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Paniyai, Kamu-Tigi and Mapiya, Paniai district, Papua Introduced and translated by Anton Ploeg

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By virtue of his function, a translator continually seeks compromise. On the one hand he knows he has an obligation to the storyteller and his or her particular speech style, on the other he has to show an understanding for the reader and his or her cultural background. Here I have opted in favour of the storyteller.

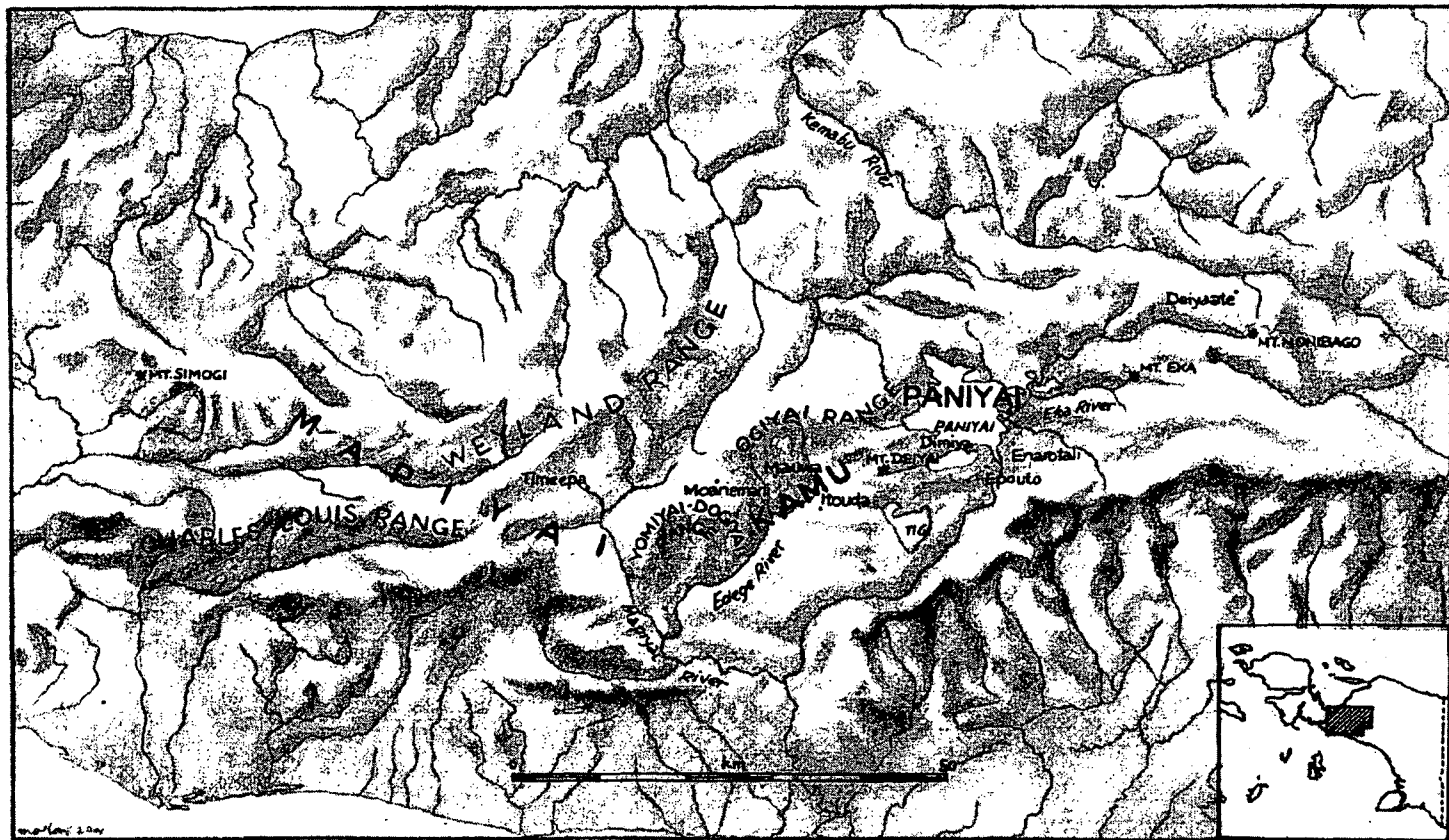
Hylkema 1990:xxxiii.

Introduction

With this paper, I introduce the ethnographic work of the late Sibbele Hylkema among the people whom he referred to as the Ekagi. In addition to my introduction, the paper consists of the English translation of a text by Hylkema that itself forms part of an introduction.

Hylkema assembled a sizeable corpus of traditional oral tales of the Ekagi (Hylkema 1990), which he intended to publish both in the Ekagi language and in Dutch translation. He introduced the Ekagi people and their way, or ways, of life, and subsequently their tales, in a lengthy preface, which I introduce here. This preface also included a sketch map drawn by Hylkema himself, which I am grateful to Marlous Terwiel for upgrading. For detailed comments on the text itself, I am grateful to two anonymous reviewers. My part was to think up a title that covered the main subject of the paper adequately: cultural variety among the Ekagi.

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Hylkema was a Roman Catholic missionary who spent his working life in the Central Highlands of Irian Jaya. From 1960 to 1969 he worked among the Ngalum, also known as Nalum or Nalumin, a people living close to the border with Papua New Guinea, and from 1969 to 1994 among the Ekagi, living near and around the three Paniai Lakes and westward towards the tip of the highlands (see map). He did not have any formal anthropological training and regarded himself primarily as a missionary, which for him, however, entailed an intensive study of the way of life of the people among whom he did his pastoral work. His investigations resulted in a voluminous corpus of writings. On the Ngalum he published *Mannen in het draagnet* (Men in string bags) in 1974, a monograph that testifies to his outstanding talents as an ethnographer. J. van Baal, in his introduction to the book, plainly expresses his admiration for Hylkema's work. When Hylkema had asked his advice on what books to read to prepare him for his work as an anthropologist, van Baal had replied that the reading of books was not a requisite. In Van Baal's words:

What he had to do [as an ethnographer] could be summed up in three words: look, listen, note. I have given people that advice more often, but I have never seen it followed so diligently. To look and to listen – that is what Hylkema has done. The resultant book represents the revival of an old and almost forgotten tradition whereby missionaries may author important ethnographies. (Van Baal 1974:vii.)

Hylkema's writings on the Ekagi, however, have so far remained unpublished. He returned to the Netherlands in 1994 and here continued work on his material. On his death in 1998 he left an oeuvre of several thousand pages (Ploeg 2000a). He had written a series of monographs on anthropology and linguistics in the 1970's. At the time of his death he was still working on two other monographs, one dealing with marriage payments, the other with cowry shells – an important, if not the most important, item of Ekagi wealth. He had finished a grammar and an Ekagi-Indonesian-Dutch dictionary.

Before explaining why I think Hylkema's paper presented in this article is an important contribution to our knowledge about the Ekagi, I give an outline of the current state of our knowledge about them. The Ekagi were the first group in the Central Highlands of western New Guinea to be effectively made subjects of the Dutch East Indies government. After the Paniai Lakes were spotted from the air, a patrol post was set up among them at the end of the year 1938. Because of the central position of the Paniai area, which made it an important starting-point for the exploration of the region and for the further extension of colonial control, there is a sizeable body of literature on the people and the area, written by colonial officials from different administrative departments and by missionaries of various denominations. An inventory of this literature is to be found in the annotated bibliography by

Van Baal, Galis and Koentjaraningrat (1984). I would specifically mention two publications here. One is the report of the scientific expedition led by C.C.F.M. le Roux, which was organized by the KNAG (Koninklijk Nederlands Aardrijkskundig Genootschap = Royal Dutch Geographical Society) in 1939. From its base near Lake Paniai, this expedition explored the surrounding region. The results of its work were only published after World War II (Le Roux 1948-50). The other is a series of papers about the Ekagi published by J.V. de Bruijn (see Van Baal, Galis and Koentjaraningrat 1984:143-4), who was in charge of the patrol post from early 1939 until its closure as a result of the Japanese occupation in 1943, and again after the war.

The first anthropologist to do research in the area was L. Pospisil, who undertook fieldwork in the Kamu valley, to the immediate west of the Paniai Lakes, in 1955. At the time he started his research, the valley had not yet been brought under administrative control (see Jaarsma 1990:137). Pospisil later made several return visits. He introduced the people to his colleague anthropologists and to students of anthropology through two major monographs (1958 and 1963), a series of articles, and a text published in the *Case Studies in Cultural Anthropology* series (1978). He referred to these people as Kapauku, although he realized (Pospisil 1958:13) that this name was an exonym (Appell 1968:2). As Hylkema argues in the article reproduced below, the Kamu Valley Ekagi among whom Pospisil worked form a culturally distinct sub-group, so it appears that his ethnography refers only partly to other Ekagi.

The Indonesian takeover of the administration of former Dutch New Guinea made it difficult for foreign researchers to work among the Ekagi. However, there are some recent publications about them by Giay, an academically trained Ekagi, whose main publication so far is his PhD thesis (1995). It was Giay who argued that the name Ekagi is wrong and that the correct name for his people is Me (Giay 1995:xvii). Hylkema does not use this name, but has stuck to the name Ekagi, for reasons he expounds in his article below. Although Giay has not convinced me of the validity of his arguments, I have started to follow his example in my own publications. However, as the present introduction is concerned with Hylkema's work, here I follow Hylkema.

There are several reasons why Hylkema's article appears to be an important contribution to our knowledge about the Ekagi. First, he discusses the people not as a single ethnic group but as a conglomerate of three sub-groups – the Paniyai, the Kamu-Tigi and the Mapiya Ekagi – and explores several points of difference between them. The fact that he distinguishes three groups may have something to do with the history of his own work, which in the main was carried out in three different locations (personal communication J. Donkers ofm). The thrust and substance of his argument make it look likely that existing, but unrecorded, subdivisions are based on only minor differences. In any case, he is the first author on the Ekagi to address

the issue of cultural differences among them. Secondly, Hylkema points out the difference between the more closely settled Paniyai and Kamu-Tigi Ekagi, with their economy based on sweet potato growing and pig breeding, and the more widely scattered Mapiya Ekagi, with their economy based on taro growing and hunting. This difference, already suggested in a preliminary description by Eyma in his research notes of 1939-40 (Ploeg 2000b), parallels subdivisions among Highlands groups in Papua New Guinea. Thirdly, Hylkema describes the Ekagi's search for identity in the multi-ethnic state and province they find themselves in. In addition, his work is valuable in the framework of the comparative ethnographic research in the West New Guinea Highlands currently conducted by Szalay (2000) and myself.

Hylkema's introduction is a fine example of his ethnographic style. As in *Mannen in het draagnet*, he illustrates the points he wants to make with the relevant details for which he had such a sharp eye. He does not quote from other authors, although it is clear from this article that he is well versed in the literature on the Ekagi.

Hylkema wrote the text in the course of his work among the Ekagi. His style is colourful and idiosyncratic – qualities intensified by his tendency to work in isolation. Consequently many passages proved difficult to translate. I take responsibility for the translation, but am greatly indebted to Mr. D.J. Hardy and Ms. M. van Yperen for the many corrections and improvements suggested by them.

In three cases I have left out a sentence because it contained no new information. This I have indicated with [...]. The footnotes and the comments in square brackets are mine. In most cases I have retained Hylkema's spelling of Ekagi words and phrases, which he in turn copied from his missionary colleagues Steltenpool and Van der Stap (Hylkema 1990:xxxix). Exceptions are current geographical and administrative names. So in this paper I use the three names Paniyai, Kamu-Tigi and Mapiya in Hylkema's spelling to refer to the three ethnic subgroups identified by him. On the other hand, I use the more usual spelling Paniai and Mapia to refer to the relevant administrative (sub)divisions, and in the case of Paniai to the three lakes formerly known as the Wissel Lakes, to the largest of these three lakes, and to the administrative division that includes the part of the central highlands extending westward from the lakes.

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HYLKEMA'S TEXT¹

The natural environment

The three lakes Paniai, Tage and Tigi are an important landmark in the homeland of the Ekagi. The remarkable phenomenon of three large lakes in a mountainous area, at an altitude of 1650 to 1750 metres, has inspired the name by which the area has become known to the outside world. The earlier name, Wissel Lakes, incorporated the name of the pilot who discovered the

¹ My translation of pages i-xxix of the introduction to Hylkema's Ekagi folk tales (Hylkema 1990). The page numbers of Hylkema's text are indicated by Roman numerals within brackets.

lakes in 1936. Currently, the official name of the entire area is Paniai, after the largest lake. Both names are slightly misleading, however. They draw the attention so much to the lakes that the fact is easily overlooked that these characterize only half the area, and the name Paniai really only refers to the easternmost part of the area, which extends at least once as far again towards Etna Bay on the south coast. The subdivision of the eastern half into Paniai, Tage and Tigi is in accordance with the topography of the lakes. In the western half the division into Kamu and Mapiya follows a natural boundary. Kamu refers to a large valley, enclosed by mountains on all sides. Mapiya is traditionally the name of the river immediately to the west of the Kamu. Nowadays, the name refers to the remainder of the Ekagi's territory, as far as its western edge. In contrast to the flat Kamu, which is swampy in the centre, the Mapiya area is characterized by a (ii) maze of steep mountains and deep, fast-flowing rivers. With the reservation that it is impossible to indicate distances accurately here, the length of the Ekagi's territory can be said to be about 130 kilometres and the width 50 kilometres. While in the north east people live at altitudes of up to 2000 metres, in the extreme south west they live below 1000 metres. These differences in altitude account for remarkable climatic differences, especially with regard to temperatures. Naturally, the topographical and climatic differences are reflected in the population density and in the material and spiritual culture of each area. The western Mapiya area is relatively sparsely populated. And the density decreases visibly the further west one goes.

Emphasis on differences

Before describing the material and spiritual culture, I would like to draw attention to the approach I have followed. When outlining the culture of a particular tribe, it is theoretically obvious that one will perhaps touch briefly upon regional differences but be guided mainly by what welds a group together into that particular tribe, as distinguished from neighbouring tribes. It should be noted that in the following the emphasis has shifted from a description of similarities to an enumeration of differences. There are several reasons for this. The first is simply practical.

The said theoretical rule would prevail if we had tales from several tribes or cultures which we wished to compare. This is not the case. The tales concerned all derive from what is usually referred to as the Ekagi culture. They have, however, been collected in several areas. Accordingly most of them reflect both the natural and the cultural situation of their area of origin, if not in the choice then in any case in the development of the theme. Readers who are unprepared for this are inclined to adapt their earlier impressions as they

move from story to story. As a result, in the end none of (iii) their impressions accord with reality. It is characteristic of Ekagi culture that some regional differences are so comprehensive that a general description will be inadequate. This may be illustrated by an example from the material culture, namely the construction of houses.

Three house types

The Ekagi did not traditionally live in villages. One searches their vocabulary in vain for equivalents of our words 'village', 'hamlet', or 'settlement'. In fact, the term 'house', *owaa*, sufficed them. The people used to live scattered in small units, preferably halfway up or at the foot of a slope. Typically, a unit was made up of an extended family comprising three generations. On the death of the first and the birth of the fourth generation, a unit would split up into two or three new units. Although a large progeny was traditionally the ideal, and a duty to be fulfilled individually, in fact fewer than two children per woman survived into adulthood.² While some units might double in the course of a generation, others would remain stable or die out. The population explosion is recent.

In principle, each unit had a room reserved for its male members, and in addition several family rooms. This is true for all the Ekagi, but it is not unique to them. It occurs also among the neighbouring Moni, further to the east. Considering how this principle has been realized from one area to the next, the people appear to use all imaginable forms. Leaving aside variations, we can distinguish three main types.

In the western Mapia region the entire unit used to live under one roof. I would point out in passing that in house construction and in the division of the house into rooms, as well as in gardening, the rectangle is used as basis. Under this single roof three rooms were partitioned off. The middle one (iv) was for the men, and the front and back ones for families. To enter or leave the men's section, one had to pass through the family rooms. The men's section had a raised floor; in the front and back rooms people sat and slept on the bare floor. In the second type, found predominantly in the Kamu and Tigi regions, a unit also lived under one roof. Here, however, the male section was in the front. The rest of the building was divided into two halves by a longitudinal wall and then partitioned off into a number of small rooms, in accordance with the number of women. In this type each room had its own door;

² Hylkema most likely made a mistake here. If he was right, the Ekagi population would have been in decline in the pre-colonial period, whereas the large population concentration near the three lakes suggests otherwise.

there were no interior doors. In some cases two family rooms might be added in front, with between them a corridor giving direct access to the men's section. In this second type as well, only the men's section had a raised floor. In the third type, predominantly in use in the Paniai areas, the men's common section either was combined with the family room of the 'house owner', usually the eldest brother, or constituted a separate house. There were no shared or individual family rooms under a single roof. Instead, the head of each family had a separate house plus yard for his family. In the foregoing I allowed myself the use of the past tense. As instructed by the administration, the people now are concentrated in longer or shorter rows of one-room-one-family houses along established roads. Men's dwellings no longer exist. However, this process has not been implemented or completed everywhere.

With these differences in house types we first come across remarkable differences in material culture. But they reflect just as many differences in the spiritual culture. Each type corresponds to a specific conception of the various relations in the extended family, notably those (v) between a man and his wife and children on the one hand and those between a man and his brothers on the other. As regards the tension between the two categories of relation, the solidarity between brothers is favoured in both the Mapiya and the Kamu-Tigi type. At the same time this solidarity is compulsory. In both cases the men's section constitutes the central or main room of the house, to which the family rooms have been added. The third type also expresses the solidarity between brothers, but this time clearly stripped of its comprehensive, compulsory character, in favour of the individual members and their relations with their own families. While in the first two types the individual is integrated in the group, in the third a man can to a certain extent go his own way. Each type likewise has special implications for the relation of the women to the men's section or men's house and consequently for their mutual relations. Finally, the distinct types have their special regulating effects on the contacts of both men and women with the outside world, roughly divided into kin and strangers. Each type uses particular mechanisms regulating actual communication, with its various facets of seeing and being seen, listening and being listened to, meeting and being met, soliciting and being solicited.

It is clear that the Kamu-Tigi type is a transitional one and that the differences become more pronounced on comparison of the eastern and western regions. It is no coincidence that relations in the west are characterized by a certain harmony, over against a scarcely concealed rivalry in the east. For not only do the different types betray different ideas about ideal relations in the extended family, they also reveal how the next generation is socialized.

Economic differences

Following the differences in climate, topography and population density, there are remarkable regional differences in material and spiritual culture. Although people throughout the area live off horticulture, the Ekagi of the western region until recently practised a kind of swidden farming. They merely pulled up, chopped down and stripped (vi) the vegetation, fertilized the soil by burning it, and then did the planting. In the east they additionally practised a rather intensive form of farming by combining this with composting and digging ditches and beds. While in the other regions sweet potatoes are the staple food, in the Mapia region, though sweet potato growing is on the increase, a swidden is still spontaneously identified with a taro garden.

In the other regions a person's prosperity is measured by the ownership of pigs. People use a complicated system of herding and letting others herd for them, and of buying and selling pigs using instalment payments, whereby the original owner does not completely relinquish his rights and the new owner cannot boast unconditional ownership. As a result, owners are inclined to let others look after their property and to pay for it, but people who have not inherited pigs hardly have a chance to acquire one in ownership. Only exceptional people are able to play both games successfully. And only pig owners can expect to be admitted to the group of people among whom cowries circulate as currency. Pig ownership is regarded as a safe investment in a system of continual lending and borrowing. Interestingly, feeding pigs traditionally involves feeding the animals sweet potato leftovers or scraps. It is hardly imaginable that a person should feed his pigs taro corms. Sweet potato scraps are at the disposal of the women, who have to do the daily planting and harvesting. Schematically a circular sequence emerges: woman - sweet potato - pig - shell - woman ...

I would not dare claim that there are fewer pigs in the Mapia area than in other regions, at least at present. But the manipulations attendant on pig ownership did not reach the heights there which it attained in the other regions. In contrast, hunting was, until very recently, in high regard. At high altitudes it was practised using snares and at lower altitudes with the aid of bows and arrows. A person could make a name for himself by becoming a diligent and skilful hunter. (vii) In the other regions hunting was certainly also practised, but there it was more of an incidental and individual pastime. Characteristic for the [low] regard in which it was held there is a casual remark in one of the clan myths of the Paniai region. In this tale an ancestor is said to have been so poor that he did not have the land to lay out gardens and had to hunt in order to make a living by selling the game he had caught for sweet potatoes. This ancestor made good only after out of pity he was given a wife. Because she had a disfigured face, nobody was prepared to

spend bridewealth on her. But she retained her rights to her ancestral garden lands and turned out to be a shrewd businesswoman. In this myth hunting is associated with poverty, but also with lack of intelligence – in short, with the current meaning of the word *daba*, 'person of low status'. In the west, on the other hand, people prefer to organize hunting parties which spend a fairly long period of time at several days' distance from their settlements. In spite of the romantic notion that primitive man is so close to nature that he can live off the fruits of the jungle, the hunter remains dependent on the harvest of his swiddens throughout the entire hunting period. This means that he has to rely on taro, which is relatively durable. In order to be able to organize a hunting expedition and to persuade others to join it, with himself as leader of the party, a man has to have a swidden with harvestable taro. In the second place, he has to be able to get enough women to carry provisions for the hunters to their camp and to restock it every two weeks. On the other hand, the more game a man can provide them with, the more popular he will become with the women, and the more able to rely on them for help. Traditionally hunting is held in such high regard in the west that a specific circular sequence has arisen: woman - taro - game - woman

In comparison with the earlier mentioned sequence, it is notable that in the latter the shell is lacking. Although a number of other highlands groups also used shells like the cowry and the *nassa* shell as currency, Ekagi society is exceptional in that this use has become extremely popular here. Generally, the *nassa* is valued quantitatively and the larger cowry qualitatively. Elaborating on this general custom, the Ekagi in the first place named and graded several categories of cowry on the basis of general criteria. (viii) Subsequently they evolved a system of more refined criteria, on the basis of which the value of each shell could be assessed objectively in its own category so it could be given its appropriate place in a string of shells. Obviously, many people had to see a shell, and it had to pass through many hands, before it finally ended up as part of a set forming a string. As regards regional differences, it is interesting to note, firstly, that each region had its favourite varieties and accordingly employed its own, regional grading system. At the same time it is clear, however, that these different grading systems seriously impeded interregional trade, as well as interregional marriage, given the prominent place of cowries in bridewealth. In the context of interregional differences, the Mapiya, typically, consciously avoided interregional marriages with an appeal to the different shell classifications. At the same time they managed to keep the bridewealth relatively limited. While in the Mapiya area the bridewealth still comprised one string of sixty cowries and seven strings of *nassa*, elsewhere it had increased sharply, in the course of two generations, to five strings of cowries and an amount of cash rather than *nassa*. While this substitution indicates the initially low value of money,

I would add for the sake of completeness that recently the cowry is rapidly being superseded by money. In the Mapia area people could practise restraint with regard to shells and bridewealth because they did not regard either as, strictly speaking, a means of payment or a price. This attitude, incidentally, is disappearing as fast as the money is flowing in.

In the areas around the lakes, crayfish was traditionally important as a food. Now that the crayfish has disappeared from the lakes, fish has not assumed the same role. Whereas nowadays people spend at most a few hours a day fishing, in the past it was not unusual for a woman to spend several days and nights on end catching crayfish. In the west, people dam up river streams to catch tadpoles by day. By night they catch frogs by torchlight. These activities yield far less, both qualitatively and quantitatively, than catching crayfish and fish. (ix) An important difference in the, rather poor, material culture is that in the east people use dugout canoes. These were needed for crayfish catching, but played an equally important role in transporting people, animals and goods. In the west, people are confined to carrying, travelling on foot along the steep mountain trails.

Socio-political differences

The economic differences are of course reflected in the socio-political relations. Here, too, we will merely touch upon some salient features. The differences are reflected most clearly in two feasts: the pig feast, *yurwo*, and the debt collection feast, *tapa*. Both are high points in the social life. In the east the pig feast occupies a central position, closely connected with sweet potato growing and pig husbandry. Including the time for preparations, it is a lengthy, phased event. It starts with the construction of a dance house and culminates in a massive slaughter of pigs in front of the dance house, which by then is flanked by guesthouses. The initiative for and participation in and the further course of the event are closely connected with the competition between the well-to-do struggling for local and regional hegemony. During the massive slaughter, both the supply of pigs and the sale of pork demonstrate unequivocally which of the prominent men has the largest following among the population. The feast must have been recently instituted, given the central position of the dance house and hence also the penis gourd. The use of the penis gourd leads me to estimate the age of the institution at less than a hundred years. Nevertheless, the pig feast has won great popularity in the eastern region, to the extent that it completely superseded a comparable, older feast. No one there seems to have any idea of what this feast was like. Its name has even disappeared from the vocabulary. It no longer even features in tales from the east, notwithstanding the conservative character of these tales.

In the west, by contrast, the pig feast has been introduced, but has never assumed the proportions it has elsewhere. Both the melody and the content of the (x) androcentric fertility songs that enliven the dancing on the rocking floor in other areas are unknown in the west. Here the dancing is combined with songs that are also sung on other occasions, and therefore were probably in use before the feast was introduced. Until fairly recently, the debt collection feast was held in the west. Although it is clear from eyewitness accounts that actually a small number of pigs were also killed on these occasions, what turns the event into a feast in the stories is the supply and distribution of the meat of small game. The event gets underway with an influential person announcing that he is obliged to collect his outstanding debts because he is no longer able to meet his own obligations. While he gives the collection of these debts a friendly touch by treating his debtors to meat, he pretends to be destitute, appealing to the loyalty of those he has helped out. For the people nearest by, this is a sign to go hunting. By selling the meat of the game they have caught to the assembled crowd on the announced day, they collect the shells with which they will be able to pay off their debts to the organizer of the event.

Although the settling of debts and simultaneously the contracting of new ones constitutes an important element of the pig feast, the public interest focuses on which of the competing parties, and which members of these competing parties, bring in and sell the largest amount of pork. In the older debt collection feast this competitive element is absent, although it cannot be denied that the organizer, though feigning destitution, is in fact giving a demonstration of his financial capacity and thus challenging his rivals to show before long what they are worth. At the pig feast, on the other hand, everyone's ambition and prestige is revealed and either rewarded or punished in the presence of the assembled crowd.

The organization of the two feasts has connections with the mutual competition and rivalry in the societies concerned, and with their rejection or acceptance. In a general sense, rivalry is said to be bad and degrading. But of course rivalry does colour the relations within and between generations, also in the western region. In order to be able to interpret the difference between the eastern and western regions, it is useful to (xi) distinguish between values and norms to which lip service is paid and those that are actually observed. Rivalry is qualified everywhere as bad and unworthy. Characteristically, in the western region this disapproval is not confined to oral statements. It is expressed in concrete ways and forms part of the socialization process. In the eastern region the matter is more complicated. Here the verbal disapproval of rivalry seems to be used primarily as an excuse for disarming an opponent and triumphing over him. This point can be illustrated with examples of behavioural patterns that become evident in the framework of legal disputes.

As a general rule, everyone has the right to speak at moots, irrespective of his economic or social status. In the west the proceedings are clearly dominated by the aim to hear each of the two parties in turn and to let everyone who wants to speak finish what he has to say. The dignity with which many speakers present themselves on the one hand and behave towards their opponents on the other is most impressive. In the eastern regions, however, we find first of all a fairly sharp division of the male population into people of lower status (*daba*) and of higher status (*tonowi*). Here, two different rules are frequently cited: first, the general rule that everybody has the right to speak, and next the rule that one must prove oneself before one can exercise this right. Proving oneself more or less involves offering substantial contributions to bridewealth payments without being under any kinship obligation to do so. This second rule clearly influences the readiness of others to listen to one. Apart from the right to take the floor, such a person also has the right to silence every other speaker in mid-speech and to awe the audience by performing the 'fury dance', driven by animosity or by a demon, with his bow and arrow at the ready and yelling some motto. It is a simple dance, consisting in stamping the bare ground with one's feet as one moves forward at a run, much like a petulant child that wants to have its own way kicking its feet. When someone suddenly springs a fury dance upon a meeting for the first time, the spectators feel entitled to comment approvingly (xii) or disapprovingly afterwards, with as criterion whether or not the person concerned has proved himself. While in the west there is a preference to ignore and not talk about mutual rivalry, in the east the phenomenon has been accepted. As is testified by the pig feast and the fury dance, an attempt has been made to channel it and make it beneficial for the community. The community is prepared to support any person in his ambition and his status, provided he proves himself by donating gifts.

Religious differences

I shall restrict myself here to one notable detail. Above I pointed out that the canoe of the eastern districts, dominated as they are by the lake, has no counterpart in the western region. It is not surprising that the canoe also figures in the major rites. The boat is universally regarded as an eloquent symbol of the human condition. The narrow confines of the canoe provide a graphic symbol of the minuteness and vulnerability of the human universe in comparison with the immensity and treacherousness of the pre-human chaos flowing around it and supporting it. To represent this experience visually, a miniature canoe of about a metre in length is used in rituals. Contrary to what one might expect in the case of a canoe, however, it is not ritually

launched, or anything like that, but is placed on dry land somewhere in the middle of the settlement. The associated spells portray the canoe as a safe place to stay, provided one ensures that the timbers do not become porous or develop holes and cracks, through which on the one hand all kinds of undesirable elements are liable to invade it and on the other people may disappear into the depths of the water. Hence one has to make sure that no water collects in the canoe and that it does not become covered with algae or mosses. The ritual represents a moral appeal to the participants to behave properly and responsibly.

Though in itself a felicitous solution, even its practical application in the ritual shows that the phenomenon and its interpretation are not wholly compatible. The fact that the canoe is removed from its proper element and put on land betrays that the underlying idea is inspired by the relationship between the cosmic earth and (xiii) the chaotic, water-filled abysses that surround it and at the same time support it. The canoe ritual is a historically more recent expression of the older, common notion that one must prevent holes from forming in the earth's surface and consequently, in close association with groundwater, tubers, which are intended for human beings, from rotting, as this will result in people being driven from their land and human society becoming destabilized and demoralized. Hunger will inevitably give rise to theft and homicide. On the other hand, humans may be directly affected, like the tubers, and disappear through the holes, as each new death demonstrates again and again. While a canoe may simply be written off as soon as it displays cracks and holes, holes in the earth may be filled in. This may be done ritually first by planting stone knives, and then by planting symbolically male trees of the cordyline [palm-lily] genus. The underlying idea does not have its roots in 'shipping' but in horticulture.

Where in practice the canoe is associated with the surface of the earth, in the relevant spells the key word *iye* only becomes really meaningful in the compound *maki-iye*, 'surface of the earth'. The earth's surface is typically conceived of as a surface that is spread out or unfolded and that provides a safe basis for things. Where in translation we are obliged to use the rather abstract word 'surface', to the Ekagi the word *iye* conveys the concrete idea of 'leaf' – a word which we, incidentally, still use in compounds like 'table leaf'. Traditionally leaves constitute the material on which things are placed or in which they are wrapped. In light of this immediate association of the word, it is not surprising that in rituals in the west leaves occupy a central position. Although here all features of every individual leaf and at the same time all leaf forms as they occur in nature and all symbolically interpreted kinds are used in rituals, this is based on the practical use of a large, intact surface that is usable as a safe resting-place for things. Notwithstanding their differences in appearance, the canoe, the surface of the earth and the tree leaf are similar

in the fundamental sense of 'basic thrust'³, the customary finale of every major ritual. (xiv)

Linguistic differences

Regionally based economic, socio-political or religious differences may impede lasting, intensive contacts, but do not stand in the way of incidental encounters. Whether or not strangers try to contact each other is dependent in rural areas on language. Language determines whether strangers will pass each other in silence, and thus confirm each other's strangeness, or whether they will stop and thus break the spell of strangeness. Comparison of the language spoken by the Ekagi with those of their easterly neighbours, the Moni or Dani, or with the Mimika language in the south shows that these languages are possibly linguistically related, but to all intents and purposes are mutually unintelligible. The linguistic relationship is not so close that people can communicate with each other in their own language. In order to be able to converse with each other, people need to have been brought up bilingually, as is usual in frontier areas, or to learn the other language like a foreign language. In the context of this introduction, the important question is to what extent the language spoken in the Ekagi's territory encourages or discourages interaction.

In view of the fact that the language is not a written language and of the extensiveness of the territory, linguistic homogeneity is obviously ruled out. When we examine the various regions from east to west on this point, we notice that there are differences between all of them, which, however, pale into insignificance when we compare the language spoken in all the other regions with that of the western Mapia area. From this it follows that the discussion of the linguistic issue will be a two-track one. First we will consider the differences between the eastern regions, and then we will discuss the remarkable difference between the single Mapia region and the other regions combined.

Although to us the differences may appear to be minimal, the importance the Ekagi attach to them is apparent from the fact that they have demarcated the linguistic boundaries within the confines of their territory. In this connection it is worth noting that these boundaries partly coincide with natural

³ Hylkema used the English words 'basic thrust' in his Dutch original. I am inclined to replace the latter word with 'trust', since that is the idea that seems to evoke the – relative – safety provided by the canoe and by the surface of the earth. An anonymous reviewer of this article, however, believed the word 'thrust' to be correct, in his view standing for 'main theme', that is, the main theme of the ritual.

boundaries, but do not always do so, especially not with the recent boundaries drawn as a result of the administrative division into districts. This does not alter the fact that in the eyes of older Ekagi this division, with its (xv) boundaries and administrative centres, represents a grotesque distortion of the previous division into centres and peripheries. As an illustration of the multiplicity of boundaries, I would draw attention to the situation in the Kamu valley as compared with the neighbouring Mapia district. In view of the natural boundaries between it and the surrounding mountain ranges, the Kamu valley appears as an integrated whole, and the boundary between it and the Mapia district must necessarily coincide with, among others, the Yomiyai-Dogiyai range. Consequently, the Kamu valley has been made a district and, in spite of the proximity of the traditionally important centre, Mauwa, the hamlet of Maonemani has been made its administrative centre. Where the reasons for this might seem obvious to an outsider, the fact that the whole of the Mapia region has been made a district and that Bomomani has finally been chosen out of a number of places to be its main centre shows that topographically the area is baffling to the outsider. If linguistic rather than natural divisions are taken as point of departure, the boundary appears not to coincide with the Yomiyai-Dogiyai range, but to cut right across the Kamu valley, whereby the North Kamu area is oriented to the Obaano valley to the east of the Ogiyai Mountains and the South Kamu area to the Mapia valley to the west of the Yomiyai-Dogiyai range. In this context I deliberately distinguish between the Mapia valley and the Mapia region or district. Although it is tempting, in view of the close similarities, to speak of a Mapia language as distinguished from the language spoken elsewhere, the regional differences are striking from an inside perspective.

The differences between the dialects of the other regions appear to be restricted to the vocabulary. Each region has a limited number of words specific to it. A regional pronunciation of what are essentially the same words is all the more common. [...] Every speaker betrays his area of origin by the words he uses and the way he pronounces them. Generally speaking this does not detract from mutual intelligibility, however. (xvi)

This is different as soon as one includes the Mapia language in the comparison. Firstly, the Mapia vocabulary includes a remarkable number of regionally specific words. Contrary to what is the case elsewhere, the meanings of these words are not understood outside the region. In this connection I would mention the special kinship terminology. Outsiders are irritated by the metatheses in frequently used words, such as the demonstrative pronoun *kidi* becoming *diki*, and so on. The intelligibility of the language is especially affected by the substitution of the 'j', as used elsewhere, by 's' or 'h', which are unknown elsewhere. This is the more true since substitution by 'h' is one reason why initial vowels are preceded by a soft 'h'. This sound shift results in a

change of words. As a result outsiders are obliged to reverse the procedure if they wish to understand a speaker. Alongside the frequent vowel change from 'o' to 'u', a notable feature in the Mapia area is that the ending of the past participle contains an 'e' in contrast to the 'i' elsewhere, as, for example, in the word for 'given', *meneta* instead of *menita*. In contrast to the mutual differences elsewhere, here grammar is also involved. People elsewhere use different endings for the future tense when referring to actions taking place today and actions taking place later. In the Mapia area, however, only the latter ending is used. In the present participle, 'na' is added to the ending 'te' that is usual elsewhere.

These shifts give rise to ambivalence. On the one hand it is quite feasible to draw up an inventory of regional peculiarities. The shifts are systematic and not far-reaching. When one is drawing up such an inventory, one is inclined to comment that it is only a knack of it. But the cumulation of all these peculiarities tends to irritate the outsider. He hears his own language, but in such a distorted form that his preparedness to listen disappears. Whenever I consult informants elsewhere about Mapia texts, they tend spontaneously to refuse to comment, saying: 'That is Mapiya language, ask them'. From the Mapiya point of view the situation, strangely enough, is not quite the same. In church matters, people have had to make do for years with translations in the Tigi and Paniai dialects. Doubtless, this is having a standardizing influence, as is apparent in song composition. But it cannot be denied that the average believer cannot identify with these translations and is not happy with them. In this connection the numerous attempts to correct existing translations are significant. (xvii) Intelligibility is not the only consideration in these attempts. The fact that a dialect that is spoken elsewhere is used seems to grate on people. It seems to undermine their identity. A dialect betokens an entire culture.

Intentional differences

In this introduction I emphasize the regional differences within the Ekagi culture because of the nature of the tales I have collected. They all have the regional situation and regional conceptions of situations elsewhere as point of departure. In attempts to localize *nassa* shell sites in the western Mapia region, the lowlands are imagined, in a coastal perspective. When bead sources are traced in the centrally located Tigi region, the boundary between the realms of the living and of the dead is at issue.

Another reason for foregrounding the differences is connected with the culture itself. All outsiders are struck by the large number of tribes, languages and cultures among the relatively small number of inhabitants of

New Guinea. In this respect the Ekagi are a favourable exception. One cannot help wondering how these small groups can survive and yet preserve their own culture. The implicit assumption [of the outsider] seems to be that these groups are victims of a fragmentation process and are threatened with destruction. Stability, in the sense of maintenance of the status quo, is the least that outsiders wish for these groups. From this point of view the concern with which they react to the process of fragmentation is relevant. They would like to stop it, if not reverse it. They are annoyed by headstrong members of these societies who, by reacting against the existing group and glorifying their regional individuality, stimulate the process of fission and fragmentation. The standardization of the Tigi language has to be understood in this context. Only when a uniform language develops can we hope that, along with the language, the culture may last in a situation of unity in diversity. (xviii)

Here the difference between the outsider and insider viewpoints becomes clear. The large number of tribes, languages and cultures is the result of existing groups splitting up into new ones over the centuries. This is not a natural or automatic process of which people are the victims, but a progressive differentiation that they have set off and sustained. It is a cultural process. In view of the result over the centuries, it may be regarded as being characteristic of the cultural personality of the New Guinean.

At first sight the organization of society into extended families, lineages, clans and tribes creates an impression of stability. This impression is reinforced by the fact that all these groups are named. A name seems to guarantee stability as well as identity, the more so since the naming process is beyond people's ken. Against the background of an existence of centuries, the impression of stability is the product of the brevity of the observation period. The tendency towards fission is part of the structure.

In this respect clan myths are illuminating, since they bring the points of origin and naming into view. The genre is conspicuous for its ambiguity with regard to the individual and social characteristics of a figure presented as the ancestor in the myths. Clan consciousness benefits on the one hand from a highlighting of the clan's origin, and hence of its essential equivalence with neighbouring clans, notwithstanding factual differences on the points of size, land ownership and prestige. It benefits on the other hand from an emphasis on its relatedness to certain other clans, and hence on its membership of a larger group. Since this relatedness actually runs in a vertical line, on the analogy of the father-son relationship, equivalence and relatedness are mutually incompatible. A historically younger clan at one time in the past split off from an older one. Because a myth has its own concepts of time and space, it is able to neutralize the opposition. Without going into historical relationships, it presents both clans in a horizontal relationship via their ancestors,

analogous to that between two brothers.⁴ When the Tekege clan prides itself on descent from (xix) a Moni clan – 'We were originally Moni' – the myth substitutes this descent with origin. The ancestor of the Tekege is represented as belonging to the same generation as the ancestor of the relevant Moni clan. The Tekege are not exceptional in this respect. The notion that the Ekagi are descended from the Moni is a general one. When a Pakage myth relates this episode, however, it takes advantage of the opportunity to represent the neighbouring Dani in addition to the Ekagi and the Moni as three brothers.

While a name suggests permanence, this permanence in turn is ensured to no small degree by registration [by the colonial government]. At present it looks as if such registration has immortalized the names. When registering their names [with the authorities], people generally stated the name of some overarching clan, even if this clan had already split internally into two or three subclans, or if a splinter had separated off from it by adopting a new name and creating its own myth of origin. In the Tage region the You clan had split in this way into the Bedekoto in the west and the Egaikoto in the east, the Tekege clan into the Kogimou in the north, with Dimiya as its centre, and the Yepomou, to the south of the lake [Lake Tage], with Oneepa as its centre. The division of the You is reflected in two separate myths of origin. The Tekege to the north of the lake have told me several versions of their myth of origin, which they claimed to be authentic Tekege myths. It is notable that these versions mention only the Tekege of Dimiya. Although they mention migrations to other places, the narrators have managed to keep the Oneepa Tekege completely out of the picture. Because both halves presented themselves under the same name, Tekege, at the time of registration, an identity seems to have been put on record that was already out of date as a result of the internal split.

Ekagi and Yimogi

So far I have referred to the tribe concerned, seemingly ingenuously, as the Ekagi. Since the area was opened up, a number of names have been used in publications. Hence the name Ekagi is not as uncontested as my usage may suggest. An outsider, when confronted with the problem, is inclined to shrug his shoulders and say: 'What's in a name?' But meanwhile we are letting an obvious opportunity go by for characterizing the cultural personality of the Ekagi in relation to his own world and the outside world. The time devoted

⁴ An anonymous reviewer of an earlier version of this text pointed out that Hylkema may have overlooked the fact that the relationship between full brothers may be unequal as well in terms of birth order.

to naming in initiation rites at the individual level and clan myths at (xx) the communal level provides ample proof that the Ekagi does not recognize the above statement as applying to him. This is because [for him] name, identity and person are too closely linked.

Consistently with the closed character of traditional [Ekagi] society, each tribe had fixed names for neighbouring population groups. Sometimes they are names of individual tribes, but often of several different tribes. Generally the Ekagi referred to the Moni, their easterly neighbours, as 'Mou'. At a less general level, he distinguished the Mou from their neighbours, the Dani, or 'Kayaa'. Very few of them may have realized, however, that the groups thus named were internally subdivided into a number of tribes and linguistic groups. The people of Epouto became aware of the existence of the Amungmee when Amungmee came to be employed in this area. The coastal peoples both to the north and to the south are indiscriminately referred to as *ogai*, closely connected with the word for lowlands, *oge*. [...] People are more familiar with the names for other groups that are in use in their own language area, than with the names by which they themselves are known in neighbouring language areas. Thus they know that the Mou call them 'Isani', but do not know by which name the Kayaa, or Dani, call them. While this shows that people were hardly interested in what names they were given elsewhere, [it is equally obvious that] in this closed system they did not need a name for themselves. At the tribal level the personal pronoun 'we' sufficed.

Only since the area was opened up, with as a result outsiders settling among the Ekagi and subsequently Ekagi moving to other areas, have the Ekagi faced the problem of identity and of appropriate individual names. As the Europeans were introduced to the highlands by people from the south coast, it might have been expected that they would adopt the name that was in use there. It is a testimony to the astuteness of the new arrivals that they did not do so. The name Kapauku only appeared in the literature as late as the 1950's, to disappear again in the 1960's. Closely connected (xxi) with its foreign origin, the name had a pejorative ring for the Ekagi, even though the word itself has no derogatory connotation at all. It refers to the highlanders as tobacco suppliers to the coastal people. Here again we have a name that only referred directly to the peripheral frontier people with whom trade was carried on and which only later became a kind of name for all highlanders, and later again for a specific tribe.

For a number of years the word *mee* has been promoted as specific tribal name, especially by migrant Ekagi living in the various coastal settlements. In this context they have narrowed down the meaning of the word for 'human'. For one thing, this is not an original 'invention', since other New Guinea tribes adopted this practice before them. More importantly, however, the name is a sign of the identity crisis the Ekagi are experiencing as a group

in the coastal settlements – apparently primarily vis-à-vis comparable groups of strangers, but in essence no less vis-à-vis their own relatives in the highlands. Given the ambiguous, if not provocative sense [of the word], we would do well to reflect on its authentic meaning.

In the first place, the word *mee* is not an exclusively Ekagi word, but also forms part, with the same meaning 'human being', of the vocabulary of the neighbouring Moni tribe. According to a traditional Ekagi principle, a word only reveals its real meaning when seen in juxtaposition with its set antonym. The word *mee* is used in the first place as a collective term for humankind, in opposition to the collective term for the non-human occupants of the same area, ultimately 'the demons'. 'Humans' and 'demons' together form the population of the whole world, in its vertical dimension, analogously to 'angels and humans'. In the second place, *mee* denotes all highlanders collectively, as opposed to the coastal people collectively, or *ogai*. Together, the two antonyms denote the entire population of the world on the horizontal plane. Although for all practical purposes the local population is meant by 'humankind' in both cases, in principle the word denoted firstly all other Ekagi, and subsequently the neighbouring eastern tribes. An eloquent example in this connection is the clan name Kayamee, literally meaning 'Dani people', for an Ekagi tribe north of Lake Paniai.

After the area was opened up, the meaning of *ogai* and subsequently (xxii) of *mee* came adrift. The Ekagi were obliged to identify and distinguish between themselves and the Europeans and, in their wake, the people of coastal New Guinea and Indonesians all at the same time. In this process of identification they soon came to reserve the word *buna*, 'black', for the coastal people, so that the word *ogai* became available first for the Indonesians and then for the few remaining whites. Although older people greet or address me as 'Father', children among themselves refer to me as *ogai*, thus betraying what the older people call me in my absence. How this term should be interpreted will be apparent from the following passages. Over the years, the criterion for whether to use *mee* or *ogai* has shifted gradually from a difference in race to a difference in culture, in close association with the words for indigenous and non-indigenous. What is relevant for this difference in culture is the fixed difference in language, *mee-mana* denoting Ekagi and *ogai-mana* Indonesian. The various cultural differences have ultimately become focused in the economic dimension, under the common denominator of money. Thus *mee* has come to stand for being stuck in the traditional system of subsistence farming and pig husbandry, and *ogai* for participating in the money economy. Strictly speaking, *mee* stands for daily work carried out at one's own risk and offering only incidental opportunities for earning a little cash by selling produce, and *ogai* for having assured oneself in an intransparent way of a regular supply of cash via a salary or of the ownership of the

very source – the monopoly of the whites – and thus continually taking advantage of the labour of others.

As the criterion has gradually shifted from particular cultural differences, such as whether or not one wears clothes or speaks the local language, to the degree of participation in the money economy, the dividing line no longer runs parallel to differences in colour or race but cuts right across the whole of Ekagi society. This criterion is an embarrassment to educated Ekagi. On the one hand, they want a share in the foreign culture, with all its advantages, culminating in the modern money economy. On the other hand, they find it hard to put up with being distrusted and excluded by their kin as *ogai*. Typical of this ambivalence is the more or less stereotypical behaviour of young Ekagi when they return to the interior after an absence of years on the coast. In dress and behaviour they show that they participate in the foreign culture, but at the same time they call upon (xxiii) their kin not to view them as *ogai* but as fellow tribesmen, or *mee*. It would not surprise me if many educated Ekagi who return to their kin after years in foreign parts were aware of the desirability of presenting themselves as *mee* in order to be able to behave as *ogai*.

After this discussion of the names Kapauku and Mee, we return to Ekagi. This word is immediately recognizable in sound and form as having come into being as an authentic Ekagi word. Because it looks and sounds so authentic, it is all the more striking that its content hardly resonates [with] or appeals [to the people themselves]. It is a mysterious word. Like all names, it will preserve its secret until one starts actively delving into the ancestral culture. The name already crops up in the literature resulting from the first contacts [of the outside world] with the tribe. I should add, however, that in these documents it is used in conjunction with a second, related, but forgotten word Jimogi or Simogi. In the light of the intriguing differences between the geography, language and culture of the eastern regions together on the one hand and the western region on the other, it is not surprising that the early literature mentions two admittedly related, but nevertheless distinct, tribes. The name Simogi is reserved for the inhabitants of the region dominated by the Charles-Louis and Weyland ranges and the name Ekagi for the inhabitants of the regions dominated by the lakes. Both names are rooted in the contemporary perception of humankind and the world. I found both of them used explicitly and implicitly in ritual spells in the context of a pig feast in Dimiya in the Tage region. These spells represent the Mou and Kayaa as people to the east and the Jimogi as people to the west of 'we', the local people, implicitly identified with the Ekagi. Because in the governmental and church administration the Jimogi were soon reduced to an integral part of the Ekagi, the mutual equality that is attributed to the four said tribes in relation to one another in both the early literature and the ritual spells is all the more striking. [...]

This equality does not exclude the possibility that one of them may have originated from one of the others and so is historically dependent on it. Several (xxiv) clan names in the Jimogi area are wholly similar to clan names in the Ekagi area. The myths of origin of clans like the Tebai, Mote and Tekege do not conceal the fact that these came into being as a result of migration and fission from similarly named clans elsewhere. But the myths of origin of seemingly autochthonous clans like the Petege, Wakei and Dogono also contain echoes, albeit weak ones, of descent from certain clans in the Ekagi area. The myths of origin of genuine Ekagi clans testify that historical relationship need not clash with tribal equality. These myths also contain echoes of the descent of the Ekagi from the Moni, yet nobody in his right mind would dispute the tribal independence of the Ekagi. This small detail suggests, however, that the Ekagi split off from the Moni much earlier than the Jimogi from the Ekagi.

This brings us to another remarkable fact. Although the latter fission is recent, the supposition seems justified that the Jimogi and Ekagi were nominally constituted as tribes only at the moment the Jimogi split off. On the one hand, the Moni name *Isani* is the only one we have to refer to the tribe as an undivided whole, while on the other the names Ekagi and Jimogi have been created in opposition to each other, on the basis of the language of these groups themselves. This creation of oppositional names testifies to the application of a procedure that can be observed in detail in the appropriate context of name-giving in myths. It is worth noting in the first place that both names comprise the same number of syllables; secondly that the first part of each constitutes an independent word: *yimo* and *eka*; and lastly that the last syllables are identical: *gi*. This combination of difference and similarity in pairs of names is not coincidental, but has been consciously effected. In support of this argument, I point to the names that designate the two halves of the You and Tekege clans, in the Tage region, as separate clans: Bedo-koto and Egai-koto, and Kogi-mou and Yepu-mou.

In both pairs of names we again recognize the constants of the same number of syllables, a difference in the first syllables, and agreement between the last syllables. Both pairs reveal their meaning almost instantly, as each name is composed of two commonly used words. (xxv) The different elements in each compound appear to be modifiers, and the identical ones the element modified. Difference means that which is optional, identity that which is essential. The different words in the first pair mean 'slug' (*egai*) and 'bird' (*bedo*) respectively. In combination with the other word they can both be taken in a singular and a plural sense. The identical word means literally 'bridge' or 'climbing-pole' and metaphorically 'connection'. 'Slug' and 'bird' are the result of an original way of reasoning. In the relevant myth, the choice of 'slug' is associated with a particular species of slug found in Epouto, on the

eastern shore of the lake [Tage], the centre of the Ekaigoto. While this clarifies the choice [of this word], for the reasoning underlying the oppositional term 'bird' we have to rely on our own inventiveness. In spells 'slug' (*egai*) is associated with 'worm' (*tokai*). Both are the daily fare of birds whose species is not specified here. The identical word 'bridge' (*koto*) is not the result of some ingenious idea. It is used quite often in the names of clans that are related to each other. Hence the choice can be formally explained as an adaptation of an existing practice. But this adaptation at the same time betrays the aim of the assignment of this name: the constitution of two independent clans. As regards meaning, however, the word 'bridge' draws attention to the fact that the two names have to be understood in relation to each other. The juxtaposition of the two names gives rise to a rhythmic formula which then should be interpreted in the way appropriate for formulas. In this interpretation 'slug' and 'bird' appear as two diametrically opposed poles. Here the playful element in naming becomes apparent. Although to the outside world each name separately denotes an independent clan, as such equal to all surrounding clans, in combination the two names seem to suggest a mutual relatedness. Both clans have as basis two clan halves that are not equivalent, analogously to the relationship between a hunter and his prey. The idea of two equivalent opponents is utterly alien to the Ekagi.

In light of the above, we can be brief about the names Kogimou and Yepumou for the two halves of the Tekege clan. If we want to understand the meaning of these names, we will again have to read them in combination. Underlying them is the Tekege's claim that historically they stem from the (xxvi) Kogi, a clan of the neighbouring Moni, to whom the Ekagi in general look up. An argument against this claim is, firstly, that the Tekege are usually regarded as part of a phratry of seven clans named Mogopiya. The centre of this phratry is traceable to the Obaano valley, to the west of Lake Paniai. This fact is usually not mentioned in the myth [of origin]. Clearly, if the Tekege are really descended from the Kogi, the link is not nearly as direct as the myth of origin suggests. The playful element in this compound is provided by the unusual word *yepu*. *Yepu* with reference to pigs can be translated as 'cross' or 'hybrid', namely the offspring of a sow casually mating with a boar of a different breed. In combination the two clans can be said to be identical as regards descent from the Moni tribe, and different in that the one can trace its descent directly from the Kogi clan and the other only indirectly. Where we seem at first sight to have here another case of unity in diversity, or of duality in unity, the diversity or duality finds expression in two unequal or asymmetrical opponents which differ in rank, the one being of pure, the other of mixed descent.

When we wonder what past events may be reflected in this distinction, the idea suggests itself that the Yepumou may owe their origin to a migration

from Dimiya, to the north of Lake Tage, to Oneepa, to the south of the lake. From this point of view the Kogimou are directly and the Yepumou indirectly related to the Kogi. This implies that among the Kogimou the superiority of the Moni survives in a pure form, and among the Yepumou in a diluted form. This conclusion may be interpreted as an expression of self-elevation in exposing one's opponent. However, when we subsequently ask at what point this impurity entered the group, the attention shifts from the Yepumou to the Kogimou, who are unable to substantiate their claim to direct descent from the Moni. They themselves constitute the boar that is responsible for impurity of the breed. For, despite their assertions to the contrary, reality shows them to be but common Ekagi instead of superior Moni. What at first sight seems to be good-natured mockery of an opponent, on closer inspection appears to be laconic self-mockery. In the analysis of this word game, the mythological figure of the Trickster or the Great Deceiver – the elusive two-faced man, closely associated with the ancestor – seems to be continually peeping around the corner. (xxvii)

These two examples provide a solid basis on which to reconstruct the origins of the names Simogi and Ekagi. This reconstruction will reveal a variant application of the same kind of cryptic wordplay. In contrast to the two above examples, the word Simogi is only ostensibly a compound. The choice of the two names is based on the practice of naming the inhabitants of a particular area by reference to a specific landmark: in the case of large groups usually a mountain, lake or river, in that of small ones preferably trees specified according to species. Against this background it is possible to explain the use of the name Moni, the common name for the people the Ekagi refer to as Mou. There is a Mount Moni or Monibago (3280 m) to the east of the 'point of three tribes', Deiyaate – a population concentration of Ekagi, Moni and Dani on the River Degeuwo⁵, to the north of the Aga basin. Its summit figures as an alternative for the summit of Mount Deiyai (3225 m) in the Ekagi's tribal area in the expression 'someone as tall as the Moni'. In common parlance the people living at its foot would have to be referred to as *moni-kabagee*. Probably because people elsewhere are hardly aware of the existence of this mountain, the name has been reduced to simply Moni with reference to the tribe. As a result the expression 'someone as tall as the Moni' is understood to refer to both the mountain and the tribe.

Simogi is the name of a remarkable mountain in the Weyland range. Similarly to what happened in the case of the name Moni, the name of this mountain has been used also with reference to the people living around it. While the name as referring to the mountain is only known locally, with reference to the people it has spread abroad. Because of its location at the [west-

⁵ I assume that Degeuwo is the Ekagi name for the River Kemabu.

ern] end of the Weyland range, Mount Simogi as it were marks the western limit of the [Ekagi-Simogi] tribal territory as a whole. In view of the double meaning of this name, it is understandable that people looked for a counterpart marking the extreme east of the territory. This led them to the Eka massif, which also lent its name to the local river and subsequently the local valley. The Eka valley is known to have been the cradle of the Degei clan and the many clans related to it via [a series of] consecutive splits. Although translation of the name Eka yields the equivalents 'name' and 'word', the myths of clans related to the Degei do not use it in this sense, but rather associate *eka* with the verb *ekai*, to 'open'. It is at this spot that Mount Eka opened, so that the first people were able to emerge and give up their mythical existence for an empirical one after travelling underground to this mountain from a place in the east. At the same time the Eka valley opened to admit the people who had emerged from underground. The underlying idea is that of the opening of the glans and of the womb in order to afford a passage for the semen. Hence Mount Eka is firmly anchored in the culture. To begin with, the names Simogi and Eka designated the two extremities of the territory in their polarity. Then, each of the two tribal halves was associated with one of the two mountains. Finally, in association with these mountains, they were included in the oppositional relationship between them. By reference to the two mountains, the two tribal halves were nominally constituted as independent tribes. Curiously enough, this was done in such a convincing way that they were both recognized and identified as such by the outside world. On closer acquaintance we notice, however, that the two halves are remarkably unequal to each other. This aspect is also graphically expressed in the names. Mount Eka stands for the east and hence, by association with the sun, for life, renewal, innovation, and ascent. Mount Simogi stands for the west and hence is the symbol of decline, continuity, conservatism and, finally, death.

With these two opposed mountains as starting-point, the asymmetrical difference between the two tribes can be empirically confirmed. That leaves us with the essential aspect of identity, usually expressed in the second element of the word, here the common particle *-gi*. It is actually this particle that makes understanding of the meaning of the word Ekagi difficult. Practically, people had hardly any choice here. The name Simogi provided the example for the particle, which simply had to be added to Eka for the sake of symmetry. It is not a word like *-koto* and *-mou* in the two preceding examples. On the other hand, it is not simply a series of sounds. It is an existing suffix. It is used in combination with the word for 'seed' or '*bibit*' (Indonesian), [as] *iyoo-gi*, in the stereotypical opening words of dance songs, for instance. In adding it to Eka, people were following the example of its application in typically poetic language. This gives rise to the question of what meaning or function this particle has in both cases. Even informants who had composed dance

songs and used (xxix) *iyoo gi* as opening word in the traditional way themselves appeared never to have reflected on its meaning. Although the remainder of the sentence consisted of sequences of the word *iyoo* (seed) alternating with long vowel sounds, [and] sometimes *iyoo* was modified by the words *mee* (human seed) or *yoka* (children's seed), the sentence was opened with *iyoo gi* from sheer force of habit. In view of the context, I am inclined to interpret *gi* in the function of a collective.

The occurrence of what is essentially cryptic usage in both dance songs and names is no coincidence. In both cases people tend to imitate this usage, while they recognize its cryptic character, but need an external stimulus to reflect on its meaning. It is true of both songs and names that they are not 'thought up' but force themselves on people's attention – they 'see the song happen' and 'hear the name called'. The only thing they need to do is to 'read', to interpret what they have seen or heard and convert it into language. Songs and names, with their cryptic character, both reflect a typically pre- or extra-human origin. Loss of the ability to appreciate traditional songs or names is indicative of a break with the cultural past.