Bowden, R. 1977. 'The Kwoma: A Study of Terminology and Marriage Alliance in a Sepik River society', Ph.D. thesis, Monash University, Melbourne (Australia).

——— 1983a. *Yena: Art and Ceremony in a Sepik Society*. Oxford: Pitt Rivers Museum.

——— 1983b. 'Kwoma terminology and marriage alliance: the "Omaha" problem revisited', *Man* (NS) 18:745–65.

——— 1987. 'Sorcery, illness and social control in Kwoma society'. In M. Stephen (ed.), *Sorcerer and Witch in Melanesia*, pp. 183–208. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.

——— 1988. 'Kwoma death payments and alliance theory', *Ethnology* 27:271–90.

——— 1991. 'Historical ethnography or conjectural history? A critical analysis of *Sepik River Societies* by Deborah B. Gewertz', *Oceania* 61:218–35.

——— 1997. *A Dictionary of Kwoma: A Papuan language of North-east New Guinea*. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.

——— 1999. 'What is wrong with an art forgery?: an anthropological perspective', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 57(3):333–43.

——— 2006. *Creative Spirits: Bark Painting in the Washkuk Hills of North New Guinea*. Melbourne: Oceanic Art Pty Ltd.

——— 2011. 'Interpreting New Guinea sculpture: the case of Kwoma Nokwi figures', *Pacific Arts* (NS) 11:5–18.

——— 2022. *Art and Creativity in a New Guinea Society: The Kwoma in Cross-Cultural Perspective.* Lanham (Maryland, U.S.A.): Lexington Books.

Bragge, L. 1990. 'The Japandai migrations'. In N. Lutkehaus *et al.* (eds), *Sepik Heritage: Tradition and Change in Papua New Guinea*, pp. 36–49. Durham (North Carolina): Carolina Academic Press.

——— n.d. [2019]. Sepik 2. Unpublished ms.

Bragge, L., Claas, U. and Roscoe, P. 2006. 'On the edge of empire: military brokers in the Sepik "tribal zone"', *American Ethnologist* 33(1):100–113.

Buchler, I.R. and Selby, H.A. 1968. *Kinship and Social Organisation: An Introduction to Theory and Method*. New York: Macmillan.

Calmels Cohen (Auctioneers). 2003. *André Breton: 42, Rue Fontaine* (3 vols). Paris.

Carmack, R.M. 1972. 'Ethnohistory: a review of its development, definitions, methods, and aims', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 1:227–46.

Coult, A.D. 1967. 'Lineage solidarity, transformational analysis and the meaning of kinship terminologies', *Man* (NS) 2:26–47.

Craig. B. 1980a. 'Legends of the Amto of Simaiya Valley, West Sepik Province', *Oral History* 8(4):59–113. (See also the expanded version of this article on www.uscngp.com.)

——— 1980b. 'Legends of the Abau of Idam Valley, West Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea', *Oral History* 8(5):1–92. (See also the expanded version of this article on www.uscngp.com.)

Culler, J. 1975. *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Dominy, N.J., Mills, S.T., Yakacki, C.M., Roscoe, P.B. and Carpenter, R.D. 2018. 'New Guinea bone daggers were engineered to preserve social prestige', *Royal Society Open Sci*ence 5:172067.

Dye, W., Townsend, P. and Townsend, W. 1968. 'The Sepik Hills languages: a preliminary report', *Oceania* 39:146–56.

Eliade, M. 1959. *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*. New York: Harper and Row.

Elkin, A.P. 1971 [1938]. *The Australian Aborigines: How to Understand Them*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson.

Evans, B. (ed.). 2019. *War, Art, Ritual: Shields from the Pacific*. Sydney: William Evans.

Fabian, J. 1983. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press.

Falck, C. 2018. 'The (re-)appropriation of spirit beings – spirits of the dead and spirits of God in a Sepik community', *Oceania* 88:107–26.

Forge, A. 1966. 'Art and environment in the Sepik', *Proceedings of the Royal Anthropological Institute for 1965*:23–31.

——— 1967. 'The Abelam artist'. In M. Freedman (ed.), *Social Organization: Essays Presented to Raymond Firth*, pp. 65–84. London: Frank Cass.

——— 1970. 'Learning to see in New Guinea'. In P. Mayer (ed.), *Socialisation: An Anthropological Approach* (A.S.A. Monogr. 8), pp. 269–91. London: Tavistock Publications.

——— 1971. 'Marriage and exchange in the Sepik'. In R. Needham (ed.), *Rethinking Kinship and Marriage* (A.S.A. Monogr. 11), pp. 133–44. London: Tavistock Publications.

——— 1972. 'The Golden Fleece', *Man* (NS) 7:527–40.

Gewertz, D. 1983. *Sepik River Societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Godelier, M. 2011. *The Metamorphoses of Kinship*. London: Verso.

Hamson, M. (ed.) 2011. *Art of the Boiken*. Palos Verdes Estates, California: Michael Hamson Oceanic Art.

Harrison, S. 1989. 'The symbolic construction of aggression and war in a Sepik River Society', *Man* (NS) 24:583–99.

——— 1990. *Stealing People's Names: History and Politics in a Sepik River Cosmology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

——— 1993. *The Mask of War: Violence, Ritual and the Self in Melanesia*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Hauser-Schäublin, B. 1989. *Kulthäuser in Nordneuguinea*. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag.

——— 2015. *Ceremonial Houses of the Abelam, Papua New Guinea: Architecture and Ritual – a Passage to the Ancestors*. Goolwa, South Australia: Crawford House Publishing Pty Ltd.

Howarth, C. (ed.). 2015. *Myth and Magic: Art of the Sepik River, Papua New Guinea*. Canberra: National Gallery of Australia.

Idriess, I.L. 1950. *Gold Dust and Ashes: The Romantic Story of the New Guinea Goldfields*. Melbourne: Angus and Robertson.

Koch, K.-F. 1974. *War and Peace in Jalémó: The Management of Conflict in Highland New Guinea*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Köhler, J. 1975 [1897]. *On the Prehistory of Marriage*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Kooyers, O. 1974. *Washkuk Grammar Sketch* (Workpapers in Papua New Guinea Linguistics, vol. 6). Ukarumpa: Papua New Guinea.

Kooyers, O., Kooyers, M. and Bee, D. 1971. 'The phonemes of Washkuk (Kwoma)', *Te Reo* 14:37–41.

Lambert-Brétière, R. 2018. 'Savoir culturel et langue en danger: l'exemple du ritual de l'igname chez les Kwoma. Cultural knowledge and endangered language', *Le Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 146:73–83.

Laycock, D.C. 1965. *The Ndu Language Family (Sepik District, New Guinea)*. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.

——— 1973. *Sepik Languages: Checklist and Preliminary Classification*. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics, Series B, No. 25.

Laycock, D.C. and Z'graggen, J. 1975. 'The Sepik-Ramu phylum'. In S.A. Wurm (ed.), *New Guinea Area Languages And Language Survey, Vol. 1: Papuan Languages and the New Guinea Linguistic Scene*, pp. 731–63. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics, Series C, No. 38.

Lévi-Strauss, C. 1965. 'The future of kinship studies', *Proceedings of the Royal Anthropological Institute 1965*:13–22.

——— 1967. *The Structural Study of Myth and Totemism*. New York: Anchor Books.

——— 1968. *The Savage Mind*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

——— 1969. *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode.

——— 1979. *Myth and Meaning*. New York: Schocken Books.

——— 1988. *The Way of the Masks*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Lewis, H.S. 1998. 'The misrepresentation of anthropology and its consequences', *American Anthropologist* 100 (3):716–31.

Lounsbury, F.G. 1964. 'A formal account of Crow- and Omaha-type terminologies'. In W.H. Goodenough (ed.), *Explorations in Cultural Anthropology*, pp. 351–93. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Lutkehaus, N., Kaufmann, C., Mitchell, W.E, Newton, D., Osmundsen, L. and Schuster, M. (eds) 1990. *Sepik Heritage: Tradition and Change in Papua New Guinea*. Durham (North Carolina): Carolina Academic Press.

Mauss, M. 1970. *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*. London: Cohen and West.

McCarthy, J.K. 1967. *Patrol into Yesterday: my New Guinea Years*. Melbourne: Cheshire.

McKinley, R. 1971. 'Why do Crow and Omaha kinship terminologies exist?: a sociology of knowledge interpretation', *Man* (NS) 6(3):408–26.

Mead, M. 1950. *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*. New York: New American Library.

——— 1972. *Blackberry Winter: My Early Years*. New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc.

Merlan, F. 2016. 'Women, warfare, and the life of agency: Papua New Guinea and beyond', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (NS) 22:392–411.

Mihalic, F. 1971. *The Jacaranda Dictionary and Grammar of Melanesian Pidgin*. Milton, Queensland: The Jacaranda Press.

Murdock. G.P. 1965 [1949]. *Social Structure*. Toronto: The Macmillan Company.

Newton, D. 1971. *Crocodile and Cassowary*. New York: The Museum of Primitive Art.

Orchiston, D.W. 1975. *Warfare in Melanesia: The Leonhard Adam Ethnological Collection, Part Two*. Melbourne: University of Melbourne.

Otto, T., Thrane, H. and Vandkilde, H. (eds) 2006. *Warfare and Society: Archaeological and Social Anthropological Perspectives*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.

Price, S. 1989. *Primitive Art in Civilised Places*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Radcliffe-Brown, A. 1941. 'The study of kinship systems', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 71:1–18.

Reche, O. 2015 [1913]. *The Empress Augusta/Sepik River* [*Der Kaiserin-Augusta Fluss*] (trans. J. Dennison; University of Otago Working Papers in Anthropology 2). Otago, New Zealand: Department of Anthropology and Archaeology.

Roscoe, P. 1994. 'Who are the Ndu? Ecology, migration, and linguistic and cultural change in the Sepik Basin'. In A.J. Strathern and G. Stürzenhofecher (eds), *Migration and Transformations: Regional Perspectives on New Guinea*, pp. 49–84. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

——— 1996. 'War and society in Sepik New Guinea', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (NS) 2:645–66.

——— 2009. Social Signalling and the Organization of Small-Scale Society: The Case of Contact-Era New Guinea. *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*, 16: 69–116.

——— 2011. 'The Abelam "invasion" and the rise of Ilahita revisited'. In P. Roscoe and D. Lipset (eds), *Echoes of the Tambaran: Masculinity, History and the Subject in the Work of Donald F. Tuzin*, pp. 25–44. Canberra: ANU E-Press.

Ross, M. In press. 'Clues to the linguistic situation in Near Oceania before agriculture'. In T. Güldemann, P. McConvell and R.A. Rhodes (eds), *The Languages of Hunter-gatherers: Global and Historical Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rumsey, A. 2001. 'Introduction'. In A. Rumsey and J.F. Weiner (eds), *Emplaced Myth: Space, Narrative, and Knowledge in Aboriginal Australia and Papua New Guinea*, pp. 1–18. Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press.

Rumsey, A. and Weiner, J.F. (eds) 2001. *Emplaced Myth: Space, Narrative, and Knowledge in Aboriginal Australia and Papua New Guinea*. Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press.

Rutgers, A. 1970. *Birds of New Guinea: illustrations from the lithographs of John Gould*. London: Methuen.

Ryan, P. (ed.) 1972. *Encyclopaedia of Papua New Guinea* (3 vols). Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.

Sahlins, M.D. 1981. *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Schiltz, M. 1994. 'Review of *The Mask of War*', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (NS) 29(3):768–9.

Schuster, M. 1965. 'Mythen aus dem Sepik-Gebiet'. In C.A. Schmits and R. Wildhaber (eds), *Festschrift Alfred Bühler* (Ethnologische Reiher Band 2), pp. 369–84. Basle: Basler Beiträge zur Geographie und Ethnologie.

Silverman, E.K. 1996. 'The gender of the cosmos: totemism, society and embodiment in the Sepik River', *Oceania* 67:30–49.

——— 2001. 'From totemic space to cyberspace: transformations in Sepik River and Aboriginal Australia myth, knowledge, and art'. In A. Rumsey and J.F. Weiner (eds), *Emplaced Myth: Space, Narrative, and Knowledge in Aboriginal Australia and Papua New Guinea*, pp. 189–214. Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press.

——— 2016. 'The waters of Mendangumeli: a masculine psychoanalytic interpretation of a New Guinea flood myth – and women's laughter', *The Journal of American Folklore* 129:171–202.

Sollis, M. 2011. 'Parallelism in Duna *Pikono*'. In A. Rumsey and D. Niles (eds), *Sung Tales from Papua New Guinea*, pp. 65–73. Canberra: ANU E Press.

Strathern, A. and Strathern, M. 1971. *Self-decoration in Mount Hagen*. London: Gerald Duckworth and Co Ltd.

Swadling, P. 1990. 'Sepik prehistory'. In N. Lutkehaus, C. Kaufmann, W.E. Mitchell, D. Newton, L. Osmundsen and M. Schuster (eds), *Sepik Heritage: Tradition and Change in Papua New Guinea*, pp. 71–86. Durham (North Carolina): Carolina Academic Press.

——— 2010. 'The impact of a dynamic environment past on trade routes and language distributions in the lower-middle Sepik'. In J. Bowden, N.P. Himmelmann and M. Ross (eds), *A Journey Through Austronesian and Papuan Linguistic And Cultural Space: Papers in Honour of Andrew Pawley*, pp. 141–57. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.

Swadling, P. and Hide, R. 2005. 'Changing landscape and social interaction: looking at agricultural history from a Sepik-Ramu perspective'. In A. Pawley, R. Attenborough, J. Golson and R. Hide (eds), *Papuan Pasts: Cultural, Linguistic and Biological Histories of Papuan-speaking Peoples*, pp. 289–327. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.

Townsend, G.W.L. 1968. *District Officer*. Sydney: Pacific Publications.

Trautmann, T.R. 2012. 'Crossness and Crow-Omaha'. In T.R. Trautmann and P.M. Whitely (eds), *Crow-Omaha: New Light on a Classic Problem of Kinship Analysis*, pp. 31–50. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.

Trautmann, T.R. and P.M. Whitely (eds) 2012a. *Crow-Omaha: New Light on a Classic Problem of Kinship Analysis*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.

——— 2012b. 'A classic problem'. In T.R. Trautmann and P.M. Whitely (eds), *Crow-Omaha: New Light on a Classic Problem of Kinship Analysis*, pp. 1–27. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.

——— 2012c. 'Crow-Omaha, in thickness and in thin'. In T.R. Trautmann and P.M. Whitely (eds), *Crow-Omaha: New Light on a Classic Problem of Kinship Analysis*, pp. 281–97. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.

Tuzin, D.F. 1980. *The Voice of the Tambaran: Truth and Illusion in Ilahita Arapesh Religion*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

——— 1995. 'Art and procreative illusion in the Sepik: comparing the Abelam and the Arapesh', *Oceania* 65:289–303.

van Gennep, A. 1965. *The Rites of Passage*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Vandkilde, H. 2006. 'Archaeology and war: presentations of warriors and peasants in archaeological interpretations'. In T. Otto, H. Thrane and H. Vandkilde (eds), *Warfare and Society: Archaeological and Social Anthropological Perspectives*, pp. 59–76. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.

Village Directory. 1960. Territory of Papua New Guinea: Department of District Administration.

——— 1968. Territory of Papua New Guinea: Department of District Administration.

Wassmann, J. 1991. *The Song to the Flying Fox: The Public and Esoteric Knowledge of the Important Men of Kandingei about Totemic Songs, Names and Knotted Cords (Middle Sepik, Papua New Guinea)*. Port Moresby: The National Research Institute.

——— 2001. 'The politics of ritual secrecy'. In A. Rumsey and J.F. Weiner (eds), *Emplaced Myth: Space, Narrative, and Knowledge in Aboriginal Australia and Papua New Guinea*, pp. 43–70. Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press.

Weiner, A.B. 1992. *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping While Giving*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Welsch, R.L. 1998. *An American Anthropologist in Melanesia: A.B. Lewis and the Joseph N. Field South Pacific Expedition, 1909–1913* (2 vols). Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Whitehead, H. 1986. 'The varieties of fertility cultism in New Guinea: part 1', *American Ethnologist* 13:80–99.

Whiting, J.W.M. 1941. *Becoming a Kwoma: teaching and learning in a New Guinea tribe*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press.

Whiting, J.W.M. and S.W. Reed. 1938–9. 'Report on field work in the Mandated Territory of New Guinea', *Oceania* 9:170–216.

Winter, C. 2015. 'The occupation of German New Guinea'. In B. Craig, R. Vanderwal and C. Winter, *War trophies or curios? The War Museum collection in Museum Victoria 1915–1920*, pp. 15–41. Melbourne: Museum Victoria Publishing.

INDEX

'GC' = Genealogical Charts

This ground-breaking and beautifully illustrated ethnography of the Kaunga-speaking Yalaku provides the first detailed history of any of the 200 language groups in the Sepik River region of Papua New Guinea. The story of this society, recorded by Ross Bowden at their request, is told by the people themselves, and contains by far the most complete account of traditional warfare in this region.

The history begins around 1800, the limit of Yalaku cultural memory. It describes the flashpoints that ignited tribal fighting (from the theft of a hunting dog to accusations of sorcery), the strategic thinking of warriors, the use of alliances, the building of structural defences, and even the actual blows of notable battles. It includes songs recounting the reversals of fortunes a warrior can experience and the laments of women over their loved ones, relaying the perspectives of both war-parties and attacked communities. This gripping narrative, performed in a men's house with both men and women present, is both a feat of memory and a communal endeavour.

Bowden's deft ethnographic analyses of the social structure and myths of the Yalaku provide the essential context to understand this society once locked into warfare with their neighbours, adversaries who knew each other's names, spoke each other's languages, intermarried, and during peacetime took part together in rituals at which their shared history was sung.

Bowden's historical reconstruction of the history of Yalaku warfare from about 1800 to the ethnographic present of the 1970s is truly breathtaking for anyone who has tried to collect a sensible set of stories in a Papua New Guinea village. He connects the past to the present of his fieldwork in a novel and dynamic way. This is essential reading for anyone interested in New Guinea ethnography.

Robert L. Welsch, PhD, formerly of Dartmouth College and Franklin Pierce University

The Yalaku *describes a New Guinea group that is among the least known to anthropology even though it lies in the midst of some of the best known. Bowden's meticulous talent as an ethnographer ensures that its ethnographic value will last long after the importance of others has faded.*

Paul Roscoe, Emeritus Professor, University of Maine

Ross Bowden is an Australian cultural anthropologist and the author of four books on the Kwoma.

Cover image: Ayam, wearing the insignia of a Yalaku (and Kwoma) warrior of the highest status.

SK Publishing