

TARO AND ARROWS: ORDER, ENTROPY, AND  
RELIGION AMONG THE TELEFOLMIN

by

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B.A., San Fernando Valley State College, 1969

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
Department of Anthropology and Sociology

We accept this thesis as conforming  
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

February 1981

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the theme of order and entropy in the society, religion, and life of the Telefolmin people of Papua New Guinea, with an emphasis on the interpretation of secret rites and myths of the men's cult. Based on research in Telefolmin in 1974-5, the thesis draws upon the perspectives of Turner, Wagner, and Burridge.

In the Telefol view order is a contingent construction which men maintain in the face of the world's drift toward entropy, corresponding to the concept of *biniman*: the process of dissipation and decay, 'becoming nothing'. The struggle against entropy informs several sectors of Telefol life, ranging from marriage practices to food tabus. A major strategy involves the segregation of antithetical acts and states, summarized in the polarization of nurturing and killing, which forms the major axis of the cult division between Taro (gardening, etc.) and Arrow (hunting, warfare, etc.). The anchoring point of the Telefol world is the men's cult house, which youths enter through a series of initiations. The rites are examined in detail, accompanied by an account of secret myths revealed in initiation. Analysis of the logic of secrecy shows that the multi-layered revelatory process illuminates principles of Telefol order while at the same time negating them. Thus the initiatory process highlights the dissonances of Telefol culture, calling "first principles" into question. This extends even to the notion that secret knowledge is capable of making reality transparent, a point underscored by the transcendental role of Magalim, a spirit embodying the notion of entropy.

The thesis concludes by suggesting that Telefol religion comments on the possibilities of knowledge, men's hopes, the meaning of human action, and man's nature. Far from escaping life's ambiguities, men encounter them forcefully in Telefol religion. This implies that the anthropology of religion should be prepared to do no less.

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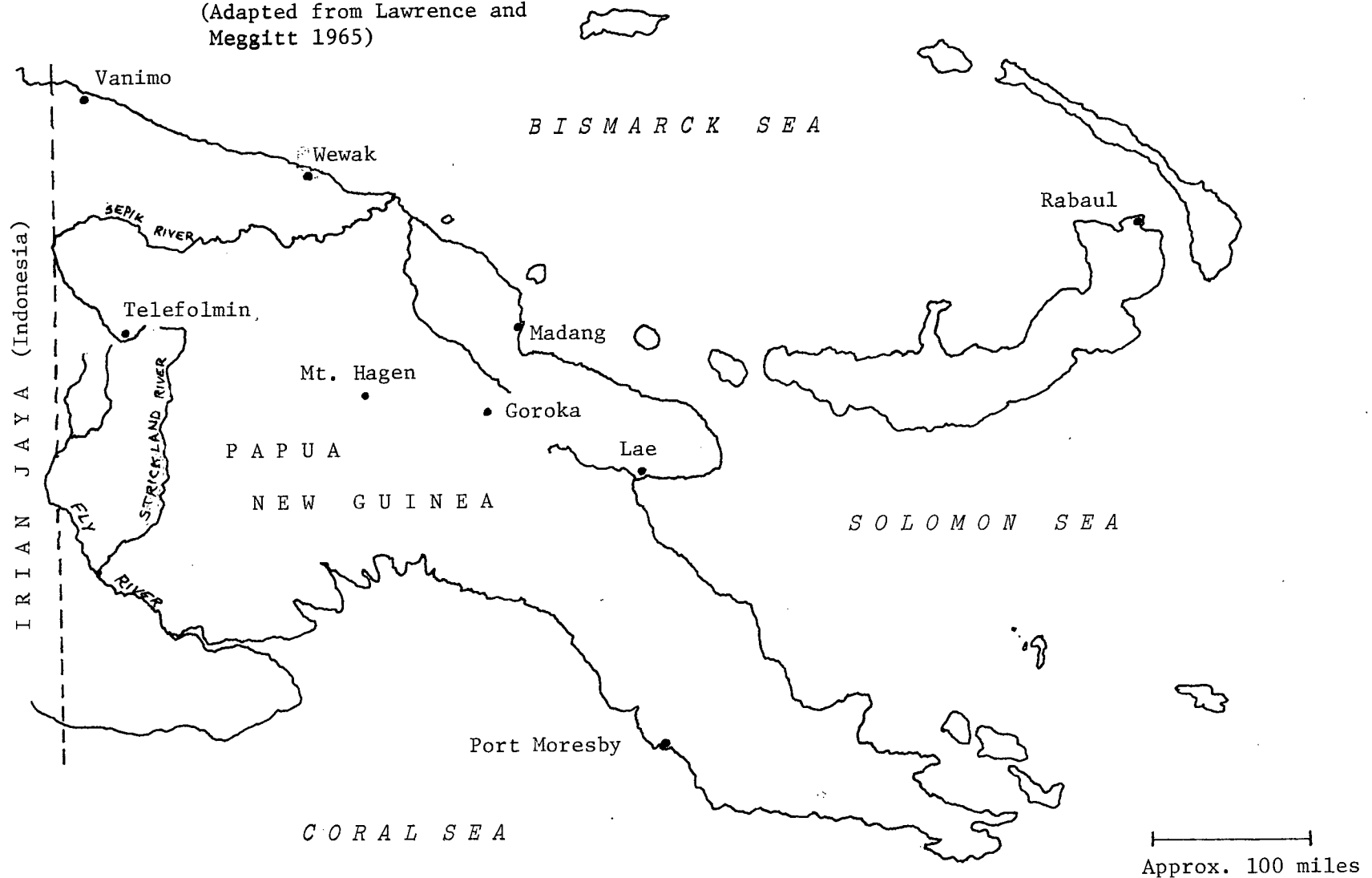
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

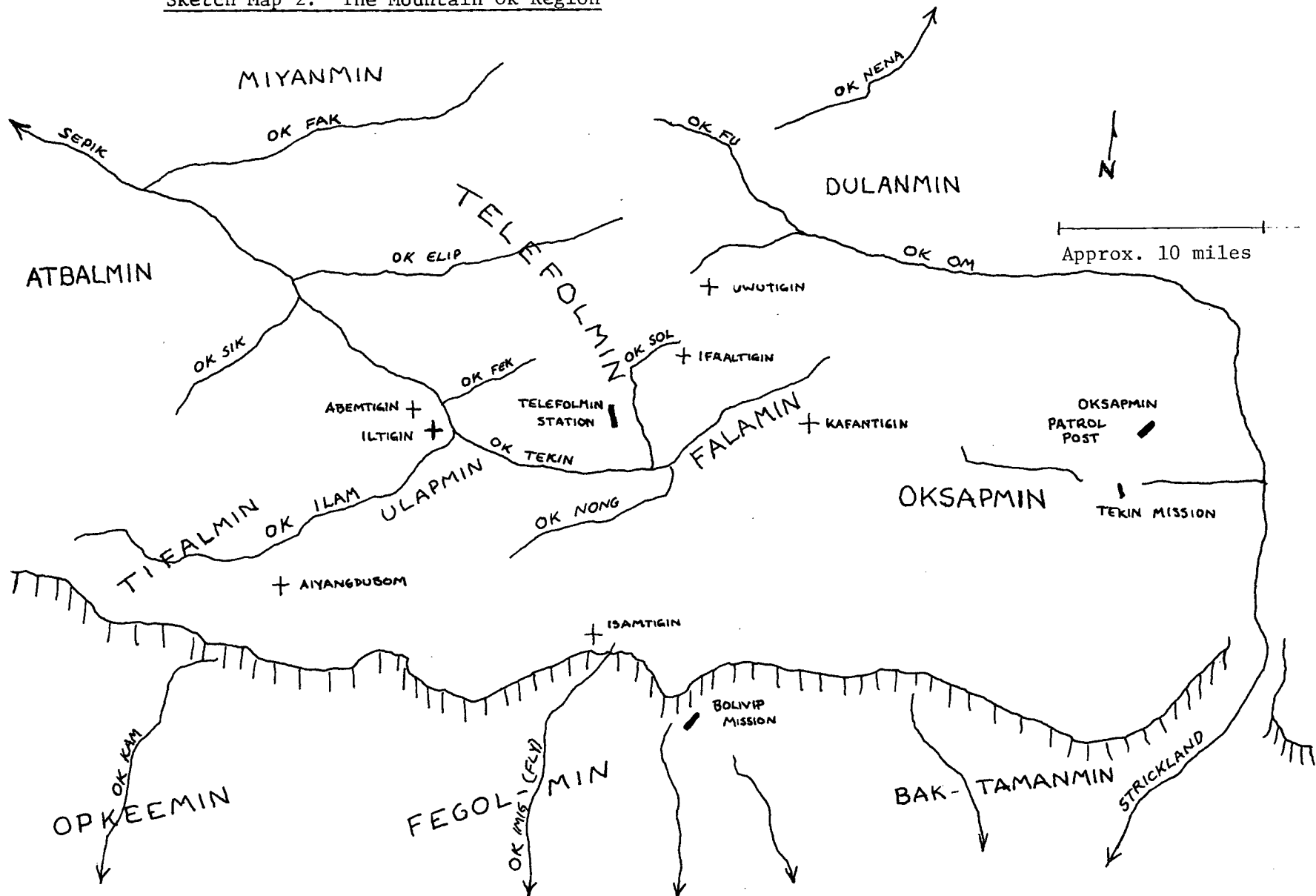
It is a pleasure to thank those who have helped me to attempt what I want to do. The work on which this dissertation is based would have been impossible without the financial assistance of the Canada Council and the University of British Columbia. To Ken Burrige I offer my thanks for guidance and intellectual stimulation, and for many less easily expressed debts as well. To my supervisory committee I would like to express my gratitude for their patient attentions. The work of others has been helpful to me, particularly the writings of Frederik Barth, Mary Douglas, Victor Turner, and Roy Wagner. Special thanks go to Aletta Biersack, John Gehman, Barbara Jones, and Cathy Wylie for their encouragement and inspiration; they are not to be blamed for what came of it. Others also contributed useful commentary, patience, and friendship: Rosemary Coombe, Chet Creider, Fred Errington, Carole Farber, Jim Freedman, Don Gardner, Marge Halpin, Dave Hyndman, John LeRoy, Lorraine Miller, Jean-Marc Philibert, Joanne Prindiville, Terry Reynolds, and Bill Richey. Previous workers among the Telefolmin aided me by providing access to unpublished work, and I would thank Barry and Ruth Craig for advice and information and Alan and Phyllis Healey for access to a draft of their Telefol dictionary. Lindsay and Meryl Smith of the Baptist Mission were helpful in many practical matters, as was Sister Betty Crouch. The administrative staff in Telefolmin were likewise helpful, and of these I wish especially to thank Mark and Sandy Winfield and Tony Friend for their help and friendship. As a result of going to Telefolmin I have enjoyed the support of two mothers, who give as mothers give: Marjorie Brossard (in Los Angeles) and Konungen (in Derolengam). In Telefolmin itself I was befriended and taught by a number of individuals for whom I have warm thanks: Aamungsep, Beksep, Bufalok, Denuksep,

Dlibal, Etnayok, the old rascal Femsep, delightful Iitmop, Neengkinapnok, Ogeesep (master of many tales), Olmamsep, Robinok, Sandeyok, Seloti, Tegemsep, Tiksan, Timogen, Uunsep, Wesani, and Yemis. Most of all, I offer my thanks to Dakasim and, posthumously, to Welagim. In many ways, this work is written for them.

Sketch Map 1: Papua New Guinea  
(Adapted from Lawrence and  
Meggitt 1965)

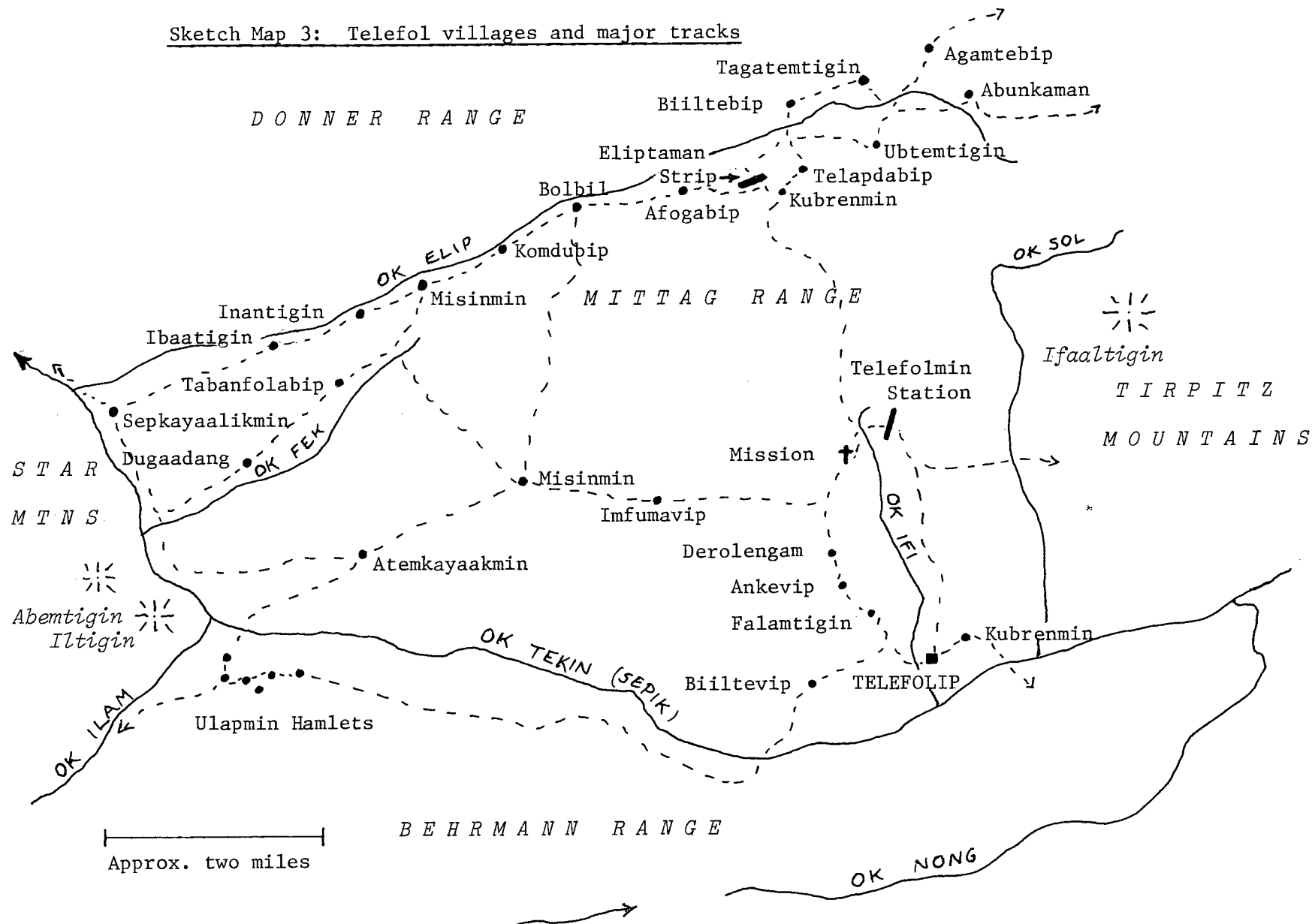


Sketch Map 2: The Mountain Ok Region





Sketch Map 3: Telefol villages and major tracks



## CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

i. Theoretical Background: the Dialectics of Order in Anthropology<sup>1</sup>

Anthropology is theorized and taught as an effort to *rationalize* contradiction, paradox, and dialectic, rather than to trace out and realize their implications; students and professionals alike learn to repress and ignore these implications, to "not see" them, and to imagine the most dire consequences as a putative result of not doing so (Wagner 1975:viii).

As a discipline with a respectable history, anthropology has produced a fruitful diversity of approaches, "isms", and schools of thought. On one point, however, there is certain to be unanimity among anthropologists: the centrality of ethnography derived from work in the field. It is on the basis of first-hand ethnographic accounts that anthropology has gone from antiquarianism and grand (but often flimsy) speculation to the sustained and intensive pursuit of an understanding of the varieties of human experience.

The fruits of fieldwork for the discipline as a whole are plain enough: library shelves make the case. But for most anthropologists the significance of fieldwork goes far beyond amassing more "data" to add to the heap. Instead, fieldwork finds its justification in a broader and deeper range of intellectual and personal concerns. In many cases field research is carried out ostensibly to gather novel material with which to test extant propositions, hypotheses, paradigms, and the like. Yet it is the rule rather than the exception that novel hypotheses emerge from the field experience rather than from well-laid plans--indeed, this is so much the case that the ethnographer who returns with his research design intact is liable to be regarded with some suspicion. Can things have really gone so smoothly, can

the fieldworker have really *learned* anything. Plainly, one of the expectations of fieldwork is that plans may have to be revised, reorganized, or jettisoned: that is how it is supposed to work, one of the essential points of the whole enterprise (see Barrett 1976).

Rather than merely being the most direct means to the end of collecting information, the practice of fieldwork is in itself one of the criterial features of anthropology as a distinct discipline. For many it is the nature of fieldwork (rather than a specific range of problems or subject matter) that differentiates anthropology from the otherwise closely allied discipline of sociology. In the folklore of the profession, fieldwork assumes the significance of an initiation, and this metaphor's half-joking character masks a widely held conviction that to become an anthropologist one must first become an ethnographer.

It is not hard to see why fieldwork has come to take on such importance for anthropologists, for the field situation is a setting in which the anthropologist must confront his share of the discipline's teaching with the exigencies of day-to-day experience among living people. This is a process (likened by some to psycho-analysis) in which analytical abstractions no longer contend with cardboard cut-outs but instead must come to grips with life in the round. More often than not, suppositions are inadequate to the task, collapsing under the burden of rapidly accumulating experience, or sometimes merely missing the mark. And beyond the purely intellectual components of this process there is the more far-reaching engagement of the ethnographer's emotional and moral being in an intense encounter with otherness (see Burridge 1973, 1979, n.d.; Wagner 1975). No wonder, then, that fieldwork assumes a mystique; no wonder that it is viewed as somehow dangerous, with the inevitable risk of "culture shock".

It is out of this context, in some imperfectly articulated way, that the seminal insights of anthropology emerge, that creativity is summoned up,

and that received thought is prevented from achieving paradigmatic stasis, closure, and stagnation. Fieldwork keeps anthropology alive.

The details of ethnographic experience vary enormously from one setting (and one ethnographer) to the next. Yet certain uniformities emerge. The most urgent intellectual task facing the fieldworker is to get some bearings, to grasp the lay of the land and formulate some fairly coherent picture of what is going on around him. Easier said than done, there are nonetheless some basic and straightforward tools which aid in achieving such preliminary understandings. At the same time, it seems certain that initial impressions will have to be revamped in the light of further experience (see, e.g., Berreman 1962). Work in the field is thus marked by a succession of hunches, lines of questioning, and representations of the ethnographic reality that follow one upon the other throughout the course of the research period.

These aspects of fieldwork are part of every ethnographer's experience and form an essential part of becoming an anthropologist. More than this, however, the nature of the ethnographic situation shapes the entire discipline of anthropology itself, and field problems are theoretical problems. It is an appreciation of this that seems to have moved Murphy, in his *Dialectics of Social Life*, to write:

Social anthropology is beset by a basic contradiction that perhaps will never be surmounted. This contradiction arises from the fact that, although we search for order, social life is visibly chaotic. Its basic characteristic is flow and flux; its concrete ingredients are people... the substance of our observations is events, each of them unique, just as each human is unique. As strict empiricists, we must confront the truth that we work with *apparent* (i.e., sensate) disorder, nonreplicable people, and non-repetitive events...anybody who has done fieldwork knows that his subjects appear to do quite mundane acts in a random fashion. What greets the investigator's senses, then, is not a social structure or even 'social facts,' but a mass of confusing impressions (Murphy 1971:38-9).

Perhaps Murphy is being dramatically pessimistic about the nature of order in social reality; certainly neither he, nor other anthropologists,

nor indeed, the peoples we study, go through life randomly, in perpetual confusion. Nonetheless, the force of the point remains: the reality of the field experience is that it tends to be quite messy (cf. Burridge n.d.). The ethnographer's task, however, is not simply to passively subject himself to a barrage of information, nor even merely to record this. Instead, some ordering must be achieved which allows not only the communication of information but the formulation of sense.

The notion of structure--in itself subject to definitional vagaries--is central to the job of ethnographic description and analysis. Some years ago Levi-Strauss scandalized a good number of his colleagues when he proposed that the idea of social structure related primarily to the analytical task of ordering: "the term 'social structure' has nothing to do with empirical reality but with the models which are built up after it" (1963b:279). Yet in this he was being less radical than might be supposed, for his pronouncement embodies the simple and relatively straightforward recognition that ethnography concerns itself not merely with information or "data" but with its orderly and intelligible arrangement; this, of course, had been known for years (see especially Kroeber 1935; Evans-Pritchard 1951).

Whatever else the term may mean, structure is first of all to be understood as order and arrangement, a statement of interrelations between elements (whether "things" or "relations") that in some sense fit together into a coherent whole. Beyond these basic assumptions there is a wide range of choice available to the ethnographer, and structure may be articulated in terms of causal relations, statistical correlations, or patterns of formal arrangement. Epistemologically, ordering may proceed from the standpoint of an external observer ("etic" analysis) or from the perspective of one embedded in the semantic environment of the culture being studied ("emic" analysis). In practice, most ethnographers employ a mixture of such approaches, varying the proportions according to theoretical or aesthetic

preference. Whatever the approach, however, the task of ordering one's material remains central to the whole subject.

All of this poses a dilemma which all ethnographers must face: to the extent that the paradigm of order guides the construction of the account, it is unavoidable that there will be a relatively large residue of material whose placement becomes either difficult or impossible within the terms of the selected framework. Put differently, this is the simple but brute truth that narrative structure and experiential reality are always to some extent at odds with each other (see, in this regard, Kermode 1979:107). This ineluctable difficulty is at once the bane and indispensable resource of the ethnographer.

The problem of constructing a narrative text which will satisfactorily render a perceived ethnographic reality is one which is a source of discomfort to ethnographers. Murphy (op. cit.) suggests that the conventional hiatus between the return from the field and the writing of ethnography is best understood in terms of the time required for the fieldworker's memory to forget or lose track of all the details which fail to fit an overall scheme. This is, I think, too extreme, if for no other reason than that I suspect such recalcitrant bits of information are only rarely exorcised from memory's recall. Wagner, in his introduction to *Habu*, sees the problem in a somewhat different light. From his point of view, the ethnographer's dilemma consists in the attempt to pre-empt or appropriate the creativity of another culture through the medium of one's own:

...the task of the anthropologist involves a very special kind of *hubris*, for he undertakes to represent the creativity of a subject-culture through the analytic processes of his science, and hence through the creativity of his own culture. But all too often the modes of analysis that he employs can only bring about a representation of the subject-culture as a fixed, unchanging, "logical" order or a "closed" system of timeless determinants. While the rules and techniques of science allow the anthropologist to be creative in the enterprise of deciphering the meanings of a native culture and formulating them in terms of a model, this model, as

the static artifact of his analysis, seldom makes provision for creativity within the culture that it purports to represent. Thus the scientist preempts creativity as a property of his own culture and denies it to that of the native, entailing a *hubris* not unlike that of the artist who usurps the forms of divine creation for use within his own designs (1972:3-4).

This is a difficulty that cannot, in any ultimate sense, be resolved. It is inconceivable to me that any ethnographer has, in one way or another, failed to appreciate this. Wagner's acute sensibility on this score, it should be understood, has not prevented him from writing provocatively and at length about the nature of the Daribi world. Nor could it do so: to perceive and grapple with the dilemma must lead to an expansion of our comprehension; to evade it yields dry "cookbook" ethnography; but to succumb to it, to fail to grasp at compromise, can only end in silence. The ethnographer who fails to risk himself and his understanding in steering a course between a private sense of experienced reality and a communicable coherence ceases to be an ethnographer and becomes instead a mute voyeur, whose experiences (whatever their private import) have nothing to tell the world.

What, then, to do? One tack would be to place the immediacy of the details and experiences of fieldwork at centre stage, as in Read's exquisite account in *The High Valley* (1965). Yet as a general solution such a course leaves much to be desired. Without the innate talents of the novelist, such "confessional ethnography" (as Wagner has called it) must surely degenerate into a rambling and anecdotal miscellany, itself unfollowable and speaking with no particular relevance or urgency to any audience. While the best of this genre claims the engagement of the reader through a forceful encounter (by proxy) with another world, any but the best seems doomed to the status of a travelogue or the trite and sentimentalist "gee whiz" romanticism that belies any real comprehension. More tellingly, the attempt to link the field experience to a relevance in the reader's (and ethnographer's) world is

surrendered. In the end, the question put to ethnography is not merely "what was it like?" but "what can it teach us?".

In this dissertation, my argument is that there is something to be learned from Telefol culture about the dialectic between structure or order and man's pragmatic experience of the world. In anthropological discourse this dialectic is refracted in a number of different forms: structure vs. history (Levi-Strauss 1966); order vs. disorder (Douglas 1966, 1975); structure vs. anti-structure (Turner 1969); convention vs. innovation (Wagner 1972, 1975); rationalization vs. event (Burridge 1979); and so on.<sup>2</sup> Each of these formulations takes the central dialectic and pursues it in differing directions, with differing intent and results. Some refer to the notion of order in highly abstract terms, while for others order seems mainly to be understood in a much more down-to-earth vein. Further, it is clear that there are wide differences among these various authors in terms of the theoretical weight accorded one pole or other of the dialectic. What all of these authors share is an appreciation of the fact that human existence is lived out between the available terms of primary categories and an encounter with the realities of a world to which the categories only imperfectly correspond; the distinctive contribution that each of these authors makes is the theoretical place accorded this appreciation.

A brief consideration of some of these author's works will serve to orient the present discussion. Beginning with some of the work of Levi-Strauss, the notion of structure (counterpoised to that of history) seems primarily to refer to categorical systems or schemes of classification, by means of which



both the social and natural worlds are made intelligible (op. cit.). Though much of his discussion seems recondite--a pursuit of its complex textures and turns would here derail our train of thought--a few salient points will establish a sense of the nature of the problem. The key point is that structure is at odds with history, the latter embracing not only the notion of sequence or temporality, but also of contingency.

In his discussion of totemism in *The Savage Mind*, Levi-Strauss considers the relation between totemic schemes of classification and history (in the familiar sense of the succession of events) in terms of a "never-ending struggle" between synchrony and diachrony (1966:231). A bit further on, he says:

[there is] a permanent conflict between the structural nature of the classification and the statistical nature of its demographic basis. The classification tends to be dismantled like a palace swept away upon the flood, whose parts, through the effect of currents and stagnant waters, obstacles and straits, come to be combined in a manner other than that intended by the architect.... The problem [totemism] has never ceased presenting to theorists is that of the relation between structure and event. And the great lesson of totemism is that the form of the structure can sometimes survive when the structure itself succumbs to events. There is thus a sort of fundamental antipathy between history and systems of classification (p. 232).

Leaving aside the particular focus of the argument on totemism, it is clear from the above passage that history--the contingent event--endangers structure--the integrity of a scheme of classification. But the relation is not one-sided, and in another place in the same work Levi-Strauss makes this plain when he writes:

...the characteristic feature of mythical thought, as of 'bricolage' on the practical plane, is that it builds up structured sets, not directly with other structured sets but by using the remains and debris of events.... The relation between the diachronic and the synchronic is therefore in a sense reversed.... Mythical thought for its part is imprisoned in the events and experiences which it never tires of ordering and re-ordering in its search to find them a meaning. But it also acts as a

liberator by its protest against the idea that anything can be meaningless... (pp. 21-2).

Thus it is that while history threatens structure, structure (animated in the activity of bricolage) musters a counter-attack through the medium of myth (or mythical thought).

Though it might be tempting to assume that the relation Levi-Strauss postulates between structure and history is simply another version of the more familiar old saw about "continuity in change", it seems a mistake to do so. Rather than being primarily oriented towards the issues of diachrony and synchrony as normally understood, he is more concerned with (to use Monod's phrase) chance and necessity. This is indicated in various passages in which the haphazard nature of events is strongly opposed to the systematic (and systematizing) nature of logical arrangement; necessity in this sense becomes the necessity of pattern or order, rather than that of causation. In this sense, then, the relation between structure and history may be rewritten in terms of the relation between coherence and incoherence, and this preoccupation is manifest in other aspects of Levi-Strauss' work where temporality is clearly not an issue.

The clearest and best-known example of this is in Levi-Strauss' analysis of the myth of Asdiwal (1967). After a minutely detailed consideration of this Tsimshian myth, Levi-Strauss draws attention to the fact that it offers a representation of customs (in this case, residence rules) that do not correspond with the actual practices of Tsimshian society. Eschewing the suggestion that such a representation is the relic of a previous phase of Tsimshian history, he instead concludes that the mythic representation acts as an ideological device to rationalize certain inconsistencies of actual usage. Thus myth serves not only to assert coherence in the face of time, but also in the face of contradiction, inconsistency, and anomaly.<sup>3</sup>

This cursory discussion suffices to demonstrate two critical lines of thought in the work of Levi-Strauss. Firstly, the awareness that social life--here writ large--is marked by a tension between the coherence of cultural form and the recalcitrant exigencies of happenings in the world. Secondly, there is the suggestion that, on a manifestly ideological plane, cultural formulations of order can operate not only to "domesticate" inchoate reality, but also to obscure or mask it. In this Levi-Strauss affords a significant departure from many earlier versions of the relation between events and their cultural representation, for he alerts us to the possibility that they are not simply two sides of one coin, but stand opposed. Furthermore, this leads directly to a consideration of the possibility that cultural systems themselves may embody their own internal dialectic and that the internal relations within a culture may consist in something other than harmonious integration. Yet, while all of these advances must be acknowledged, it must also be admitted that the general thrust of Levi-Strauss' work has been to place priority on the side of structure. With reference to myth, his general preoccupation has been to establish the resilience and resistance of structure to history, and one suspects that if a dynamism is accorded to that ideological tinkerer, the bricoleur, it is only so that the interests of order-striving-for-stasis may be advanced. His famous citation of Boas (Levi-Strauss 1966:21) serves to underscore the point: "it would seem that mythological worlds have been built up, only to be shattered again, and that new worlds were built up from the fragments".

The abstract issue of order confronting disorder has been explored directly by Mary Douglas, particularly in *Purity and Danger* (1966), and more recently in *Implicit Meanings* (1975). In the work of Douglas matters are not phrased in terms of history or the disjunctive import of events, but are rather addressed from the perspective of the internal coherence of categorical

systems (equivalent for the purposes of discussion here to Levi-Strauss' structure). Her basic argument is best approached through her discussion of tabu and the complementary processes of foregrounding and backgrounding.

In *Purity and Danger* Douglas advances the thesis that tabu is to be understood in relation to the notion of contagion or pollution, the culturally postulated consequence of the breach of tabu. The proscriptions of tabu are essentially purity rules, hence observance is related to breach as purity is to pollution or as security is to danger. Carrying her argument further, Douglas also argues that the rules of tabu provide the significant landmarks by which we may chart the dimensions of order in cosmological systems: it is by such means that we can grasp an overall system of categories in a particular culture, a system she denotes by the rubric "classification". Further, when we locate tabus within such a scheme, we are identifying those regions of the system where its integrity is most vulnerable and where discreteness, differentiation, and disjunction must be enforced. It is in this sense that the principle of tabu--socially enjoined avoidance--protects the very principles upon which a given cultural order is based, and the danger of a breach of tabu is in the end the threat posed to order itself. It is for such reasons that anomaly (in terms of a given set of categories) is seen as both potent and dangerous (see, for example, her analysis of the Abominations of Leviticus [1966:54-72]). At bottom, the analysis turns upon a consideration of the relation between culturally formulated order (formally viewed as categorical discreteness) and chaos (contagion, improper juxtaposition, dissolution of differentiation). Tabu is a strategically significant focus for analysis because it is one of the means by which a system of classification defends its integral coherence.

The order with which Douglas is so preoccupied is order both as an abstract principle and as a symbolically constituted cultural framework. Here she is concerned with the culturally defined shape of belief and experience.

She has accordingly devoted some energy to the understanding of the cultural grounds of knowledge and perception. In reviewing her own work on these matters, she sums things up this way:

I started by considering the *a priori* in nature. My intention was to show how a guts reaction is founded. I argued that knowledge in the bones, a gut response, answers to a characteristic in the total pattern of classification. Something learnt for the first time can be judged instantly and self-evidently true or false. This flash of recognition would correspond to the split-second scanning of animal knowledge. The referents for this kind of knowing are not particular external events, but the characteristics of the classification system itself. We are talking about the way the system has been set (1975:312).

Here, then, the most significant single attribute of a system of knowing rooted in cultural classification must be an overall coherence or consistency. In another passage, Douglas writes:

In the normal process of interpretation, the existing scheme of assumptions tends to be protected from challenge, for the learner recognizes and absorbs cues which harmonize with past experience and usually ignores cues which are discordant. Thus, those assumptions which have worked well before are reinforced. Because the selection and treatment of new experiences validates the principles which have been learned, the structure of established assumptions can be applied quickly and automatically to current problems of interpretation (1975:51).

Such broad and relatively abstract concerns are made relevant from an analytic point of view when we examine the ideological content of belief systems. For example, Douglas suggests that among the Lele

there cannot be any possibility of truth...for the notion that menstrual blood is harmless or that its contagion is not conveyed through food cooked on a fire tended by a menstruating woman. The whole cosmos would topple if such a piece of tendentious and obviously false information were accepted (1975:4).

This is the sort of thing Douglas has in mind when she discusses the notion of backgrounding--the social suppression of information that fails to accord with an overall structure of classification. In other words, knowledge depends upon the organization of experience into coherent patterns, and the

coherence of such patterns comes only at the cost of a systematic screening of reality which rejects information of a discordant nature: "...the cognitive drive to demand coherence and regularity in experience requires the destruction of some information for the sake of a more regular processing of the rest" (1975:7). In these terms, belief hinges on unbelief and knowledge depends upon ignorance in a systematic way.

The substantive focus of Douglas' work has been upon religion within the frame of this theory, and her chief thrust has been to detail and demonstrate the ways in which religious observances exemplify and advance the interests of order and coherence in the face of potential disorder. Like Levi-Strauss, Douglas has sought to establish the project of ordering at the centre of man's concerns. To this extent, then, her own theoretical predilections accord with Wagner's suggestion that most anthropologists seek to rationalize contradiction, paradox, and dialectic rather than to trace out their implications. This gives rise to the suspicion that, for Douglas, the theoretical role of dissonance is largely negative--it acts mainly as the foil for the delineation of coherence, the true object of analysis.<sup>4</sup> This is most clearly evident in the stance she adopts with regard to myth:

Since we are interested centrally in how meanings are constituted, we would do well to avoid mythical material. Apart from being notoriously pliant to the interpreter's whim, it is thought in relatively free play. Myth sits above and athwart the exigencies of social life. It is capable of presenting one picture and then its opposite. We are on more solid ground by concentrating on beliefs which are invoked explicitly to justify behaviour (1975: 289).

Here it seems that Douglas has fallen prey to her own theory of tabu, for she is suggesting that because myth can offer ambiguous or contradictory meaning it should be avoided. Its position "above and athwart" is a source of analytic danger: therefore, it should be made tabu. Turning her theory on itself, it seems that this is one of the ways in which the theory defends itself, by avoiding confrontation with the ambiguity of myth. As she has

often reminded us, a new datum of experience is stripped of its power over us if it can be domesticated and overcome by the power of proper placement.

This analytic strategy has its price. It requires us, as Wagner has argued, to deny the creativity of the peoples we study. Further, the analyst's invented abstraction of culture takes on its own cloak of factuality and subordinates the less orderly realities of the ethnographic experience to its schema (see Wagner 1978). In Douglas' case the free play of thought in myth becomes the very reason for denying it a central theoretical importance. This being the case, it is not so surprising that the ultimate import of many of Douglas' analyses of other peoples' religions forces the conclusion that they are falsifications of reality and--socially useful though they may be--illusions. This is clearly not Douglas' intent: it is merely one of the consequences of the preoccupation with coherence in the frame of a theory that itself recognizes the limitations of coherence. This is a problem which Douglas herself perceives, but one which has remained as a problem. Thus, in the opening passages of *Purity and Danger*, the difficulty is recognized, if not met:

It may seem that in a culture richly organized by ideas of contagion and purification the individual is in the grip of iron-hard categories of thought which are heavily safeguarded by rules of avoidance and punishments. It may seem impossible for such a person to shake his own thought free of the protected habit-grooves of his culture. How can he turn round upon his own thought-processes and contemplate its limitations? And yet, if he cannot do this, how can his religion be compared with the great religions of the world? (p. 16)

Though both Levi-Strauss and Douglas have explored the active interplay between the structure of cultural categories and experience of the world, the emphasis has been upon the triumph of order, determinacy, and closure over the openness and indeterminate flux of raw reality. Recognizing the imperfect fit between the two, they have been concerned to underscore structural coherence: order has received analytical priority, and to this

extent the dialectic is one-sided. This stance is grounded in the assumption, occasionally given voice, that man is first and foremost an orderly creature who seeks--and needs--to impose his order upon the world. It is in this light that many of the peculiarities of human experience are to be apprehended.

Such a view has an assured place in anthropological thought. But it contains one difficulty only incompletely recognized in the main run of anthropological theory: if man is indeed a world-ordering creature, the constructed nature of social reality implies not only that culture is a creation, but that it is itself (and not merely the external world) subject to reformulation. That is, man not only reconstructs nature, but reconstructs this construction. This is at least implicit in Levi-Strauss' suggestion that myth takes as its object the structure of cultural categories, and such an appreciation is likewise implicit in Douglas' notion that the dangers addressed by tabu are not those rooted in the external world but those embedded in a cultural scheme of classification. To this extent, then, the various components of cultural systems are themselves dialectically engaged, and all of this implies a reflexive awareness on the part of the people who make up particular societies. The chief difficulty of both Douglas and Levi-Strauss on this question is that, given the positive value accorded paradigmatic closure and consistency, it becomes hard to see how reflexive awareness is possible or how creativity can operate to do more than underwrite the ideological *status quo* when faced with challenge. The image is one of human creativity restricted to shoring up, defending, and patching up a system jeopardized by its engagement with the world. It is as though the aim of human activity is to bring the world to a halt, to sew up and lock up possibility and achieve stasis: fixity is the goal.

This way of looking at things is for the most part implied in the practice of social anthropology. Often it is no more than what is deemed a necessary convenience, and its basis, no doubt, is simply a device permitting



the working assumption that an anthropological account (which is, by definition, a finite text) corresponds in some way to a determinate reality. This is, in fact, a second-order reflection of the very problem to which Douglas' theory is addressed: the fact that realities are only incompletely reducible to articulation in orderly schemes. Yet there is a relatively small number of anthropologists who have, to my mind, attempted to come to grips with these difficulties, and their work is marked by the effort they have taken to accommodate reflexivity and openness within their accounts. It is to a consideration of three such workers that the discussion now turns.

One of the most creative and influential thinkers in the anthropological study of religion and symbolism is Victor Turner. What is most significant for present purposes is that Turner's analyses are marked by a recurrent sensitivity to the importance of ambiguity in human experience. While the body of Turner's work is vast, I wish to concentrate on some of his key analytical concepts, particularly the notions of liminality, anti-structure, and the multivocality of symbols (see, e.g., Turner 1962, 1967, 1969, 1974).

The key point of departure in the development of Turner's ideas on ritual and symbolism is afforded by the early work of van Gennep (1960) on rites of passage. Starting from the notion that a society may be conceived in terms of a set of categories into which its members may be sorted (i.e., statuses), van Gennep drew attention to the fact that transitions from one category to the next tend to be marked by ritual. From this derives an understanding of ritual as predominantly transformative in nature, and the critical mandate of ritual action is the traversing of the categorical boundaries of a given culture. Though van Gennep contented himself mainly with the documentation of this seminal insight and a brief exposition of the tripartite phase structure of ritual, Turner concentrated attention on the theoretically significant aspects of the "in betweenness" implicit in ritual

so defined (see, e.g., 1967:93-111).

In van Gennep's scheme of ritual phases, the process of transformation (the passage from one categorical state to another) is accomplished in three steps: separation (from the old status or category); the liminal phase, during which the participant lies outside any firmly fixed categorical definition; and the final phase of reaggregation, in which the now-transformed participant is once more incorporated within the society's categorical framework. At an abstract plane of discussion, this means simply that to effect a transition from category A to category B, there must be an intervening period during which the individual making the transition is in the ambiguous position of being *neither* in category A *nor* B. For the most part, the significance of this state of affairs went largely unexplored for several decades; Marcel Mauss is reputed to have dismissed van Gennep's work by commenting that it was generally understood that everything had a beginning, middle, and end anyway.

In his article, "Betwixt and between...", Turner suggests we devote more attention to the liminal phase of ritual activity. Starting from the idea of society as a structure of positions, he makes the case that in examining the "interstructural" situations of ritual we may at once arrive at an insight into common but otherwise perplexing features of initiation rites and, on a more general level, lay bare the fundamental principles governing the structure of societies and the means whereby individuals reflect upon them. Referring to Douglas (1966) and her suggestion that the concept of pollution "is a reaction to protect cherished principles and categories from contradiction", Turner suggests that while transitional (i.e., liminal) *personae* are indeed generally considered polluting and are segregated from society as a whole, there are important differences between states arising from the infringement of tabu and ritual states:

I think that we may perhaps usefully discriminate here between the statics and dynamics of pollution situations. In other words, we may have to distinguish between pollution notions which concern states that have been ambiguously or contradictorily defined, and those which derive from ritualized transitions between states. In the first case, we are dealing with what has been defectively defined or ordered, in the second with what cannot be defined in static terms. We are not dealing with structural contradictions when we discuss liminality, but with the essentially unstructured (which is at once destructured and prestructured) and often the people themselves see this in terms of bringing neophytes into close connection with deity or with superhuman power, with what is, in fact, often regarded as the unbounded, the infinite, the limitless (1967:97-8).

If we ask in what way such states differ from the pollution situations to which Douglas refers, there are two main respects: while pollution (in Douglas' sense) is to be avoided, the transitional states to which Turner refers are actively produced and passage through them is deemed essential to the development of the members of the society; secondly, while pollution rules are inherently conservative in their import, the aims of ritual are dynamic and transformative.

For Turner the liminal aspect of ritual (particularly but not exclusively in the case of initiatory rites) has a clear and significant reflexive import, for the systematic destructuring of cultural frameworks permits and invites a wrestling with the given:

In discussing the structural aspects of liminality, I mentioned how neophytes are withdrawn from their structural positions and consequently from the values, norms, sentiments, and techniques associated with those positions. They are also divested of their previous habits of thought, feeling, and action. During the liminal period, neophytes are alternately forced and encouraged to think about their society, their cosmos, and the powers that generate and sustain them. Liminality may be partly described as a stage of reflection. In it those ideas, sentiments, and facts that had been hitherto for the neophytes bound up in configurations and accepted unthinkingly are, as it were, resolved into their constituents. These constituents are isolated and made into objects of reflection for the neophytes by such processes as componential exaggeration and dissociation by varying concomitants (1967:105).

Turner underscores this point a bit further on when he suggests that liminality "breaks, as it were, the cake of custom and enfranchises speculation" (p. 106). Clearly Turner's work touches upon issues akin to those previously discussed, but just as clearly his analytic strategy embraces rather than eschews the disjunction between structure and experience. In the process he points the way towards a resolution of the difficulty that seems to have troubled Douglas. Here, as in so much else, it seems that to confront the bogey is to overcome it.

Far from evading contradiction, paradox, and ambiguity, Turner has turned them to account, and in his hands they become potent analytic resources. One of his earliest and most masterful (and, one might add, brave) demonstrations is in *Chihamba* (1962), a brief work in which many key points are adumbrated. Two of the most fruitful ideas subsequently developed are the notions of anti-structure and the multivocality of symbols, and it is to these that we now turn.

The concept of anti-structure is introduced in *The Ritual Process* (1969). Breathing new life into van Gennep's insight that ritual entails a departure or break from the everyday terms of experience, Turner treats the reader to a series of analyses unified by the central thesis that the project of ritual is to invert, suspend, or otherwise transcend structure (on both symbolic and social planes). In the process such issues as the relation of sacred to profane and the significance of status reversal come in for sustained attention.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps most significantly, he demonstrates with recourse to Ndembu ritual that paradox, mystery, and absurdity become powerful and productive resources for the resolution of the necessarily fragmentary nature of socially ordered experience. Finally, in his discussion of the character of ritual symbolism, he repeatedly stresses the fact that, rather than being ordered as signs (in a code of one-to-one correspondences between signifier and signified) in paradigmatic sets, they

exhibit the properties of *condensation, unification of disparate referents* and *polarization of meaning*. A single symbol, in fact, represents many things at the same time: it is multivocal, not univocal. Its referents are not all of the same logical order but are drawn from many domains of social experience and ethical evaluation (p. 52; emphasis in original).

Here we may note for the time being that the thesis of multivocality has several important consequences. A clear intimation is that such symbols are inherently ambiguous, and that their meaning is in principle open-ended and to an important extent indeterminate: they work by implication, and to the extent that they are powerful it is precisely because their import is indefinite.<sup>6</sup>

Turner's work points to an important shift in the apprehension of the relation between structure and experience, for his view of the nature and role of ritual and its symbolism suggests that these facets of culture are to be regarded not as structure, but as anti-structure. That is, their significance is not primarily found in the representation of the structural givens within which experience is normally framed, but rather in the *reformulation* of them. Further, a critical aspect of this way of looking at things is that openness and indeterminacy become central to our understanding and are not to be understood as defects of the system under consideration, but rather as crucial properties. Here, it may be parenthetically added, we have the germ of a theory of man and culture that leaves room for two of the most important features of human language and consciousness: self-reference and the self-transcendence implied in the concept of creativity.<sup>7</sup>

In most anthropological thought the notion of creativity is conspicuous by its absence. This is, it seems to me, a theoretical defect of major proportions. Against this prevailing neglect, however, the work of Roy Wagner stands clearly apart. Animated by a dialectical spirit, he has deliberately and consistently sought to challenge and depart from the

presumptive verities of received thought, one of the finest examples of which is his paper entitled "Are there social groups in the New Guinea Highlands?" (1974). In a flurry of flinging gauntlets, Wagner calls into question the very foundations of social anthropology in his challenge of the "as if" assumption, the analyst's working notion that his terms of reference correspond to the ethnographic world he attempts to piece together (pp. 102-5). This variety of the "myth of transparency" (see Kermode 1979) is, in this particular paper, embodied in the notion that the anthropologist armed with a theory of social structure based on the concept of corporate groups does no more than *discover* such groups in his ethnographic milieu. While his argument is in the first instance a development of Levi-Strauss' remarks about the epistemological status of social structure as a model (see p. 4 above), Wagner drives the point home in the following passage:

When an anthropologist sums up the lives and imaginations of his subjects in a determinist "system" of his own contriving, trapping their fancies and inclinations within the necessities of his own economies, ecologies, and logics, he asserts the priority of his own mode of creativity over theirs. He substitutes his own ("heuristic") *making* of groups, orders, organizations, logics for the way in which "the natives" make their collectivities. And it is this "native" mode of *making* society, rather than its curious similarities to our own notions of groups, economics, or consistency, that compels our interest here (1974:103-4).

The notion of creativity is for Wagner a central and abiding concern (see especially 1975, 1972). Further, he is at pains to close the loop and show--reflexively--that in regard to this the anthropologist and his subjects are not fundamentally different:

...*we* are creators no less than the peoples we study, and we must take heed of our own creativity as well as theirs. To put it somewhat differently, the assumption of creativity puts the anthropologist on a par with his subjects; the native, too, is an "anthropologist," with a "working hypothesis" of his own regarding his way of life. And regardless of how we wish to put that way of life together, we must come to terms with its own "theory" as a matter of professional and ethical obligation. This

kind of science, which treats a subject matter of the same order of phenomenal existence as its own hypotheses and conclusions, is a comparative latecomer (p. 120).

In brave words such as these Wagner places the inherently reflexive nature of anthropology as a discipline at the centre of his work. This can and does lead to perplexities and obscurities (if not obscurantism), but the central message is that these are to be confronted rather than exiled to the never-neverland of things we all know but need not bother about.

How all of these things work out in anthropological practice is best seen from a look at Wagner's *Habu*, bearing the significant subtitle, *The Innovation of Meaning in Daribi Religion* (1972). Basing his argument on a variant of the tensive theory of metaphor, Wagner organizes the book around a dialectic between what he calls ideology and innovation, the latter being equivalent to his term "metaphorization" (pp. 3-13).<sup>8</sup> Although the general shape of the dialectic, in terms of the interplay between structured fixity and open-endedness, bears a family resemblance to the Levi-Straussian formulation of the relation between structure and history, there are several supremely critical differences. Levi-Strauss, it will be recalled, affords some recognition to creativity with his notion of bricolage. But for Levi-Strauss this reworking of structural elements has something of the character of a salvage operation. In the perhaps too uncharitable words of Geertz, the image is of

some uprooted neolithic intelligence cast away on a reservation, shuffling the debris of old traditions in the vain attempt to revivify a primitive faith whose moral beauty is still apparent but from which both relevance and credibility have long since departed (1973: 359).

For Wagner, metaphorization is a mode of activity whose aim is not restoration but creation and extension. Further, it is not merely a response to the external stimulus of events, but an active exploration of possibility based upon the reflexive grappling with the given, an attempt to transcend or

at least revise the necessarily limited terms of structure, that is, of what he calls ideology. From such a point of view, culture is indeed creativity.

Since an understanding of Wagner's perspective--which is by and large that adopted in the course of this dissertation--is critical to all of the issues so far raised, I will devote a fair amount of attention to his ideas. Here I will persist in the simple expedient of quoting *in extenso*. At the core of *Habu* lies the following proposition:

Meaning is created by the formation of metaphors involving the formal elements of a culture. The relationship among specific metaphors within a culture can be either one of complementarity (consistency) or of innovation (contradiction). A set of complementary metaphors, whose meanings are consistent, constitutes an ideology, but the distinct ideologies stand in an innovative relationship to one another, that is, they achieve their meaning by metaphorizing, and hence contradicting, one another (1972: 7-8).

The key concept here is that of metaphorization, and this ultimately derives from a sense of metaphor which focuses upon its departure from lexically specified meaning (see, e.g., Ricoeur 1977, 1978). As perhaps the most fundamental form of creativity in language, metaphor proceeds by transcending and (through a reciprocity of implication) transforming lexical signification embodied in semantic categories.<sup>9</sup> Metaphor is thus not only extensive, but is, in a prior sense, tensive: it generates meaning precisely because it violates ("breaks, twists") paradigmatic definition. This metaphor itself exploits, in the analysis of culture, the already-given (stabilized, "decayed") metaphor of culture as language. It turns upon a consideration--as with van Gennepe, Levi-Strauss, Douglas, and Turner--of the nature of conceptual (and semantic) boundaries whose specification and definition underlie the formal notion of structure.

In terms of an overall view of the way in which culture works, the general conception is of opposing tugs and pulls, not balancing or cancelling each other out in some homeostatic fashion, but resulting in an ongoing



dialectic of transformation:

Metaphor constitutes the dynamic expression of a meaningful relation in a culture; through its combination of contrast and analogy it generates relations of opposition in which elements remain distinct from one another and are yet interdependent (Wagner 1972:6).

And in another passage: "...the conceptual basis of a culture can never be adequately summed up as a logical ordering or a closed system of internally consistent propositions" (1972:10). Most importantly, this state of affairs is the opportunity by means of which creativity finds scope, a cultural resource to be exploited. This emerges clearly again at the end of *Habu* when Wagner considers the position of the individual in this context:

In fact, it might be said that an individual learns to "use" his culture, to perform operations upon it, by "breaking" rules, that is, by extending words and other learned signifiers beyond their defined areas of signification (p. 171).

In terms of the ethnography with which he is concerned, Wagner adduces several instances of what he outlines in theoretical terms. Thus, the Daribi *habu* curing rite is analyzed as a metaphoric transformation of Daribi funeral practices, while the *bidi nia sai* dance is seen as an "anti-funeral" (pp. 145-63). Likewise, the "invention of immortality" via ghosts gives rise to the "impersonation" of ghosts in the seances of the *sogoyezibidi* (pp. 130-44). And so on.<sup>10</sup>

There is, it seems to me, a clear affinity between these ideas and some of those developed by Turner for the analysis of ritual. The strategic significance of metaphor, the transformative trope, is decisive for Wagner's analysis, and metaphor likewise becomes central to some of Turner's more recent work (see, e.g., 1974). Wagner's stress on the open-endedness of metaphoric predication and implication recalls in a different register Turner's focus on liminality and the insistence upon the multivocality of symbols. For both, the dialectic of fixity and flux is located less in the

envelopment of structure in the events of the external world than in the inner recesses of culture itself. For Turner, the impression point is in the interplay and transcendence of structural definitions in ritual; for Wagner the locus of the dynamic is between the inconsistencies and internal contradictions afforded by culture. For both, the determinate and closed character of what Turner calls structure and Wagner terms ideology--a mutually reinforcing consistency--is seen not simply as stability, order, or security (as per Levi-Strauss and Douglas), but as limitation; for both Turner and Wagner, man's project seems at bottom to be the transcendence of limitation through ritual (Turner) and metaphorization (Wagner). The chief divergence between the two seems to be in terms of the object of transformation. In the main thrust of Turner's thought, the object of transformation is primarily the awareness of the individual; for Wagner, the object of transformation is cultural meaning.<sup>11</sup> For both, finitude stands opposed to life, vitality, and reality.

All of the themes so far discussed have been extended and developed in the work of Burridge, whose writing has consistently sought a reflexive course in which the dialectic of self and other, structure and history, what is and what might be has been given full play. Through all of this runs a pervasive concern with the nature of experience, its representation, and the meaning which may be construed from it. The first major exposition of these themes is in *Mambu: a Melanesian Millennium* (1960). In this book the confrontation between structure and experience is displayed as a continual and multi-layered process of becoming, its central arena being the collective dialogue among Tangu about the possibilities to be puzzled out and grasped in a context where received wisdom, present actuality, and moral awareness all strain in different directions.

The pivotal focus of *Mambu* is the epistemological and moral contradiction between the indigenous conception of man and his proper modes of

being with the new terms of manhood demanded in the Tangu experience of Europeans. Here both human knowing and human action are called into question, and the urgent task which Tangu faced was the formulation of a synthesis in which the possibilities of a new man and a new awareness might be realized. The conventional rubric for this dynamic and collective striving for new terms of experience and new ways of being is the anthropological term "cargo cult". Though such movements, accompanied by new ideologies and new prescriptions, have marked Melanesian history for as long as we have noted it, they evaded the centre stage of anthropological attention for decades. One suspects that (with some exceptions, e.g., Hogbin 1939, 1951) this was chiefly because such things ran against the grain of what anthropology saw as proper to its concerns and susceptible of theoretical treatment. Given the predisposition to see cultures as integrally ordered systems, collective attempts to redefine cultural givens could only be taken as aberrant, counter to entrenched theoretical premises, socially disruptive, and indicative of breakdown. Perhaps as importantly, cargo cults have tended to be viewed in both professional and popular eyes as manifestations of irrationality, collective hysteria, and madness (see, e.g., Schwartz 1971, Williams 1923).

In a discussion of anthropological dilemmas of ethnographic articulation, Burridge affords a retrospective view of his own work which condenses the problem in the following terms:

Religious movements are surely never boring: they always introduce something new. That is, after all, their burden and purpose. But there comes a time when one becomes jaded with reading and writing about them. Forced into the orthodoxies of anthropological or sociological systemics they put on the corruption of what they ought to be rather than what they are. What was original and unique becomes like any other, an illusion created by system. The truth of things escapes. Even where the very real transformational vigours of a religious movement are not made to seem childish, delusory, or due to mental aberrations or societal or individual malfunctionings, the systemics make uniform. The truths of experience die, the funereal trappings of a familiar and given paradigm measure

a professional status against common standards of what is currently acceptable in the discipline. Only occasionally does something catch the eye and engage the attention. Then, looking at this something more closely, we see that, like the yellow sparkle in the grey sand of a prospector's pan, it is a nugget that has escaped the systemic. If the truth about what is new is not to become just another instance of the human proneness to orderly illusion, a given system must surely admit and yield to the initially disorderly truth--which alone can, in the course of time, give birth to a new and more viable system (Burridge n.d.:1).

And, more pointedly referring to *Mambu*:

...the material that was to make *Mambu* began falling into place in my mind. Awkwardly, it is true, and in no neat fit. Theory and paradigms did not and could not matter... Most important...was my resolve that such reading as I did should only help me be true to the ethnography as I saw and experienced it. Then the material could find its own ordering. In short, I wanted to use the (albeit peripheral) involvement with and experience of particular activities to explicate those same activities in the light of that part of the experiencing which remained relatively uninvolved. Not an abnormal procedure--except that, as has been noted in relation primarily to Rivers and Levi-Strauss, the use of what appear to be the properties of a phenomenon to explicate the phenomenon does not come so easily in anthropology; and that, doctrinally and dogmatically, the use in anthropology of the properties of religious experience to explicate religious activities has been taboo: being epiphenomenal, irrational and unreal by definition, religious activities have to be explained (away) by other modes. As well explicate a motor vehicle in terms of a horse or vice-versa (pp. 23-4).

Substantively, this stance has led to a consideration of topics that for the most part remained in the shadows and out of the spotlight of social anthropology: the role of the prophet (*Mambu* himself), an individual in whom the ambiguities and contradictions of the world as given and as experienced are reformulated in a vision of what may be, a denial of what was hitherto accepted to be the case; the dilemmas of everyday experience in the world, the truth that image and reality are in tension, and that imagination can transform the terms in which reality is seized; the nature of prescriptive moralities, which define how men should be and offer means to attain honour while burdening them with obligation, posing problems of choice, embodying contradictions and forcing limitations on impulses to freedom which seek

transcendence of such confines; the dynamic of dream and myth wherein signposts from the past and an urgently sensed present reshape each other to point towards possibilities latent but not yet reached; the embeddedness of the self in a matrix of socially defined personhood to which the imperatives of the individual offer challenge; the location of the heart of religion in a sense of the numinous (cf. Otto 1958); finally, and perhaps most importantly, the insistence that professional concerns in anthropology must speak to the ethnographic encounter with otherness that is at once an engagement with fellow beings of one's own kind (see Burridge 1960, 1969, 1973, 1975, 1979, n.d.).

In all of this, the themes of Levi-Strauss, Douglas, Turner, and Wagner outlined above find expression: structure and history come to terms in the Tangu movement to new orders and new awareness; the anomalous and discordant are revealed both as threatening and as beckoning with the prospects of the power to transcend the finite (see especially the provocative explication of the Tangu category *imbatekas*, 1969); the fixity of structure is shaken and suspended in rite and myth, eliciting new perspectives; culture and meaning are creativity, with man as producer as well as product of experience. The success with which this stance can be adopted hinges upon the refusal to subordinate experience--both one's own and that of one's ethnographic "subjects"--to the reassuring determinations of a paradigmatic system. To close the rather large circle I have been trying to trace, ambiguity, contradiction, paradox, and dialectic must be given their due. Before proceeding to give firm outlines to what it is I actually attempt to do in this dissertation, I will close off this part of the discussion with some words by Buber, who suggests the shape of a philosophical anthropology:

the philosophical anthropologist must stake nothing less than his real wholeness, his concrete self. And more; it is not enough for him to stake his self as an *object* of knowledge. He can know the *wholeness* of the

person and through it the wholeness of *man* only when he does not leave his *subjectivity* out and does not remain an untouched observer. He must enter, completely and in reality, into the act of self-reflection, in order to become aware of human wholeness. In other words, he must carry out this act of entry into that unique dimension as an act of his *life*, without any prepared philosophical security; that is, he must expose himself to all that can meet you when you are really living (1973:153).

I began this section with a consideration of the place of fieldwork in anthropology and departed from there to a consideration of the anthropological address to questions of the relation between structure and experience. Let me now state clearly the premise that lies at the core of what follows: the ethnographic enterprise consists in balancing the claims of coherence against the often untidy experience of reality; not only a pragmatic fieldwork problem, this is also the subject of a considerable range of explicit theory, though often divorced from a sense of the linkage between these two levels of the problem; my own understanding of Telefol culture says to me that the relation between articulate order and men's experience is likewise of concern to them. In the balance of the dissertation, I attempt to tell the reader how Telefolmin seek their own resolution. If what I have so far said is accepted, this cannot fail to inform us about who Telefolmin are, how anthropology should understand this, and, perhaps, what it is to be human.

A friendly critic remarked to me once that one of my pieces about Telefolmin sounded more like a credo than an anthropological analysis. This I take as an unintended compliment. The facts of Telefol ethnography do not speak for themselves: I speak for them, and in the course of this I cannot help but also speak for myself.

## ii. The Plan of the Dissertation

I have alluded to Telefolmin above without giving the reader much to go on by way of forming a picture of this people. Telefolmin number perhaps

3500 or so and are distributed somewhat unevenly among twenty-odd villages in the mountains of the Sepik headwaters of Papua New Guinea (see maps). Like other New Guineans, Telefolmin are a frizzy-haired people whose skin colour ranges from dark copper to black; Telefolmin are shorter than most, and a man standing above 5'2" may be considered tall. The men, women, and children are hardy, possessed of great stamina and surprising strength. Until the days just before the Second World War, Telefolmin worked with a technology of stone, wood, and readily available bush materials. Steel tools became prominent in the 1940's, and it was at this time that Telefolmin also ceased to master their own affairs with the advent of what they call *gabman* (government). Their livelihood nonetheless remains pretty much what it always was: they cultivate root crops, raise pigs, and hunt for a living.

When I first went to study Telefol society in 1974 it was with the intention of examining the way in which politics at the local level operated in what I had anticipated would be a situation of competing modes of leadership. Conversations with Ruth and Barry Craig, who had previously done fieldwork in Telefolmin, indicated that a local government council had gone into effect, with elected councillors from each ward (roughly corresponding to villages). I had expected that these new-style "leaders" operated within the context of a more traditional regime of leadership, and I wanted to study the relation between alternative forms. About traditional leaders accounts were vague, but there was the suggestion that big men of the sort commonly found in Melanesia operated in Telefolmin. The Craigs also suggested that less visible leadership in community life was exerted by senior initiates of the men's cult, which was very elaborate but circumscribed with secrecy--because of this, it was uncertain just how clearly marked such leadership was, and the presence of such men directing collective affairs was more of a guess than a firm conclusion. Armed with this information, I set off for Telefolmin in the hopes of being

able to dissect what promised to be a complex political system in which leaders of various kinds competed to gain followings within their communities.

Things did not go as planned. Shortly after arriving in Telefolmin I began looking for recognizably political behaviour, confident that in the normal flow of village life disputes would soon come to the surface and flush the local network of opponents, allies, and rivals from cover. My first impression was that Telefolmin were unusually peaceable and not at all litigious--a bit of a surprise from what I had read of New Guinea politicking. After some months passed without so much as raised voices in village gatherings I became worried about the progress of my work. The villagers of Derolengam, where I was living, seemed perversely to avoid public disputing. This was to be the cornerstone of my research strategy, for it was in disputes that I hoped to assemble case material for analysis. At first I thought my presence had driven the normal dramas of village life underground, but it later became clear that this was not the case. Telefolmin simply did not resolve problems through challenge and negotiation. In the meantime, enquiries about who the local big men were or how they came to be prominent were met with an unfeigned indifference and even a bit of puzzlement. It soon appeared that there was very little in Telefol life that could fruitfully be understood in terms of struggles for political power, at least within the sphere of the village.

My original strategy disarmed, I drifted into a persistent malaise and faced the uncertainty most ethnographers face about how best to proceed. In the meantime, I busied myself with generalized and unfocused note-taking, enumerated households, and familiarized myself with the nuts and bolts of daily life. Slowly, and almost without my noticing, my material began to centre around the secret men's cult and what we might call the religious side of Telefol life. In retrospect, it is easy to see that this is what the men had been talking to me about all along, and it is also clear that this is what they thought was most central to their culture.<sup>12</sup>



Telefol religion--the practices of the men's cult, the multiple initiation rites, the esoteric myths--is founded upon secrecy. This obviously presents problems to the ethnographer wishing to know something about Telefol religion. As I later came to see, Telefol men face precisely the same difficulties of knowing, and it might even be said that the problem of knowledge is a central preoccupation of Telefol religion. In Telefol eyes, the key to much of what goes on in the world--both within and beyond the confines of the cult--is to be found in awareness, or "seeing" (*utamamin*), and a central tenet is that the apparent world conceals a *mysterium* to be unravelled with the aid of the revelations contained in myth. But such myths themselves are and *must be* secret: their validity depends upon this. One result is that while there is a staggering number of variant versions of the myths--or more correctly, components of the myth-cycle, for men insist that they are all one story--there is little in the way of a widely-shared or authoritative consensus. Knowledge is thus by definition refractory and partial. To the extent that an overall coherence emerges, it is through the progressive revelation of the more secret (and hence, less widely-shared) narratives of the myth cycle during the course of a man's life. When this state of affairs is viewed from the perspective of the progression of individuals through the cult, the experience is one in which the taken-for-granted is called into question and appearances are shown to be something other than they seem.

The Telefol preoccupation with knowledge is not a dispassionate or disinterested one. Given certain fundamental premises Telefolmin hold about the nature of the human predicament, men must face the world on unequal terms. According to the Telefol view, the way of the world is "naturally" counter to men's aims, and this is conceived in terms of what I call "entropy". Not a thing but rather a discernible tendency in processes and events, Telefolmin

capture this sense in the verb *biniman*, 'to finish, to run out, to dissipate, to become nothing'. Most immediately felt in the sense of loss, entropy figures (as it does both in physics and in information theory) as dissolution, disarray, the decay of structure.

Heuristically and analytically, the concept of entropy articulates with the conscious concerns of Telefolmin and with anthropological preoccupations (as outlined above), and so I will cite a brief statement here about what the concept entails:

Entropy [is] a measure of the amount of disorder in a physical system, but it is now clear that a more precise statement is that entropy measures lack of information about the structure of a system (Whitrow 1967:528).

In the context of Telefol religion the relevance is clear, for the overt aim of the men's cult is to counter the postulated drift of the world towards entropy, and a major strategy for doing so is to underwrite the cultural bases of order and to reveal information about them.

This dissertation is an exploration of the dialectic between order and entropy in the Telefol world, with the aim of interpreting the place of traditional religion in Telefol life.<sup>13</sup> The exposition is broken down into four chapters (excluding this one), and I will now briefly outline their contents and the structure of the argument.

Chapter 2 introduces the general background of Telefol life, organized in terms of paired poles. These polarities (e.g., village and bush) are the general terms in which daily life is oriented, and provide the basic elements in the structure of Telefol culture. The mode of presentation shows these polarities in the frame of contrasting or opposing pairs, approximating the structuralist notion of oppositions. My aim in Chapter 2 is to introduce these oppositions and to inform them with ethnographic content while trying to convey a sense of their experiential reality to Telefolmin. An important aspect of the argument is that these polarities are perceived as in opposition

by Telefolmin themselves and are at the same time foci of ambivalence and ambiguity.

In Chapter 3 I outline more explicitly the relation between order and entropy in Telefolmin. Taking a succession of topics in turn, this chapter gives an account of the Telefol social and cosmological order. Here I examine the *tenum mit* (cognatic descent categories), the village as an organizational entity, and the structure and operation of the Telefol marriage system. Entropy figures in relation to each of these topics in differing ways. *Tenum mit* afford an ideological image of order based upon a ritual division of labour, but their membership is inherently ambiguous and they are in fact organizationally irrelevant. The village is the firm centre around which the society is organized, but individual and domestic interests are such that this centre must contend with very powerful centrifugal tendencies, and men display marked ambivalence concerning their participation in village life. Telefol marriage is ideally founded upon a strict and balanced system of direct ("sister") exchange, but in practice such balance is difficult to achieve; further, one of men's concerns is to enforce village endogamy and prevent the loss of women to other villages, but this too is more difficult to accomplish than might be imagined. One of the basic organizing principles of social relations in Telefolmin is reciprocity, and this has the consequence that most relations so based are contingent and conditional, and as individuals men are ambivalent about giving to others. In practice, men view relations of reciprocity largely from the perspective of loss or unfulfilled claims.

The second half of Chapter 3 turns more directly to how Telefolmin conceive of entropy and order in cosmological terms. A consideration of the question of mortality and of the alternative fates of the dead shows that the loss of death is conceived as final and irrevocable, save in the case of the spirits of the men's cult house (the *usong* inhabiting the *yolam*). Even here, however, this is only an uncertain triumph over the finality of death insofar

as the living are concerned, for their relations with such spirits (like other relations in the society) are also rooted in reciprocity, and hence, are conditional. This articulates with broader aspects of Telefol cosmology in which men's world is seen as diminishing through time, with the continual loss of the living to the land of the dead, Bagelam. The world is on the wane, and men cannot prevent this but at best may only, with effort, delay the end. To the extent that they are able to do so, this is to be accomplished through hard work and participation in the men's cult centred around its house, the *yolam*.

At the end of the chapter there is a discussion of Telefol food tabus, which offer a comprehensive ordering of relations between people and the natural world while at the same time defining rules of commensality and food-sharing. Observance of the tabus ensures some coherence in men's relations with the external world; breach opens the floodgates of entropy, and in this sense men control the latent propensity to disorder by maintaining categorical discreteness through interdiction or disjunction. This is one of the general principles of Telefol order, manifested in an overriding ritual and cosmological division between the activities of nurturing and killing, encoded in the antithetical relation between Taro (*iman miit*) and Arrow (*un miit*). To this extent order depends upon separation between opposed aspects of the world, while entropy effaces such division.

Chapter 3 concludes with a discussion of the strategies for managing entropy and the pre-eminent place of the *yolam* as the anchor both of Telefol society and of the Telefol cosmos. Chapter 4 is devoted to a more detailed look at the *yolam* and its activities, a glimpse into the interior of Telefol religion. Much of the content of this chapter is descriptive, and I outline the sequence of male initiations and of the esoteric myths associated with them. A sustained look at the structure, content, and implications of the myths shows them to be multifaceted and full of "radiant obscurity" (cf. Kermodé 1979). While it is true that at one level they act in an affirmative

manner to validate particular features of the Telefol world, they do far more than this. The myths offer both an exposition of and commentary upon the interrelation of order and entropy, topically orienting themselves to critical dimensions of Telefol experience (the relation between male and female, the relation between nurturing and killing, and so on). At the more esoteric levels of myth, however, they go beyond this and call into question the very bases of Telefol culture. It is here that myth serves as a reflexive commentary upon the givens of experience, and it is a commentary that is suggestive rather than definitive, posing questions rather than solving them.

One of the biggest problems raised in myth is the possibility of "seeing" or knowing, and this question is the pivot for many of the narratives of the cycle. The pervasive praxis of secrecy in relation to the myths is one of the critical components of the problem, and an examination of the grounds and consequences of Telefol ritual secrecy reveals that the cult confronts men with the impossibility of final or complete knowledge. The actual workings of the cult thus serve to obviate its announced aims, and this too is part of the burden of the myths, which systematically overturn many of Telefol culture's central tenets.

This situation is intensified by a consideration of the role of Magalim, a transcendant bush spirit, in Telefol cosmology. While the major focus of the men's cult is on the doings of the Ancestress of the Telefolmin, Afek, she (betokening order) is understood in counterpoint to Magalim, who is the embodiment of entropy and the numinous. Whereas Afek is the authoritative source of the structure of men's world, Magalim is the enveloping presence in which this order seeks a place. Further, Magalim--"the meaningless one, the unknowable one"--is manifest in the flux and flow of the world, and impinges unbidden on men's experience. And he is ultimately revealed to be ascendant reality itself, a reality which men may not evade.

The final chapter offers an assessment and overall interpretation of Telefol religion in the context of Telefol life. Here I suggest that the role of Telefol religion is not to lead men into the comforts of an illusory order, but to bring them to an awareness--disquieting, to be sure--of their situation in a world where order is tentative, knowledge incomplete, and entropy real. I conclude by considering existential imperatives that follow from this.

While this gives a reasonably good account of what the reader may expect to find in this dissertation, I would like now to discuss a second, largely implicit, level of the argument. Rilke wrote, in his Eighth Duino Elegy:

Always facing creation, we perceive there only a mirroring  
of the free and open dimmed by our breath...

and in his First Duino Elegy,

...all of the living make the mistake of drawing too  
sharp distinctions. Angels (it is said) would often be  
unable to tell whether they moved among living or dead.

These two passages contain much that is implied in this work. I have, so far as possible, tried to avoid attributing a convenient if spurious clarity to the material presented here. To the extent that I am consciously aware of distortion, it has always been on the side of over-ordering, never towards deliberate clouding. Perhaps the most "over-clarified" section of the dissertation is in the discussion of *tenum miiit* at the beginning of Chapter 3: I doubt that Telefolmin ever consciously formulate the overall picture as neatly as I have done. My strategy has by and large been to follow the injunctions of Wagner and Burridge and to recognize fuzziness, ambiguity, paradox and the rest for what they are. To my mind, the most successful (and least forced) sections of the dissertation are those dealing with the mythic content of Telefol religion and the consideration of the significance of Magalim, i.e., the last three sections of Chapter 4. These were for me the

most critical parts of the work: everything turned upon their proper understanding. To this extent, the critical reader may find them also the most vulnerable of the piece. Here is the core of the dissertation: Telefol religious notions, the men's cult, and their experience are full of contradiction. It seems to me that this is the distinctive feature of Telefol religion, and that it is so pervasive that if one could, like Telefolmin, attribute the ensemble to an author, one would have to say that such contradictions were "designed into" the system.

This perception of Telefol religion was resisted by me for some time. I kept looking for an overall consistency without realizing that the consistency was to be found in *systematic inconsistency*. This realization was largely aided by the difficult and complicated way in which I learned the myths, and by the attitude of the seniors who revealed them to me: had I learned the myths quickly, easily, simultaneously, and without the constraints of secrecy, I am sure I would either have homogenized them into one grand authorized version or left them as a haphazard and disarticulated testimony to idiosyncratic variability among my informants. In either case, the *point* would have been lost. My feel for the material was clinched by three things: learning, quite late in my stay, about Magalim--this forced the abandonment of any hard-edged structural strategy; the circulation of a manuscript of Barth's *Ritual and Knowledge among the Baktaman* (1975), where it seemed indeed that the apparently incoherent nature of Telefol religion was mirrored (but without a sense of a point to it all); and meeting Barbara Jones (of the University of Virginia), who was simultaneously doing her own fieldwork among the Fegolmin (Faiwolmin), who arrange their way in the world in as thoroughly paradoxical a fashion as Telefolmin.

The argument of the dissertation, with concessions to convention and readability, is to establish that while there is a rough and general sort

of order to life in Telefolmin, the fit is in important respects a poor one; that Telefol religion intensifies this mismatch rather than glossing it over, and seeks by a wealth of means to get Telefol men to see this; and that, to understand Telefol religion, and perhaps religion in general, we must be prepared to acknowledge what we see, even if we're not quite sure just what it is. In "Paradigms and the sociological imagination", Burridge writes:

Perversely, the romantic, because he clings to the messy truth of things as he sees them, is the realist. The so-called realist, wedded to his supposedly scientific paradigms, thinks he can understand more of what he does not know by distorting what he does know (n.d.:22).

This is, in intent at least, a romantic piece of work.

### iii. Placing Telefolmin in New Guinea Ethnography

Telefolmin are one of a number of peoples speaking languages of the Mountain Ok family and inhabiting the western part of the central mountain ranges of Papua New Guinea. Not much has yet appeared in print concerning these peoples.<sup>14</sup> Broadly speaking, the Mountain Ok form a distinctive cultural grouping within the kaleidoscopic array of New Guinea peoples. Here I will sketch some of the common features of Mountain Ok cultures.

The Mountain Ok are virtually all denizens of a montane forest environment who make their living by a combination of shifting cultivation, pig tending, and hunting. In comparison with the better known Highlands peoples to the east, they have much smaller domestic pig herds and spend more time hunting in their forest environments (see Brown 1978). This is accompanied by a horticultural regime that seems universally to accord to taro a pre-eminent place; this is so despite what seem from the outside to be unpromising conditions for the cultivation of this essentially lowland crop, and is true even where sweet potato comprises a larger proportion of the diet. Again, the Mountain Ok peoples may be contrasted with Highlanders on the basis of the relatively poorly developed systems of exchange to be found in the



region--there is nothing comparable to the Highlands ceremonial exchange cycles, nor are pig feasts common, and there is little in the way of a system of political arrangements based on the manipulation of wealth. Big men are rare to non-existent. Organizationally, settlements tend to be relatively small (rarely exceeding two hundred people, in the case of Telefolmin, by far the most thoroughly sedentary of the Mountain Ok) and the populations tend to be relatively mobile. Settlement patterns range from isolated households or small hamlets (as among the Atbalmin) to longhouses (Miyanmin, Dulanmin) or small villages (some Miyanmin, most Fegolmin, Tifalmin, and Telefolmin). Systems of clans or lineages seem to be either absent or rudimentary from an organizational point of view, local forms of grouping appearing to be more significant.

Perhaps most distinctively, the Mountain Ok peoples display--in comparative terms--a marked elaboration of ritual, often combining a system of male initiation with a secret men's cult concerned with taro fertility. Men's cult houses are virtually ubiquitous, and may even be found on permanent sites when the population at large pursues a more free-ranging pattern of settlement (e.g., the Wopkaimin and their focal site of Bultem). Ritual activities seem to provide the occasion for large-scale enterprises, and ritual seems to be the firmest organizational matrix among the Mountain Ok peoples, analogous to systems of descent or of exchange in other parts of New Guinea. Finally, it seems that most of the Mountain Ok peoples (at least on the Papua New Guinea side of the border with Irian Jaya) claim descent from a common ancestress known variously as Afek, Afekan, Kaligan, or Kaliganip.

Within the grouping of Mountain Ok peoples as a whole Telefolmin occupy a distinctive place. Telefolmin claim the stewardship over the ancestral village and spirit house of Telefolip--said to be built by Afek herself--and are also the guardians of the sacred lore pertaining to Afek. To a certain extent such claims are acknowledged by neighbouring peoples:

Telefolip is a sacred site not only to Telefolmin, but to the neighbouring peoples who also claim origins from Afek. In a like manner, neighbouring peoples accord to Telefolmin a pre-eminence in matters of esoteric knowledge and ritual, and it seems many view their own local traditions as derivative from those originating at Telefolip. Here it is also worth mentioning that the two valleys of Telefol settlement--Ifitaman and Eliptaman--hold twenty or so permanent villages, unparalleled in both number and stability in the region. This dissertation, then, is a contribution to our knowledge of a relatively poorly known ethnographic region and focuses upon a people whose elaboration of ritual seems to intensify the distinctive features of the region as a whole.

#### iv. A Sketch of Telefol History

Like other peoples of Papua New Guinea, most Telefolmin have within their lifetimes confronted a series of events adding up to a historical experience radically different from that of their fathers and grandfathers. Though there were sporadic and intermittent contacts with Europeans since at least the 1920's (Champion 1966), the history of the Telefolmin in relation to the wider world of mission, money, and government began in the days of the Second World War. The US Army Air Force established an emergency landing strip in Telefolmin as part of the preparation for the campaign against the Japanese at Hollandia, and this later became the site for the government landing strip and patrol post set up by the Australians after the war.

Initial relations between the administration and the Telefolmin seem to have been good. A number of today's greybeards recount their eagerness as youths to find out about the newcomers, and many volunteered to act as carriers for relatively hazardous contact patrols into neighbouring areas. By 1950 things were running relatively smoothly, and the start of the decade saw the establishment of the first mission by the Australian Baptist Missionary Society. Before long, however, the relationship turned sour. In late 1953

Telefolmin mounted what can only be described as a rebellion against the administration and managed in two simultaneous attacks to kill the two European patrol officers and two native constables. The plan misfired, however, when a third planned attack on the mission station and government radio shack was foiled by an Australian missionary who held the son of one prominent man hostage while he radioed to headquarters in Wewak for help. Help rapidly arrived in the form of several plane loads of armed constabulary and it became instantly clear that the attempt to expel the administration had failed. After several months the participants in the attacks were rounded up, questioned, and flown to the coast for trial. Most of those apprehended were convicted of murder and were sentenced to death by hanging, a sentence which was later commuted to ten years' imprisonment.

The effects of the so-called "Telefolmin massacre" and its denouement were far-reaching. The affair became a topic for political debate in Australia, and this seems to have had the consequence of sensitizing the administration to the advantages of avoiding such incidents in the future. In pragmatic terms, this resulted in the adoption of a go-slow policy towards development in Telefolmin. Administration correspondence of the period immediately following the trials shows a consistent pattern: local patrol officers repeatedly requested permission to embark on cash-cropping projects and were insistently told by district headquarters that the experience of 1953 showed that Telefolmin were basically very "primitive" and backward people who were not yet ready for progress. Better instead to concentrate on straightforward law-and-order administration, censusing, and extension of basic health care: to attempt more would be to spread administrative resources too thin, to the potential detriment of security considerations.

The situation had a different look from a Telefol point of view. Though published accounts of the affair suggest that the rebellion somehow resulted from savage cussedness, cargo cults, or the simple desire for

autonomy (cf. Quinlivan 1954), local people have another tale to tell. A number of different witnesses (including some of the participants in the attacks) report an accumulation of grievances against what can only be described as abuses of administrative authority. For example, it became common practice for government patrols to seize pigs without compensation, and in at least two cases the government refused to compensate the relatives of men who had died in accidents while acting as carriers for patrols. Others complain that they were forced to act as bearers on patrols against their will, and at least one man died as the result of beatings by police when he refused to carry the load assigned to him. During the course of government censuses the houses of villagers who did not appear were put to the torch by police or patrol officers. In at least one case a house was burnt in the village of Telefolip where a number of significant cult relics were being stored. None of these things, however, seems to have caused as much anger and resentment as the practice adopted by Laurie Nolan (sole European patrol officer in early 1953) towards the irate fathers, brothers, and husbands of local women he kept as mistresses: when they came to the station to collect kinswomen or wives, he had them beaten and bloodied by native constabulary. Deciding that they were men and not dogs, Telefolmin decided also that if this was government, they had had enough.

The immediate impact of the arrests and imprisonment following the failed attempt at expulsion was demoralizing. Numbers of men from several villages were separated from their families and neighbours for a decade, and it is precisely such men who would have formed the active core of their villages. It was soon clear that Telefolmin had ceased to master their own affairs, nor were they ever likely again to do so. Telefolmin in latter days maintained a certain pride in their attempt to stand up to the outsiders, but this was mixed with a view that came to portray their 1953 attacks as foolish and futile. Worse yet, they had done *wrong* (Pidgin: *rong* = error, breach of

law, or sin) in their foolishness and ignorance. If for some the killings are proof that Telefolmin are men and cannot be pushed around, the memory is also tainted with guilt and some regret. The guilt is significant because it lends credence to the common sense that the government was reluctant to help Telefolmin in development because they had killed the patrol officers--an estimation closer to the truth than is comfortable.

After 1953 things in Telefolmin remained quiet. The administration was preoccupied with the expansion and consolidation of control in outlying areas, particularly in Miyanmin to the north. Nonetheless, the decade from the mid-50s to the mid-60s was a period in which a number of significant influences on Telefol life took shape and made themselves felt.

The Baptist mission took up its programme of evangelism in earnest during the 50s and gradually began building up its operations. By 1960 a bible school for youths (male) featuring training in Pidgin literacy was in operation, and a number of boys went--sometimes without parental consent--to live on the mission station and receive education. A number of these youths were later to become prominent as village pastors, and some of these became councillors when the Telefomin (sic) Local Government Council was established in 1969. At the same time, the mission also established a nursing school for young women and a maternity clinic under the direction of Sister Betty Crouch. Clinic staff went on regular medical patrols in outlying areas, and an airstrip (now closed) was established by the mission at Falamin to facilitate such visits. This strip was the first of a series of such strips established by the mission throughout the region with the aim of opening up outlying areas for evangelism and incidental development.

Though there were few conversions to Christianity until the late 60s, the mission had become a prominent part of Telefol life. Moreover, those who were attracted by the mission comprised two significant sectors of the population: women, who were traditionally excluded from the cult life of the

village, and young men (few of whom were fully initiated) with ambitions for the future. According to the mission view, such men were to become the leaders of a new generation of Telefolmin. From the Telefol view men with a command of literacy were best suited for dealings with the government and the outside world, and it is a measure of this that the first and only elected member of Parliament from Telefolmin, Wesani Iwoksime, was also one of the first men to complete training at the bible school and was the first village pastor in the area. Characteristically, such men also attempted to become small-scale entrepreneurs by running village tradestores. Though virtually all of these ventures failed for a number of reasons, such activities had the aura of prosperity and success about them. To many villagers it thus appeared that the route to a new way of life led through the mission, and it is worth noting that those who had taken this route thereby removed themselves from the stream of youths who embark upon Telefol manhood through initiation.

The decade of 1955 to 1965 also saw the first serious engagement of Telefolmin in the cash economy. Though the administration failed to provide much in the way of local development, there was nonetheless a steady growth in access to cash for villagers. In the early days following the Second World War Telefolmin who acted as labourers (on station and strip construction) were paid in axes, matches, salt, bolts of cloth and so on. This had the double effect of creating demand for manufactured items and at the same time created the need for a more flexible and generalized form of payment; though most men were eager to acquire steel axes, there were only so many axes one man could use. Payment in cash then became more frequent, and the mission operated a small tradestore where people could exchange their cash for goods. As both mission and administration operations expanded, a small but regular labour force was required for airstrip maintenance, construction, and domestic service. In addition, small quantities of vegetables and other local produce were sold both to mission and administration personnel. Most significantly,

the advent of contract labour on coastal or highland plantations made a relatively large amount of cash available to increasing numbers of younger men over a wide area. Such labourers signed on for two-year contracts and would, at the end of their contracts, return to Telefolmin with new experiences, store-bought clothes, and as much as two hundred Australian dollars in their pockets. Though the administration prudently restricted the number of young men eligible to leave on labour contracts (to prevent too drastic disruption of village life and subsistence), most Telefol men near the station under the age of thirty or so have had some experience as plantation labourers.

By the close of the 1960s Telefolmin had become a very different sort of place. The mission had become a regular part of the landscape, the Telefolmin Local Government Council--empowered to initiate development projects with government support--went into operation, a rudimentary road network between villages near the station was built, while a government hospital and school extended their services to local people. All of these new presences began to intensify in the 1970s, with Independence in 1975 providing a significant turning point. Though subsequent developments in Telefolmin are beyond the scope of this dissertation, 1975 marked not only the era of national independence, but also brought with it the hope--and the threat--of large-scale copper mining in the region, a new level of local participation in national politics, and the inauguration and fruition of cash-cropping schemes involving the production of coffee and chilis.

This is the historical context that framed my fieldwork in Telefolmin between 1974 and 1975, and the "ethnographic present" of the dissertation may be taken as falling within this time period. The reader may feel a few twinges of discomfort by the lack of reference to history in Telefolmin, and perhaps with some justification. It is nonetheless the case that the realities of Telefol society, cosmology, and religion that are set forth here belong to the contemporary scene--though admittedly affected by recent changes--and are not

part of some dead or frozen past. Here my most straightforward means of persuading the reader is to refer to events in Telefolmin between my departure in 1975 and my second visit in 1979. When I left the field in 1975 it was evident that the initiations in Telefolmin were taking place less frequently and with fewer participants, something I mention in passing in my discussion of the Ok Bembem movement of 1975 (see Chapter 4). In 1979 I was requested by Wesani Iwoksim on behalf of the Telefolmin as a whole to return to take up residence in Telefolip and collect and assemble an archive of sacred narratives (*weng amem*). By 1979 it appeared that the initiation system itself was on the verge of collapse, and my commission was to save the secret lore of the cult in a form (here, recording tape and a subsequent transcription, as yet incomplete) accessible to future generations of Telefolmin. In the current year (1980) the Telefolmin are at what may very well be a cultural crossroads, and while I do not intend to pursue the details of the matter here, the crux of the issue concerns the future status of the men's cult and all that it entails. In a very real sense, the outcome of this collective debate will determine not only the shape of Telefol society but also the nature of being Telefolmin and what kind of people tomorrow's Telefolmin will be (see Jorgensen 1980).

#### v. Entering Telefolmin

To reach Telefolmin it is necessary to fly in from the north coast of Papua New Guinea by light aircraft. The flight from Wewak, roughly two hundred miles distant, begins at dawn since the cloud cover thickens and visibility decreases as the day progresses. Crossing first over coconut-studded coastal hills, the route passes over Maprik and across the broad Sepik plains. Here the Sepik is a very different river from the one encountered in Telefolmin--here it is broad, sluggish, laden with silt and mud that it carries in wide looping meanders to the sea. Across the river to the west is Ambunti,



and beyond it the horizon fills with a growing tangle of blue-green forested ridges. These rise abruptly to form a cloud-shrouded mountain chain, the Central Ranges. Below there are few signs of habitation, the forest cover relieved only by the watercourses swiftly falling north to the Sepik. Gradually a few, and then more, isolated gardens and houses appear in the forest below. Clearing the Donner Range, the first Telefol villages appear on spurs overlooking the Ok Elip and its valley, Eliptaman. Continuing on, the aircraft skims over the last ridge of the Mittag Range whose crests sport forest festooned with russet mosses. Then the ground drops suddenly away to reveal Ifitaman, the valley of the upper Sepik and the homeland of the Telefolmin. Here signs of habitation abound. The grass and gravel airstrip is flanked by a tidy clustering of gleaming tin-roofed buildings--the government station. This is connected by a dirt road to another such cluster on the opposite side of the strip, the establishment of the Australian Baptist Missionary Society. The road continues along past another building, the tradestore of the church-run Telefomin Development Association (TDA), the largest structure save one in the sub-district. From there the road skirts the edge of a grassy marsh to link up a crescent-like arrangement of villages perched along the rim of a sloping tableland. Here the colours and forms are evidences of the Telefolmin and their activities, the villages marked by the faded grey thatch of houses ranged around dazzling white clearings innocent of the colours of the bush. These sites overlook finger-like ridges and jumbled streams and ravines where the nearer garden clearings are marked by fences and fallow land is signalled by tall clumps of feathery casuarina trees. Brown or purplish patches reveal new garden clearings while distant wisps of smoke tell of men working further afield.

Though the most striking natural feature of Ifitaman is the Sepik itself, the Ok Tekin, Ifitaman takes its name from the Ok Ifi, a small creek flowing across the marsh and past the village of Telefolip. Properly speaking,

Ifitaman comprises only that section of the valley between the confluence of the Ok Sol and the Ok Tekin in the east to the junction of the Ok Tekin and the Ok Ilam in the west. The section above the Sol is Tekintaman, the home of the Falamin--neighbours and traditional enemies. Perhaps six miles broad and eight miles long, Ifitaman is surrounded by mountains (see Map 3, p. xiii).

From the hill named Taamettigin, where Falamin bodies were counted after battle and where the government primary school now stands, it is possible to get a fair view of the valley on a clear day. To the north lie the Mittags whose forested flanks are dotted with gardens. Rising to about 8000 feet, the Mittags are the source of numerous streams running south to the Tekin. Save for a few limestone cliffs and slide scars, this range forms an unbroken green wall separating Ifitaman from Eliptaman. Towering on the east bank of the Sol is a southern extension of this range, the Tirpitz Mountains. Like the Mittags and most of the other nearby ranges, these are limestone mountains pock-marked and honeycombed by karst formations: caves and sinkholes abound and streams issue full-blown from the gaping black depths of the massif itself. On a late afternoon the harsh white of the limestone is transformed into a coral glow, echoing the sunset. Telefolmin have no encompassing name for this range, or for the others, preferring instead to confer identity on each crest and peak. The mountain at the head of the Ok Balam is Balamtigin, and here gardens temporarily pre-empt forest in depressions or on the steep slopes. Beyond Balamtigin to the east lie Uwutigin and Ifaaltigin. Uwutigin, at the source of the Ok Sol, is where the people known as the Uwutigin Kasel originate. Ifaaltigin, a towering mist-shrouded block surrounded by lesser peaks, is a spirit house presiding over the dwelling houses of the village where *momoyok*--those who die by violence--live.

Away to the east and beyond the lands of the Falamin looms the great ship-like mass of Kafantigin, the "awakening mountain" over which the sun begins its daily course and where the Ok Tekin starts its journey which ends

at the Sepik estuary. Beyond Kafantigin to the southeast lie the Victor Emmanuels, running westwards to form the Hindenburg Range and the Star Mountains straddling the border with Irian Jaya. In the Victor Emmanuels the Fly River, the southern counterpart of the Sepik, finds its beginning as the Ok Feneng. The Feneng, together with the Ok Imig, rises in the sheer southern face of the Hindenburg Wall, the imposing limestone barrier overlooking the lands of the Fegolmin and other Faiwol-speaking peoples. Seen from Taamettigin, the Victor Emmanuels offer a less severe and dramatic aspect, and when the morning mists have lifted they can be distinguished as a series of parallel ridges clad in mossy beech forest. It is over the 8,000 to 10,000 foot ridges that trading routes make their way through eerily silent moss forest to Fegolmin in the south, a wearying trek of two or three days.

The southwestern rim of Ifitaman is formed by the Behrmanns, a lower offshoot of the Victor Emmanuels. The Behrmanns are mountains of a different sort, however, since their northern face shows *kunai* grassland rather than forest: the result of Afek's fire-making. Few streams are found here, the water percolating down through the porous limestone instead. Those water-courses that exist are easily distinguished by the fringes of dark forest along their banks. As with many of the streams to the north, these streams are resurgences from within the mountains themselves and emerge from cave mouths. Some of these, like Okaaltem, are *abemtem*, sacred or forbidden places which are not to be disturbed, whose water is not for men's lips, and past which people must go in silence. It is at the foot of the Behrmanns that the Ok Tekin cuts a deep and narrow gorge; a few miles downstream the Ok Tekin is joined by the Ok Ilam before it exits in a series of rapids through the spectacular chasm surmounted by Iltigin and Abemtigin, the two easternmost sentinels of the Star Mountains.

Several smaller side-valleys adjoin Ifitaman--Nongkaman to the south, Soltaman to the north, Okfekaman to the northwest. With the exception of two

small hamlets in Okfekaman, none of these holds permanent settlements, being instead places to which people walk--sometimes for several hours--to make gardens and sojourn in the bush. This, then, is the physical setting of the Telefolmin. In the next section we will begin by exploring how Telefolmin inhabit it.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE BACKGROUND OF TELEFOL LIFE

#### i. Introduction

In this chapter I outline the general context of Telefol culture in terms of a limited number of themes that pervade daily life. Though others could doubtless be found, these themes sum up economically the nature of work and social relations in Telefolmin, and are part of the necessary foundation for further understanding of Telefol culture. In each of the following sections I present the content in terms of two complementary and often opposed poles. This is in accord with the way Telefolmin tend to think about these sides of their lives, in terms of contrast and a dualistic formulation. Such a presentation adumbrates the thematic organization of Telefol ritual and myth, which selects such polarities as the topical focus of attention. In addition, this format allows some insight also into many of the ambivalences and complications arising from life led in such terms.

#### ii. Gardening and Hunting

Telefolmin are subsistence cultivators dependent upon taro as the staple of their diet, substantial if monotonous fare which they supplement and embellish with the results of collecting, hunting, and pig husbandry. Though a key part of the definition of Telefolmin as people is their membership in permanent and more or less tidy villages, they are primarily a forest people and it is in the forest that they make their gardens and seek game. Continually active, the villagers of Ifitaman are keen, energetic, and able in these pursuits. For men and for women, gardening is both a means and an end in itself, and of all the Telefol virtues, industry is given a special

place. For men there is an additional and more precarious sphere, that of hunting, in which they put skill and luck to the test. Gardening and hunting frame and shape the energies and preoccupations of day-to-day life for men in Telefolmin, twin poles around which much of their experience is organized, affording the context of conversation and reflection as well as of activity. Though occasionally tedious to the outsider, gardening and hunting are inevitably the topics of chats around an evening's fire, and if Telefolmin sometimes give the impression of being laconic and closed in their manner, their discussions of the current state of gardens or of likely locations of game are always animated and detailed. In the process they reveal not only their impressive knowledge of such things, but also their consuming interest in them.

"Taro is the same as a baby--if you look after it well,  
you will fare well." --Dakasim

Taro (*Colocasia esculenta*) is called *iman* in Telefol, a word synonymous with *unankalin*, 'food'. To be without taro (*iman binim*) is to be without food, near the brink of starvation--even if, as is virtually always the case, there are ample amounts of sweet potato (*Ipomea batatas*, *waan*) available. To be hungry (*iman tep*) is to eat a meal without taro. Other crops, and there are many, may each be valued for the variety they offer, but none can be seen as any more than supplements or garnishes for taro, the true food.

It is difficult to convey the sense of identification Telefolmin have with this crop, or the high esteem in which it is held. In Telefol eyes, taro is particularly their own, part of the cultural bequest left them by Afek, the Ancestress. Men may describe it as the "bone" (strength) of the Telefolmin as a people, one of the cornerstones of their existence. Telefolmin are aware that a number of their neighbours rely more heavily on

sweet potato than taro, and they seize upon this as one means of distinguishing themselves from such others. Thus Telefolmin illustrate the near-proverbial shiftiness and laziness of their Atbalmin neighbours to the west by emphasizing that the Atbalmin zest for hunting is not matched by their gardening. Atbalmin gardens are notoriously poor and few, and are planted almost exclusively in sweet potato instead of taro. Men who have visited the Oksapmin area to the east remark upon the short-sightedness of Oksapmin cultivation practice.

Unlike Telefolmin, the Oksapmin imprudently fell all trees when clearing their forest gardens, rather than allowing some to remain standing in and around the margins of the clearing. This has--from the perspective of people committed to taro--a number of ill effects, including the drying-out of the soil and full exposure to the sun (bad for taro), as well as reducing the likelihood that forest regeneration will provide fallow cover. The net result is that forest has in large areas given way to grassland, land which could only be suitable for sweet potato--not taro. Thus the Oksapmin must pay for their improvidence by chronically living with the misfortune of having to eat sweet potato in lieu of the inestimably superior taro. While it is clear that much of Telefol fondness for taro stems from a variety of gustatory chauvinism, Telefolmin themselves point to the self-evident nature of taro's superiority as a food. Taro, they remark, is a strong food that satisfies easily and fully. Compared to taro, other foods--even the starchiest--are "like water". While a relatively modest taro will suffice to sustain a man through a day's arduous work, one must eat much sweet potato before appetites are sated--and then one becomes hungry again at mid-day! And while other foods may provide a variety of flavours, the fragrant chestnut-like taste of good taro is unexcelled in its appeal to the Telefol palate.

Despite what appear--to Telefolmin--to be taro's obvious advantages over other crops, throughout Papua New Guinea taro is normally a staple only in the warm coastal and lowland interior areas. The majority of peoples in

the cooler uplands rely instead upon sweet potato as the mainstay of their subsistence (Watson 1965, 1977). In higher elevations (above 4000 feet) taro is much slower than sweet potato to mature, as well as producing lower yields. This is no less true in Telefolmin than it is elsewhere, and taro planted in the higher mountain gardens at elevations of between 6500 and 7000 feet can take as long as two years to mature. In addition, taro requires appreciably more labour than sweet potato to plant. While sweet potato may be propagated from vines which proliferate over the surface of the ground, taro can only be planted from stalks whose weight must be borne from one garden site to the next, each stalk bearing only a single (but large) corm. Telefolmin are, of course, fully aware of this difference and point out others as well. For instance, sweet potato vines may merely be thrust below the soil's surface to take root, while it is necessary to wield a heavy digging stick with great force to make a hole deep enough to properly accommodate taro. In addition, taro is vulnerable to a number of blights and to even short drought, which endanger both the growing crop and the precious supply of stalks used as planting material. Nonetheless, Telefolmin steadfastly insist that taro is tastier and more satisfying--sweet potato is clearly easier to plant, but who would like to live on a diet of sweet potato? Hungry times are those in which one eats sweet potato because the supply of taro is short; prosperous times are those in which all the sweet potato is used as pig-fodder; the best times are those in which pigs are fed nothing but cooked taro. Whereas a good taro crop is full evidence of a gardener's industry, there is no particular merit in having produced many sweet potatoes. Though Telefolmin are not given to boasting--at least among themselves--a gardener's mettle can be clearly indicated in the claim, "I plant no sweet potato!".

Dakasim's statement that taro is the same as a baby carries a much more direct and immediate import than we might at first imagine. Taro, like other garden crops, domestic animals, and humans, is endowed with *sinik*,



'spirit', and has among other things the faculty of hearing human speech. Thus, taro must not be insulted or shamed in speech, lest the edible portion below the surface of the ground depart, leaving the gardener with no food to harvest. On the other hand, taro may be coaxed, urged, and chided to grow well. Not only must taro be respected in word, but in deed as well: it should not be handled roughly or tossed about. Should this somehow happen, any man present will pass the taro (stalk or corm) under his legs to 'fasten its *sinik*', just as women do with small children when they fall or hurt themselves. And, as with small children, he will cradle it in his arms, cry over it, and speak soothing words to it. Though all garden crops share these characteristics to some extent, they apply pre-eminently to taro, which is the garden crop *par excellence*.

The presence of gardens in the bush is signalled at a distance by the sight of breaks in the forest on mountain flanks or by thin wisps of smoke rising above the trees. At closer range the tock of an axe or the laughter of children indicates a family at work. All along the major tracks between villages there is an intermittent branching of smaller, narrower paths leading to household plantations. One of the most pleasing sights in Ifit-aman is a taro garden set against the backdrop of the forest. Whereas the bush offers a dark and somber aspect, gardens are places where sunlight and broken shade alternate and the sky may be seen. Surrounded by sturdy fences, garden clearings are filled with a profusion of green taro leaves gently nodding in the breeze, punctuated here and there with cornstalks, banana trees, tobacco seedlings, clumps of sugar cane, beans climbing up poles; the ground itself is covered with squash and cucumber vines. The park-like atmosphere of the garden is enhanced by a few forest trees left standing to temper the sun, echoed by irregularly spaced pandanus trees whose fruit is highly prized and whose presence testifies to the gardener's previous attentions to the land.

Each Telefol household maintains roughly a dozen or so such gardens scattered through different tracts of bush, often accompanied by makeshift shelters or more substantial houses. At any given time some gardens will be bearing, others will require weeding, some will be in the process of clearing and planting while yet others will be nearing exhaustion as the last remaining corms are dug out of the earth. On the average, a hard-working family will manage to clear and plant about one garden per month, replacing another that will be abandoned for the forest to reclaim. Since taro is not seasonal, and since there are no regular fluctuations in the climate, the entire process goes on as one continuous round, a steady rhythm of labouring and reaping labour's rewards<sup>1</sup>.

The first stage in the process of making a garden is deciding upon a likely site. Here there are many alternatives. Most Telefolmin like to have their gardens distributed fairly evenly throughout the range of elevation zones that Ifitaman affords, thus assuring a good mix of ecological settings for their taro. Each zone--*diip*, *dagaan*, *tolim*--offers its own advantages and risks, which must be weighed. Gardens located in the warm, low-lying *diip* land will mature fairly rapidly, with six to eight months between planting and harvest. But taro planted in *diip* tends also to be more vulnerable to rot, blight, and insect pests than taro planted higher in the valley. On the other hand, taro which is planted in the cool, high *tolim* zone is less susceptible to such hazards, but can take anywhere from eighteen to twenty-four months to reach maturity. Taro planted in the intermediate *dagaan* zone represents a compromise between these two alternatives. In general, the final decision for any particular garden will be based upon a consideration not only of the relative merits of each of these zones in themselves, but also on the basis of the current distribution of gardens in production or near exhaustion. Thus, if a man is nearly finished harvesting a garden in *tolim*, he will be likely to begin clearing another one in a

nearby tract to replace it. Such a course has the advantage of permitting the gardener and his family to rely upon the old garden for food and planting stock, thus eliminating the necessity of arduously carrying provisions in from elsewhere. Such decisions are reached between husband and wife and with the advice of neighbours, and are always complex, requiring skill and managerial judgment in order to balance anticipated requirements against varying periodicities of growth and the possible contingencies of failure. These uncertainties are all the more striking because Telefolmin juggle all these possibilities without the aid of a calendar or any system of long-range time-reckoning. It is thus not surprising that, quite apart from particulars, the general Telefol policy is to place reliance upon continued hard work to look after the future.

Once a general area has been selected for cultivation, other factors must be taken into account before a particular stretch of forest gives way to garden. Does the gardener, or his wife, have any established claims to land in this tract? If not, does anyone else have claims here? If a man is returning to a tract in which he has claims, he ought to consult others (e.g., parents, siblings) who also have rights in an area before he begins clearing. If, on the other hand, the land in question is virgin bush he may proceed without undue regard for the wishes and intentions of others, one of the attractions of distant tracts in the deep forest. Finally, a man must decide on a particular spot for his plot. Walking through the forest, he stops here and there examining the surroundings for promising signs. Bending occasionally, he will thrust his hand down to the ground, checking for the depth of the leaf-litter, the humus mulch of the forest. The presence of a small creek or rivulet bodes well, a safeguard against the drying of the soil so dangerous for taro. The slope must be suitable--great enough to allow drainage in heavy rains, but not so steep as to encourage erosion--and the presence of broken earth is noted, raising the possibility of landslides.

Attention is paid to the location of cliffs and rock outcrops, aids in reducing the extent of fencing. If the gardener is returning to land previously cultivated, he carefully checks the height and diameter of trees, such as casuarinas (*tetip*), that he previously planted as fallow cover. Large healthy trees are encouraging signs, stunted ones offer little to look forward to. Other trees--those of the forest--give clues as well, one of the best being *at ulap* (*Ficus* sp.) which is a sure sign of soil good for taro. Finally, memories will be searched for precedents--either good or poor--of earlier gardens in the same land. After all these deliberations have been completed, a matter of perhaps half an hour, chips fly with the first decisive stroke of the axe. The garden has been begun.

Though Telefol women are quite capable with axes, felling trees is men's work. For their part, women busy themselves with clearing undergrowth, all the while keeping a sharp eye out for whatever lizards, rats, snakes or marsupials dart forth from their erstwhile homes. These are women's prizes, a sort of bonus they derive from the back-breaking work of wielding their bush-knives. In the old days, of course, steel tools were not to be had. Then, men used polished stone adzes (*fubi* or *mook*), while women employed smaller versions of the same implements for their tasks. Nowadays, steel tools have made the work of clearing gardens less taxing: older men reminisce about how they might spend the better part of a day felling a forest giant, and how their urine ran red at the end of the day as a result of their exertions. Steel blades make the going lighter now, and don't require polishing and retouching as often--but then neither do they have the 'heat' (*mamin*) that the old adzes had, the work they perform does not always produce the bounty of the old stone blades.

Once the initial felling and clearing has been completed--a matter of perhaps three or four days--the first sections are prepared for planting. The gardener--perhaps with the help of a brother, son, or brother-in-law--

will drag off some of the lighter timbers to the downslope margins of the clearing while women and children heap the slash in small piles to dry in the spaces newly opened to the sun. Then men and boys set to work splitting some of the remaining logs for fence-building, always a laborious task. As with so many other things, fence-making affords some measure of a man's industry, and hence his worth. The vertical fence-piles must be driven deeply into the ground and securely lashed together with cane, lest wild pigs force an unwelcome entrance into the clearing. Young women thinking about potential husbands will take some measure of their men by surreptitiously trying to force, and thus test, their fences. A poor fence betrays a lack of the qualities that make a man a good provider and earn him a name. After the fencing, a great number of the larger logs will still remain in the clearing. Some of these will be sectioned, hopefully to dry for future supplies of firewood, while others are simply left where they lie, later to provide walkways through the burgeoning garden.

Over the next week or so the work proceeds at a steady and even pace. All the members of the household, men, women, and children, take part. As the family's daily needs are met with taro from mature gardens, the stalks are cut, bundled, and allowed to dry for a day or so before being carried to the new site. If a producing garden is near at hand, this occasions little difficulty--otherwise, the heavy stalks must be carried in bundles or in the ubiquitous netbags over narrow and slick mountain paths. At this time there may not be enough stalks available from household harvests to suffice for the new planting requirements, in which case a family will often invite friends, relatives, and other villagers to help them harvest an old garden to increase their supply of planting material. Those who help out will keep the taro they harvest, to be reciprocated in the same manner later on.

Taro stalks are of central importance to Telefolmin. Though gardens are certainly the joint projects of the families who depend on them,

the stalks themselves are individually owned by each member of the household, and the identification between a person and his supply of stalks is very strong. Each Telefol boy and girl receives a small number of stalks from his parents between the sixth and ninth year. From this time on, each child begins to tend his own small plots in the family garden, increasing his stock as each 'mother' plant sends off a few shoots in each planting. These stalks are the nucleus of a person's future livelihood and will form the basis of each person's contribution to the household established with marriage. By the time they are in their mid-teens, Telefol youths and girls are virtually self-sufficient in terms of garden production. One's supply of stalks is thus both a token of and a means to the attainment of autonomy and the establishment of personal integrity. Thus, if a garden is, say, invaded by pigs, the gardener's anger and loss pertains not only to the forfeit of the food the garden would have provided, nor simply to the loss of labour invested. Such reverses are telling, to be sure, but the most significant loss is that of the stalks themselves, for they are irreplaceable in a way that food itself is not. A person's stock of *fiip* serves as a cumulative record of his work over the years, going beyond the immediacies of the situation at any one point in time. It is for this reason that the gardens of middle-aged men are larger than those of their juniors--not only is the number and extent of gardens limited by the initiative and labour of the individual at any particular time, but more importantly by the availability of planting material, which, if abundant, generates its own imperative to industry. It thus happens that one of the most significant ways of opening and maintaining friendships with other villagers--or even strangers--is to make a small but immensely meaningful gift of a few taro stalks, and some men can point to plants in their gardens as a registry of their good relations with others. A person's life is thus intimately bound with the careful husbandry of their taro, and when a person dies, so ends the life of their stalks, which must be burned (cf. Schwimmer 1973:112-22).

When a supply of stalks has been collected and transported to the new garden, the planting begins in earnest. While the women take up their heavy digging sticks and deftly thrust the stalks into the holes, men and boys will gather together the now-dried slash and pile this at the base of the largest trees left standing in the garden. This is set alight, and soon the sound of crackling wood and the smell of smoke permeates the clearing. The ash from the fires is in a perfunctory way scattered around the area with bark sheets, though most of it remains at the bases of the trees. Such spots will be reserved for particular plants, such as tobacco, yams, or bananas, that can best make use of the rich concentration of nutrients in the ash. In addition, the firing has the effect of killing the trees where the slash has been heaped. These trees will gradually lose their leaves, which allows a greater amount of sunlight in for the by-then established plants; in addition, the leaves themselves will act as a mulch, thus sustaining the growing crop. Finally, the fire imparts *mamiin*, or 'heat', to the earth, thus underwriting the vigour of the coming garden.

Once the firing has been finished, husband, wife, and children complete the planting of their own plots in the garden. Though the produce of these is for common consumption, each is the responsibility of the person who first planted the slips. In the meanwhile, the garden inventory is fleshed out with subsidiary crops, such as beans, squash, corn, gourds and greens, all planted around the margins of the garden or in the interstices between the already planted taro.

Certain crops that grow upwards above the level of the taro are the concerns of men, such as bananas, sugar cane, pandanus trees, and yams with their climbing vines. Yams are the nearly exclusive prerogative of senior men and require a great deal of work and skill to produce, though dietarily insignificant. Yams do not fare well in Telefolmin, and are virtually impossible to grow in higher elevations. Since yams require a generally dry

regime, and since Telefolmin is a wet place (between 135 and 180 inches of rainfall annually), great care must be taken in the selection of suitable soils. Most men prefer to plant yams in raised anthills, since these are always well-drained; if this is impossible, then the soil must be broken, tilled, and mounded before planting. Later, poles will be cut for the vines to climb. Sugar cane is highly prized by Telefolmin, both as a snack and as a source of moisture on hot days. Children are particularly fond of sugar cane, and a devoted father will always see to it that he plants plenty for their benefit. Sugar cane is of particular importance for other reasons as well, since most men's rites entail a prohibition on drinking water while they are in progress. Thus sugar cane becomes essential for the conduct of the village cult life. A man who always has a ready supply of sugar cane is much appreciated, and will be sure to earn the respect of his fellows. This, like most other things, comes at the expense of great effort and skill. To grow proper sugar cane, one must construct a large trellis to which the growing stalks are lashed. This prevents the cane from collapsing when it reaches a certain height, ensuring that it will grow to a great diameter (perhaps three inches or more)--not only does such cane look impressive, it also contains a deliciously rich and succulent pith. In order to prevent a drying and toughening of the cane and its woody peel, a man must periodically return to his cane thicket to remove old leaf-sheaths, thus frustrating the boring insects that are the cause of the toughening. Not all men are equally assiduous in their care of sugar cane, but a man who takes the trouble is easily known by the sugar he offers visitors. Of all of the specifically 'male' crops, the most significant is perhaps the oil pandanus, *em*. The fruit of this tree is prized nearly as highly as pork, and the thick red sauce of the pandanus fruit is symbolically seen as blood. Thus, a man who is feeling sluggish may eat some of this special food--often the occasion of a minor feast--to 'change his blood' and renew his vigour. Gifts of



pandanus occasion fond memories, and a meal of pandanus and grated taro cakes is often a favoured form of thanking someone for help they have rendered, e.g., in housebuilding. Aside from these things, however, pandanus is particularly significant for yet another reason. It is the longest-lived crop that Telefolmin cultivate, remaining and bearing fruit for decades. For this reason, a man's pandanus trees are at any time a more or less permanent record of his history of cultivation, a history renewed in periodic visits to old garden sites (long since overgrown) when he inspects the trees for signs of their long red cob-like fruit. These trees are a visible and positive indication of a man's connection with the land and serve to validate his claims to particular plots of land: if a man can point to a pandanus tree he himself (or his father or mother's brother) has planted, all questioning of his rights to cultivation is dispelled. These trees, as well as casuarinas, are thus used as explicit boundary-markers and statements of claim, and one of the more serious acts a man can commit is to cut down another man's pandanus trees.

Over a period of another week or so the area of the garden will have been more or less completely planted. All around the edges of the garden certain varieties of taro, specifically selected for their poor texture and bland flavour, will find homes. These rather lacklustre varieties are planted to protect the rest of the garden--should rats or marsupials make their way into the garden to feast on the crop, these plants will be the first they encounter. If these animals are at all sensible, this unappetizing taro will surely offer an unpromising prospect, leading such pests to look elsewhere for a satisfying meal. In this way inferior taro is deliberately maintained and cultivated to deceive the small furry animals that threaten the true crop. If the garden is large, or if there are other gardens within reasonable walking distance, or simply if the gardener feels like it, a small garden house will be erected near to the

garden, thus removing the need to walk from village to garden and back during periods of heavy work. Finally, a red ti plant (*Cordyline* sp., *tobaa*) will make its appearance in the centre of the garden, often surrounded by a tiny fence. This, and the taro planted next to it, is *amem*, forbidden, and women and children know enough not to touch or disturb this, though they may not be certain as to the details of its arrival (cf. Clarke 1971:75, Appendix C; Buchbinder and Rappaport 1976; Wagner 1972:124-9). From this point on, no taro may be harvested from the garden until the men have come and uprooted this ti plant (see also Rappaport 1968).

Once the initial phases of the garden have been inaugurated and seen through, a man will direct his attentions elsewhere to a garden now well producing or another whose existence is as yet only an intention. The new garden is now left for a month or so before a woman or some children return to do the first weeding. After another two or three months the first beans, cucumbers, and squashes will be ready to harvest, during which time the garden will again be weeded. During each of these subsequent visits the dead trees left standing will provide firewood, and as they are felled progressively more light is let into the garden. From then on the garden will be periodically revisited to harvest second plantings of beans and greens and to keep track of the progress of the taro. At these times, small casuarina seedlings will be transplanted to speed the recovery of the soil--the roots of the casuarina turn the soil black and strengthen it. Though today's casuarinas, like today's taro and domestic pigs, are neither as big nor as fast-growing as those of bygone generations, they nonetheless grow quickly, especially if the planter knows the secret to hasten the lengthening of the growing trunk. These casuarinas help to guarantee the re-establishment of forest instead of useless grassland. As the taro matures it will be gradually harvested, the garden itself becoming more weed-infested as the harvesting progresses. Women, children, and men will come, fill their netbags, and strain under the

weight of taro's bounty as they make their way back to the village or to other gardens demanding attention. Eventually, the garden will be abandoned, the fences dismantled for firewood as the forest once again reclaims the clearing. Then the gardener will return only to reap late harvests of bananas or sugar cane, or to check the productivity of his pandanus stands. From time to time men will return to their casuarinas, for marsupials have an especial liking for the bark of this tree. But by this time the garden has already passed from the scene, remaining only as a tangle of seedlings and saplings, to be cultivated again after perhaps twelve to twenty years in forest fallow have passed. The abandoned garden is no longer a place for the production of staples, but is simply one of many places where game may be sought.

"The things of the bush aren't looked after by men...  
wild pigs are the enemies of gardens."      --Dakasim

If the garden provides the setting for the common engagement of men, women, and children in their mutual livelihood, hunting affords a context in which men and youths stand clearly apart from women and children in their pursuits. While it is true that both women and children do collect various kinds of insects and small animals, this is not hunting proper, but rather (from the men's point of view) the adventitious seizure, without weapons, of whatever falls to hand. Here there is one very significant exception, the nocturnal collection of frogs which women undertake singly or in groups. Following along the margins of streams or wading in swamp or marshland, women may spend the better part of a night with their bamboo or pandanus torches, trapping frogs in the open end of a large bamboo tube or simply catching them with quick thrusts of the hand. The resulting catch, which is steamed with greens, can make both a tasty and surprisingly large (and frequent) addition to the following day's meals. Though such additions seem particularly important in a dietary sense, men are not always enthusiastic about these

results of women's work, perhaps reflected and engendered by the fact that a number of varieties of frogs are forbidden or tabu (*amem*) for men to eat. Frog gathering aside, hunting is exclusively a male preserve, underscored by the precept that women should not touch a man's arrows, lest they fail to find their mark. Telefolmin tell a brief tale (*utuun sang*) which serves to emphasize that women and hunting do not go together:

An eagle (*bogol*) went into a cave after a *kuyacam* marsupial that was hiding there [both the eagle and this marsupial are tabu to women]. A pregnant woman was in the bush, collecting mushrooms and gathering bark to make string for netbags. She came near the entrance to the cave and heard noise inside--when she looked, she saw that the eagle had killed a large *kuyacam*. The eagle wanted to leave the cave, but the woman blocked the entrance as it tried to fly out, and she beat it with a piece of rotten wood. She did this, but the eagle fixed its talons in her swollen belly, still clutching the *kuyacam* in its other claw. The woman died, but its talons were so deeply embedded in her flesh that the eagle couldn't fly free. Later, some men came and killed the eagle and placed the woman's body on an exposure platform. This eagle had killed two things--the *kuyacam* with one hand, and the woman with the other.

Here, in this short narrative, we can see a polarization of feminine pursuits and hunting. Though in the forest, the woman--whose nature is stressed by the fact that she is with child--is engaged in the innocuous pursuit of gathering mushrooms and collecting bark-string for the netbags with which she carries the fruit of her gardens and of her belly (netbags acting as cradles for infants). When she attacks the eagle, the hunter's prototype *par excellence*, she finds nothing more suitable than a piece of rotten wood. Rotten ('bad') wood has both the undesirable associations of wetness, coldness, and softness (all symbolically feminine), and is also the usual phrase for firewood (*at mafak*), with connotations of the domestic hearth. Her fate is sealed, though she was doomed at the outset, for women should never try to usurp the male role of the hunter, especially when the animals (*bogol*, *kuyacam*) are so clearly marked as reserved for men.

Just as the huge netbags in which women carry taro and babies form an inseparable part of their identity, so a man's bow and arrows are his companions wherever he goes, virtual items of masculine apparel. There are, of course, practical reasons for this, since one may never be sure when game may appear just off the track. In the old days, of course, there was always the added possibility of enemy bowmen lying in ambush, and while such ambushes are now a thing of the past, the possibility of being set upon by *biit* sorcerers serves as an additional reason to keep one's weapons readily at hand. Boys usually receive a small toy bow from their fathers by the time they are around six or seven years old, and from this time on the lads will spend more and more time apart from their mothers and sisters, chumming around in the bush stalking imaginary game or, better yet, small lizards or birds. At idle times around the village they may test their marksmanship on an old banana stalk, while women roll out bark string on their thighs or knot the string into netbags. Likely as not, the boys' fathers will chat amongst themselves while putting the finishing touches on their arrows with a marsupial-tooth chisel or carefully stroking on red, white, or black pigments with a brush improvised from the stem of a cordyline leaf. In fact, Telefol arrows (*un*) are things of great beauty and workmanship, as are the women's netbags. Though many of the tools and implements of Telefol life go unadorned, men lavish meticulous attention on their arrows for both aesthetic and technical reasons. The shafts of the arrows are made from the light but strong and straight *biil* cane to which a great variety of points are affixed with intricate and fine cane bindings. There are a number of different arrow types, distinguishable by both form and use. Lizard and bird arrows may carry three or four prongs, each notched and barbed, or they may be blunt-headed so as not to damage the skin or plumage of the quarry. Marsupial arrows are mounted with long black-palm points, most of which have double rows of curved barbs and elegantly incised and painted designs around the base. By far the most

elaborate arrow is the *kaangat*, with a broad bamboo blade. This arrow is for wild pigs, cassowaries, or enemies and inevitably receives elaborate decorative attention. A *kaangat* will usually be ornamented with some red bird feathers (aids in their flight) and a few wild pig's bristles, betokening its intended target. Such arrows, which are the objects of these efforts, may be much admired, and two men who meet may signify their friendship by exchanging particularly fine arrows with each other.

The bows Telefolmin use are, unlike their arrows, not the products of their own craftsmanship, but must be traded in from the outside. Made from one of two varieties of black-palm (neither of which grow within Telefol territory, belonging instead to the lowlands), these bows (*unuuk*) may be had from the Fegolmin or Opkeemin to the south and west in exchange for the large conical bundles of tobacco (*suukang*) for which Telefolmin are locally renowned. As such, these bows are valuable items, and like the old stone adzes, find their way into bridewealth payments. A youth will often be presented with one of these by his father or other kinsman when he is capable of drawing these stiff and powerful weapons; if the lad has some enterprise and initiative, he may not wait this long, instead joining a trading party heading south, carrying his own tobacco bundles.

In addition to the traditional and ubiquitous bows and arrows, there is normally at least one man in each Telefol village who has been able to buy (often with the contributions of friends) a shotgun from the mission store--providing he is able to get a government permit for it. This is not always possible, since the government policy is to limit as far as practical the number of shotguns in any one area for the sound reason that an abundance of shotguns usually leads to a dearth of game. In the case of two men who had come into possession of shotguns for which they had no permits, the guns had to be surrendered to the patrol officers; one man lamented that this was the same as if his bones were removed, while the other was so distraught

that he daubed himself with clay and went into mourning for his lost gun. While few men have shotguns, these attitudes are nonetheless expressions of a deeply-felt connection between hunting and men's definition of themselves, and thus tell us something more general about hunting in Telefol life.

If one walks into a Telefol family house (*unangan*), one is likely to notice a number of animal bones adorning the back wall: perhaps a few cassowary breastbones, wild pigs' jaws with their curving tusks, and sometimes a number of marsupial jawbones as well. Very little significance may be attributed to these in and of themselves, but collectively they serve as a sort of trophy rack, speaking for both the skill and good fortune of the men of the household as hunters. Suspended from the rafters in soot-blackened bamboo tubes are yet other fruits of the chase--plumes and feathers of a number of different birds, among a man's prized possessions, for these provide many of the materials with which a man adorns himself (and other members of the household) on festive occasions. Telefol men, in particular, take great pride in their appearance in such settings, and while it is possible to acquire such things through exchange or trade, men are particularly proud of a crown of feathers made from birds they themselves have shot: such finery is valuable in itself, but also for the fact that it proclaims a man's ability in a strikingly visible way. When Karius and Champion first walked through the region in 1927 they noted that the Telefolmin were "great dandies" and the Telefol repertoire of items of self-decoration makes extensive use of animals of the bush (Champion 1966:173). For everyday dress a number of older men may sport a pair of long black cassowary quills projecting upwards from perforations in their nostrils; a bright white wild pig's tusk inserted through the nasal spetum enhances a man's face, and some men will wear a small armlet made of the stretched and dried penis of a wild boar. If a man is particularly smartly attired, he will be almost certain to wear a netbag over his shoulders whose exterior may be lined with hornbill, parrot, cockatoo

or bird of paradise feathers. The superlative variants of such netbags are festooned with the skins (hair-like black feathers intact) of cassowaries, the tails of wild pigs, or the white feathers of the *bogol*, the large mountain eagle. Though such things are usually too valuable for everyday wear, they are *de rigueur* for anything constituting an "event".

Men's finery bespeaks, among other things, their pride as hunters, and part of this pride finds its roots in homelier contexts. As in a number of other Papua New Guinea societies, the giving and sharing of food is an especially powerful idiom of social relationships (cf. Schieffelin 1976; Strathern 1973). One of the ways in which a young man may endear himself to his wife's family is to provide them with small amounts of game from time to time; a man wishing to patch up a quarrel with his wife may make a point of hunting for marsupials which she may eat, and a man bent on adultery may employ the same tactic to entice the woman he desires. When a man's wife gives birth, he must provide her and the women who have helped her with a small feast made up entirely of birds and marsupials, and one of the signs of a son's devotion to his mother--whatever his age--is for him to give her small items (again, birds or marsupials) of game to eat. Feeding children is perhaps one of the most highly valued acts in Telefolmin, and a father who sees to it that his children have bush meat to eat is clearly a father who can translate his care for his children into deeds. One middle-aged man told me proudly that not one of his children had died--a real accomplishment, considering a high infant mortality rate--and he attributed this achievement to his skill and energy in hunting. Another man, a nearly toothless ancient by the name of Kwiylim, remarked with an obvious air of satisfaction that virtually all the young people of Derolengam village were his children. This is in itself not so remarkable, since Telefol kinship terminology classes all of a man's relatives of successive generations as *man*, 'child'. But Kwiylim followed this up with the statement that when he was young he took special



care to see to it that his 'children' always received some of his hunting bag. If this claim is exaggerated--as it almost certainly is--it nonetheless makes the point, for Kwiyolim has almost unparalleled renown among Derolengam men as a hunter, a reputation which finds much of its significance in the actualization of sentiments and connections through gifts of game. Men of advanced years like Kwiyolim find that such reputation and the acts upon which it is based stand them in good stead. Due to a feature of the Telefol system of food prohibitions, most men who live past middle-age are debarred from consuming the flesh of domestic pigs. Thus, whenever such pigs are slaughtered, senior men are excluded from what may otherwise be a general distribution of pork. In such circumstances they can do nothing but look on, which will occasionally spur younger men to a remembrance of the past generosity of the old-timers. If a younger man is moved to action, he will set out to hunt foods which old men may eat, so that the latter are not left out. In the words of Dakasim, who is himself a noted hunter, "I am the child of an old man, not a young one.... So I think of the old men and hunt".

Though a full discussion of Telefol food prohibitions is reserved for Chapter 3, here we may note that the system of restrictions on the edibility of game (and thus on the possible recipients of a hunter's largesse) has as a consequence an emphasis on diversification of a hunter's efforts. Not only should a man provide, in a general sense, a number of people with meat from the bush, but he should also see to it that the game that he bags is permissible to those close to him. A man who fails to do this, particularly with regard to the women and children of his own family, may run into trouble, as illustrated by the following *utuun sang*:

There was a man who was always hunting *oga* birds [forbidden to women]. He would always hunt these, and after he shot them he would come home to cook and eat them while his wife just looked on. One day he brought home a fine *oga* and began cooking it in the hearth. His wife came and sat down

nearby, merely watching as usual. While he was roasting his bird, he glanced over at her and noticed that she was sitting with her legs apart. He became excited, and soon they were copulating. While this was going on, the man's wife nudged the *oga* across the floor with her foot to where a dog was sitting. The dog took the bird in his teeth and ran outside with it. When the man realized what had happened, he got up and shouted for the dog to come back.... But the dog ignored him, and he couldn't run outside after it because he still had an erection and couldn't put on his penis-gourd. And so the wife, who never got any of the *oga* that her husband hunted, played a trick on him....

The provision of small game is one of the defining features of a man's duties to his wife. There is a sweet touch of irony here, since the woman not only deprives her husband of his catch by seducing him, but also manages to heighten the contrast between her fulfillment of conjugal obligations and her husband's failure. The obligation to provide small game is a diffuse and generalized one, but a man who consistently fails to provide his wife with such meat runs the risk of being accused by her of eating menstrual blood. This is one of the gravest and most shaming insults a woman can offer, for aside from the obvious repugnance the insult conveys, it also implies that a man is so lazy that he would find eating menstrual blood (which men view with disgust and fear) preferable to the effort of hunting.<sup>1</sup>

The game most often taken by hunters are *nuk*, marsupials. Like other forest creatures, *nuk* are not looked after by men and are in some sense beyond their control, being cared for instead by *nukamin* and *nukunang*, male and female spirit beings usually invisible to men. *Nuk* come in several varieties, ranging from the tiny *katip* and *ditip* to the large arboreal *dabool* (a tree kangaroo the size of a dog). One of the things all *nuk* have in common is that they are difficult to find. Most *nuk* are nocturnal animals and hence rarely visible during the day, and though some *nuk*, such as the *kuyaam*, are garden-raiders, most avoid clearings and dwell exclusively in the forest. Here the Telefol view of marsupial hunting is that success or failure depends

not upon whether there are any *nuk* present, for they are *always* present in the bush; success depends rather on locating and being able to see the animals in the forest. This accords well with the facts, for marsupials (with a few exceptions, such as *watom*, a small wallaby, or *kutinim* a carnivorous marsupial cat) rely upon concealment and silence for survival, rather than upon speed or elusiveness.

Because of the difficulties of locating and sighting *nuk*, Telefol hunters are in the habit of making small offerings, in the form of ripe bananas or some leaves of tobacco to Tenum Misim ("Generous Man"), an unseen bush spirit who may allow the animals of the forest to become visible to a bowman.

Most men keep dogs (*kayaam*), small and usually skinny beasts, which can--especially if well looked-after--help them in their search for game. The ability of dogs to sense or detect animals in the bush is much-admired--dogs are able to do this because when Afek scattered all the wild animals far from the village of Telefolip, the men covered their eyes (as they were supposed to) while her dog peeked. Though not considered nearly as valuable as pigs, nor as well cared for, a man often feels great affection for a good dog, who will often accompany him whenever he leaves the village.

In addition to these aids, some men have in carefully tucked-away bags or packets an assortment of materials specifically helpful in discovering *nuk*. Such packets are jealously guarded and are highly secret, but one of the most important elements of many of them is the claw of the eagle, *bogol*: the *bogol* is the marsupial (and bird) hunter *par excellence*, tenacious and keen-eyed. Men who have seen *bogol* nests marvel at the success of these avian hunters, who certainly know how to look after their children. The nests themselves reek with the smell of rotting marsupials killed in such abundance that the nestlings cannot consume them all. Yet other men from time to time enjoy the assistance of a *selman*, 'owl'. These large nocturnal birds of prey

are described as 'the same as a wireless' since particular ones may sometimes lead men to *nuk* in the forest night with their calls. If a man has a garden house in deep forest and at some remove from his garden, he may plant a green ti plant (*kasak*, *Cordyline* spp.) in the vicinity, along with some *nuk* droppings and bits of tree bark half-chewed by other *nuk*. If successful, this will help the *nuk* living in the area to 'come out' so they can be easily shot.

Since most *nuk* are nocturnal, men usually venture out into the forest at night to hunt them, a synonym for marsupial hunting being *kayop tiinemin*, 'to walk by the moon'. Hunters normally go into the night singly or in pairs, though occasionally more will join in. Some of the most favoured areas for marsupial hunting are in *nuk bagan*, 'marsupial ground', usually located high up in the mountain forest and at some distance from gardening areas. Sometimes particular locations are selected, especially if disturbed leaves, droppings, or claw and toothmarks on trees seen during the day betray the activities of *nuk* in the bush. Men occasionally fell trees across streams, for these bridges then act as natural roadways (*nuk ilep*) for *nuk* passing from one bank to the other--if not visited too frequently by hunters, such crossings provide an ideal place for ambushes as the small animals make their way across the water. Ambush is the most common tactic employed in hunting *nuk* (see Bulmer 1968), and a hunter must therefore be watchful and alert while sitting quietly in the damp cold of the high forest night. Though men will on unusually severe nights sometimes warm themselves by a miniscule fire of strips of tree-bark, for the most part they remain in cold and lightless concealment--it is for this reason that young boys are often admonished not to spend too much time in the evenings sitting close to the family hearth, lest they lack the hardiness and wakefulness of the successful hunter.

Some *nuk* are arboreal, and these require that a man either climb an adjacent tree from which to loose an arrow, or sometimes that he fell the

tree in which the marsupial is nesting. Such undertakings can be risky, with injury or death as the result of a bad fall, but such risks are part of the business of hunting. In the past there were other risks as well. While today a successful hunter will hang his marsupials from tree limbs as he kills them, in the past this could only be done in the most secure areas. Since some of the most favoured hunting areas are located far from village and gardens, *nuk bagan* was often also *waasi bagan* ('enemy ground'), a sort of no-man's-land into which men ventured only at some peril. In the old days men would never go into such land alone, but only with a companion. As soon as a few *nuk* were shot, one would make a very small fire on which to heat cooking stones while the other kept careful watch for the approach of others, in particular Falamin who were enemies and who often hunted in the same high country east of the Sol. The instant the stones were heated, they would be thrust into the already-cleaned innards of the *nuk*, then bound up and carried home as quickly as possible, cooking on the way back to the security of the village. Such danger seems to have added to the appeal of *nuk* hunting then, enhancing the hunters' achievement each time they brought back small game. In addition, these risks gave scope to the sense of humour of Binengim, a Derolengam man who was notorious as a practical joker. More than once he would go with a companion into the dark forest near Falamin territory, only to shout out in the night, "Okay now, Igimduvip [Falamin village] men, come quick! I brought here a man for you to eat--he's up the slope there, get him before he gets away!". Such pranks would send his companion flying back to the village, with Binengim sauntering in after him, laughing to himself and enjoying the whole affair hugely, albeit at the expense of his friend. While such humour was not always appreciated, it underscores two essential features of marsupial hunting in those days: a man put himself at risk whenever he went into the forest at night, and a man was dependent upon the trust he placed in his friends when he did so. (See Champion 1966:173 for a similar incident.) The fact that

men could and did joke about such things also says something about the spirit in which Telefol men approached some of the risks of day-to-day life.

Today, men are freer to go off on their own since warfare is now a thing of the past. There are, however, risks even now, for while open warfare has ceased and relations with former enemies are eased there is still the possibility of a solitary person in the bush being set upon by stealthy parties of *biit* sorcerers. A man who is a target for *biit*--and no man may be certain that he is not--must always be wary and vigilant whenever he enters the night in search of game. Beksep of Derolengam relates one of his father's experiences:

Years ago, when Dagayok [Beksep's father] was helping to build the mission station, some men from Misinmin village came to him one afternoon while he was working. They said that they had seen some marsupial droppings on a track in the forest near the creek called Ok Din, and they suggested that he might want to try his luck at that spot for hunting. Dagayok was no fool, so he went out into the forest early that evening--he sensed something suspicious was afoot. He took some tree bark with him and lit it and placed it on the track near some marsupial droppings (as a hunter might do on a cold night). Then he concealed himself a little distance off the track in shadows among the forest trees. There he waited with his *kaangat* and other fighting arrows. Soon he heard faint voices from downslope, where the track dropped off to the stream. All the while he waited silently with drawn bow. Soon a man came creeping stealthily up the slope, making for the spot on the track they had thought to use for their ambush. As he crept nearer and reached for a vine for support, Dagayok sent an arrow into him--down the hill the man rolled, Dagayok following and shouting behind him. Frightened and fearing attack by others, the men ran away and Dagayok returned to Derolengam. That night other Misinmin came and carried the dead man's corpse back to their village. The next day people heard that a Misinmin man had fallen from a tree and died. The arrow with which Dagayok killed him had been replaced with a tree branch--since these men were *biit*, they couldn't say openly how this man had died. But then Derolengam men knew for certain that the man Dagayok shot had died. This man was the former husband of the wife of Teksep of Derolengam.

Marsupials are not the only game taken by Telefolmin, though taken far more frequently than any other animals of the forest. Men hunt birds from

time to time, often from blinds constructed on the ground or in the treetops as the occasion demands. Some birds in Telefolmin are seasonal, and most know the precise location of fruit- and nut-bearing trees within the vicinity of their villages, thus outlining the possibilities of the appearance of certain birds known to feed on them. In addition, most men are able to simulate bird-calls, which are occasionally effective enough to lure a bird within bowshot. Despite this, Telefol arrows (being unfletched) are not nearly as accurate as they are elegant, and many more shots miss than strike the mark. Like *nuk*, birds (*uun*) are not the things of men, but are looked after by spirit beings, women known as *uununang* ('bird woman').

Of all the birds present in Telefolmin, one in particular stands apart--*kumsop*, the mountain cassowary. These large, flightless and swift birds of the deep forest (akin to the Australian emu) are both prized and extremely difficult to bag. Often, they are only visible to the hunter as large fleeting shadows. Though dogs may sometimes give chase, it is rare that they bring cassowaries at bay, and if they should succeed the dogs risk disembowelment (as do hunters at close range) by powerful kicks of the cassowary's claw-tipped legs. Because of this, cassowaries are not often killed, and when they are it is usually by means of nooses and snares strategically placed in runs displaying fresh tracks. Cassowaries are special in other terms too, for Telefolmin tell tales of women who, unhappy and disgruntled with their husbands, run off into the bush and become transformed into cassowaries, elusive and solitary wanderers of the deep bush. Though men doubt whether this happens any more among the Telefolmin, they do know that it is possible for Atbalmin and Fegolmin to transform themselves into cassowaries, and women who become such changelings can be especially dangerous:

There was once a boy who was orphaned, both of his parents died. He went down to Fegolmin country, where he stayed with his mother's brother (*moom*), who looked after him. One day this man's wife said to him, "let's kill this

little child and eat him". But her husband didn't like this and said, "I don't want to kill my child--if you want to eat him, you must kill him".

The man and his orphaned nephew went into the bush and made a cassowary noose. They left it for some time--maybe a week or so--and then returned to check it. When they came up, they saw a cassowary in the noose. The man told the child, "you go untie this cassowary". But the boy answered, "no, you do it--it wouldn't be good if your *usong* made me sick". [The boy refers here to a man's 'guardian spirit', who may jealously guard his belongings against others.] The two argued about this for a while, and then the boy's uncle took the cassowary and carried it back to the village. The man told the boy to remove the cassowary's feathers while he went to fetch some taro and firewood. Then the man left.

The boy was removing the cassowary's feathers, and then came to the anus of the cassowary and saw a woman's vagina and pubic hair. This he stroked, and the cassowary woman began to giggle. The boy jumped up and grabbed a stone adze and struck the head of the cassowary. Then he flew back to Telefolmin. As he ran, he heard the woman berating her husband, "I'm a woman, I can't kill a man--you're a man, you must kill men--I tried to, and he hit me!".

Though most cassowaries are no more than they appear to be, there is always the danger that they are women transformed and bent on killing. For this reason some men take the precaution of tickling a cassowary's bottom, just to be sure.

One of the less common game varieties in Telefolmin is neither *nuk* nor *uun*, but lies somewhere in between: *saman* (or *sagam*), mountain fruit bats or flying foxes. *Saman* usually inhabit limestone caves high up in the mountain wall during the day, being garden-raiders (especially fond of bananas) at night. One particularly well-known roost of these bats is Samantem ('flying-fox cave'), located in the mountains east of the Sol and not far from Ifaaltigin. Here men will every few years go during the day and scale the cliff-face on a lattice-work of ladders until they reach the cave entrance. After blocking the cave entrance, it is relatively easy to go inside and to club the bats as they try to flee. Occasionally, however, men



who go off on their own in caves to find these bats find other things besides:

One night a woman from Kubrenmin [village] was out searching for frogs and following a small stream, the Ok Balam, that flows into the Ok Sol. It had been raining all night, and it cleared slightly just before dawn. The woman looked up and saw many *saman* enter a cave high up in the mountain. She made a fire, and then the sun came up and she headed for home. When she got back to the village, she told her brother what she had seen--normally, she would have told her husband, but he had gone off to Fegolmin to trade. When she told her brother about the bats they decided that it would be good to go to kill and eat them. She and her brother and the rest of the villagers made their way to the cave and then blocked the entrance with wood and leaves. Then they went inside and killed the *saman*, filling their netbags with them as though they were harvesting taro. The party then returned to the village, each man carrying several netbags full of bats, and they made a fire and started heating stones for a feast. When the *saman* were cooked, however, the men didn't even give the woman a whole *saman* to herself, and instead merely gave her a few pieces, nothing more. Affronted, she didn't eat these, but instead tucked them away in one of her netbags to show her husband when he returned. When he finally got back, she showed him how poorly she had been treated, though she was the one who had led the villagers to the cave in the first place. Feeling sorry for his wife, the husband gathered up several netbags and set off for the cave.

When he reached the entrance, he went inside and followed the passage deep into the mountain. As he went, he began to notice that it was no longer dark inside--on and on he went, and he saw the sun shining and was soon walking in the bush, with many gardens. These were the gardens of the *saman*, and there was much taro, sugar cane, and greens. He came to one of these gardens and cut and ate some sugar. After he had done this he climbed a nearby tree and from there looked out and saw a man and a woman who had mourning clay on their faces. These two came up to the garden and, noticing the cut cane, wondered who had been eating it. Then they looked up and saw the man in the tree--they told him of the men who had come and killed their relatives, and warned him that these men might come to kill him too, saying that he would be safe if he stayed with them. Having said this, the man and the woman went back to their village--when they returned, they were accompanied by their fellow villagers, and they all set upon this man and killed him. When he was dead, they ate him, leaving only his skin intact. Then they gave him a banana sucker and a

stalk of sugar cane--the banana was *suum kalom*, the sugar *kwet sangaatum*. After they had done this, they told him to take these back home with him, where he would go to die.

The man returned home, and when he arrived he told his wife that he had gone deep into the cave because the other men of the village had given her so little. He gave her the banana and sugar, told her how they should be planted, and then said that he was going to die. The following morning he was dead.

The people that the man had seen under the ground were the *saman*, but they were also really *saamin*, otherwise known as *momoyok*, the spirits of those who die violently. Making their main abode in Ifaaltigin, the large mountain to the east of Samantemtigin, *momoyok* are *saman* by night, when they sally forth to raid the gardens of the villagers in the valley below. *Saman* can thus be potentially dangerous, and if men should never venture into caves alone, this is all the more so if the cave is known to be inhabited by *saman*.

If *saman*, the fruit bat, is a garden raider, a far more spectacular, destructive, and dangerous garden raider is *saaman*, the wild pig. Like other bush creatures, *saaman* are not looked after by the hand of man, but are watched over instead by *aanangen*, dangerous spirit women inhabiting stones or living underground near streams. It is because of *saaman* that men must make sturdy fences, which must not only be strong enough to withstand the awesome force and strength of these pigs, but must also be built high enough to prevent them from leaping over the fences. While *saaman* normally live off the huge acorns of the *miyaam* tree or the blue fruits of the *igim* tree, they are truly the enemies of gardens--should they make their way inside, they are capable of destroying months of work and annihilating the precious stalks from which taro grows.

Epitomized by their flashing curved tusks, *saaman* are dangerous not only to gardens, but to men as well. Unlike most other forest animals, *saaman* will directly attack men who encounter them in the bush, and there are a few men who carry with them scars as permanent evidence of such encounters.

Hunting *sacaman* is therefore a risky enterprise, one which few men attempt alone. A bowman lying in wait for a boar charging down a track has time for but one shot, which is without effect if fired head-on. The technique is tricky, once demonstrated for me by old Olmamsep, pantomiming in his house: the hunter waits, bowstring taut--as the boar approaches (and *sacaman* seem always to be boars), the hunter must in a flash step to the side, loosing his *kaangat* behind and under the shoulder blade, the killing-spot. Then, as the boar turns (for one shot will seldom drop such a beast instantly) the bowman leaps upwards to the safety of a nearby tree (in this case afforded by the hearth-posts of Olmamsep's house). If the boar is mortally wounded, a triumphant cry of "Kwiinama!" rings out. If not, the man tries to hail help while fending the *sacaman* off with hand-held arrows.

Men who single-handedly kill *sacaman* are rare, though there have been some, such as old Miyaamkaalengim, "Oak-skin", whose names spread far from their villages with such accomplishments. Those who do so often have special advantages in this. Thus, one man from Eliptaman succeeded because he knew the secret words that would help him to transform himself into a *sacaman*. If any fellow villagers ever accompanied this man into the bush to hunt wild pigs, he would carefully instruct them to avoid the stretch of bush in which he would hunt, for fear that they might mistake him for one of their quarry and shoot him. In the guise of a *sacaman* himself, the other wild pigs would have no fear of him and sometimes even take him to their sleeping-places, where he would then be able--after transforming himself back into a man--to kill them with ease. His success, however, proved his undoing, for his fellow villagers became jealous and angry after he had on his own wiped out most of the *sacaman* in the vicinity, and they had him killed with *biit* sorcery.

Though Atbalmin are particularly adept at transforming themselves into *sacaman*--so they can avoid the hard work of gardening by raiding the gardens of others--very few Telefolmin know the words necessary to turn into

*saaman*, and those who do refuse to share or reveal this knowledge. Others have different but equally secret aids for hunting wild pigs. Dakasim possesses the arm bones of an *utuumin*. *Utuumin* are tiny people, perhaps waist-high or so, who lived in Ifitaman in the distant past, before Afek came and built Telefolip. Living exclusively by hunting and making no gardens, *utuumin* are now only rarely seen, and then only in distant bush. Dakasim's bones were a gift from Binengim, his father, who once encountered two *utuun* men and an *utuun* woman near the upper Sol. These Binengim killed, and then took their bones so that they might help him in hunting. Now, when Dakasim goes after wild pigs, whom the *utuumin* are particularly adept at hunting, he rubs some pig-grease on these bones and carries them in his small netbag into the forest. If there are any *saaman* in the vicinity, he feels an itching or a nudge on one of his shoulder blades, to the left or to the right, indicating in which direction the *saaman* may be found.

For the most part, Telefolmin only hunt *saaman* in groups ranging from three or four men to perhaps a score or more. If *saaman* have been persistently attacking villagers' gardens, collective hunts may be organized to kill them off and push them deeper into the bush and away from the taro. This was more common in the past than it is today, for shotguns have killed or driven off many of the *saaman* in areas frequented by man. There are, however, a number of contexts in which *saaman* must be killed, and long-range expeditions three or more days' walk away may be mounted for this purpose, which in the past sometimes served as a prelude to warfare. Two of the favoured areas exploited by Ifitaman villagers are the valley of the Sepik below its junction with the Elip (Tekindiim), and the valley of the upper Strickland (Ombal). In the past such expeditions ran the risk of encountering enemies also in search of game, the Miyamin in Tekindiim and Dulanmin, Falamin, or Oksapmin in Ombal. Today this is no problem (though Dulanmin seem to resent Telefol hunting in the Om), and now men take care to avoid the settlements of friendly villages (particularly

in Eliptaman), lest they be forced to share out most of their bag before returning home.

When men have killed *saaman* and return to their villages with netbags bulging with smoked meat, their approach is signalled by the hauntingly beautiful and almost somber chorus of the *saaman*-killing song, the same song sung when men returned from successfully killing the enemy. Dancing in a double formation as they approach, the men enter the village, taking the smoked meat into the men's house (*yolam*), where it is distributed to all the fully initiated men present. It is a time for rejoicing, even for women and children, who may not eat *saaman*, for the fence-breakers and garden-destroyers have been killed.

### iii. Village and Bush

Tending their gardens and killing game are the means by which Telefolmin sustain themselves, and affirm their identities, and the rhythm of their lives is played out in pulses of movement from village to bush and back again. Telefolmin give the impression of being continually on the move, and if not working in their gardens or searching for game, they seem always to be on their way to the bush to do so or returning to the village afterwards. The narrow mountain tracks in the mornings witness the passing of small groups of men, women and children carrying axes, bows and arrows, bundles of taro stalks; in the evenings, families can be seen making their way home laden with freshly harvested taro, precariously balanced stacks of firewood, and planting material for the following day. Village and bush thus provide poles between which life's movement alternates.

"This isn't the bush now, it's the village--here's taro, here's tobacco, here's sugar cane, here are bananas!"

--an Agamtevip man's greeting

Ever since Afek first built the ancestral village of Telefolip and brought the Telefolmin as a people into being, Telefolmin have always lived in villages, or *abiip*. Permanent in theory and largely in practice, the Telefol *abiip* offers a sharp contrast with *sep*, the bush; villages are creations, established by the hand of man, while the bush exists *sui generis*, apart from and indifferent to man's concerns (though the context for his projects); the village is the home of man and of the animals (domestic pigs, dogs) he looks after, while the bush is the abode of all the wild game and of the spirit-beings who look after them; finally, the village is community, a place where people are together with their fellows, while the bush is for the most part a place where strangers and sometimes strangeness are encountered. For this and for other reasons, the *abiip* is radically distinguished from *sep* in Telefol thought. It is thus no surprise that *abiip* also means 'clearing', a virtual negation of the bush with its profusion of forest and undergrowth, and Telefol men, women and children literalize this contrast in a quiet but particularly visible way: the *abiip-mat* ('village belly') is the central plaza around which all the houses of the village are arranged, and the *abiip-mat* is kept scrupulously clear of even the smallest weeds and grasses. Any vegetation that makes its appearance in the *abiip-mat* is summarily uprooted the instant it is noticed by the villagers. The *abiip-mat*, towards which the doorways of all the village houses face, thus presents a clear white aspect--dazzling on sunny days--of scraped clay devoid of the green of the forest, and the boundary between *abiip* and *sep* is clearly marked by the margins just beyond the backs of the houses where grass once again grows. Unlike the dark and shadowy world of the bush, the village clearing is a place of light and security where things are in the open and may be clearly seen. Some of these associations of the *abiip-mat* are enacted and amplified by the fact that it is the arena of public life in Telefolmin. In fine weather, this is where those who have

remained in the village sit chatting and sunning themselves in small clusters of sociability. If a feast is being held or domestic pigs are being killed, the *abiip-mat* affords the setting. If an evening dance (*atool*) is in progress, men sing their songs, strike their drums, kick up their heels and show themselves in the broad, open space of the *abiip-mat* by the light of bonfires set around the edges. This is the place of festivity, where life is carried on in the midst of one's fellows, where their presence is most immediate, the stage upon which relations with others are enacted and spotlighted.

The village in Telefolmin acquires some of the aspects of an oasis in the vastness of the bush, an oasis which is 'home'. This is a place of hospitality, where one eats with friends and where food may be had for the asking, though asking is not often required. Upon entering a village after several hours' walk through the forest I would always be offered food, and the remark of the Agamtevip man assuring food to be had in the village is characteristic, epitomizing the village as the locus of the prized Telefol virtue of warm and open-handed hospitality. The giving and sharing of food in Telefolmin is perhaps the chief idiom of relatedness, the means by which people's thought and concern for others may be actualized, given shape, and made manifest. If I were embarking from Derolengam on a journey through the bush to some other village, close friends would always see to it that I had some cold cooked taro, bananas, and perhaps some tobacco before I set off. These small gifts were rarely accompanied with words, speaking for themselves, but occasionally someone would remark that it would not be good if I died or grew weak from hunger along the track. And though there are only a handful of apocryphal tales of such things actually happening, the message is nonetheless clear: if the bush is at times a place of uncertainty, the village is the font and touchstone of security and well-being. If the notion of 'Society' is for Westerners sometimes vague and abstract, for Telefolmin Society takes a definite, immediate, and well-known shape in the concrete form of the village.

As a place of amity, there is little room in the village for the anti-social. Ideologically, the village is the focus for positively valued notions of security, solidarity, and people in community. Villagers should not speak sharply or harshly to one another and ought, ideally, to support one another in their dealings with outsiders. Very rarely differences within the village rise to the surface and tempers flare. But if this happens violence should be limited to fighting with sticks or with the flat side of *biyal-sinams*, long and flat hardwood fighting clubs. The use of bow and arrow--appropriate to wild game or enemies--is specifically prohibited, and fighting must cease if blood is drawn. In the days of warfare, the village was always the one place where people could sleep with relative freedom from fear of ambush or attack. Greybeards who saw fighting appreciate this more acutely than others, and they stress that any enemy would be reluctant to attack a large and well-ordered village, for such villages are indications of strength and unity. While men and women rarely venture into the bush alone for fear of the *biit* sorcerers that the forest may harbour, the village is a place where *biit* sorcerers are unable to carry on their nefarious activities, for in the village one is surrounded by neighbours and kin. And since *biit* sorcery requires secrecy to be effective, it is in any event impossible in the village, the public place *par excellence* of Telefol life.

The security of the village is also exemplified in its permanence. Many of the village-sites in Ifitaman have a number of tall and graceful hoop-pines (*Araucaria* spp., *at deli*) towering above them and signalling the presence of the village even at a distance. Most of these trees were planted by men of the past whose names are recalled, and such trees--taller than any forest giants--stand in witness of these men's lives and in testimony to the village's survival of past vicissitudes to the present day. Telefolmin take these as evidence of their ability to withstand their foes, and men will often attribute the remarkable success of Telefolmin in warfare to their ability to maintain



relatively large and enduring villages. Here, as in so many other instances, they contrast themselves with the neighbouring Atbalmin people. The Atbalmin, who suffered greatly from the attacks of the Miyanmin, have no villages on either a permanent or temporary basis. Instead, they live in widely scattered households and small hamlets in the bush. In Telefol eyes, the Atbalmin--who have the ability to transform themselves into wild animals--are hardly men because they make no villages--"they just make camps in the bush and roam around like wild pigs or cassowaries".

It is in terms of the commitment to villages, varying from between 130 and 150 persons, that Telefolmin stake and affirm some of their strongest claims to humanity: unlike the animals of the wild, or the not-quite human *utuumin* who inhabited Ifitaman before Afek's coming, Telefolmin are *tenu afeen*, 'true men', garden-makers and village-dwellers. And just as village life is the *sine qua non* of humanity in Telefolmin, so the presence of a *yolam*, a house reserved for both men and spirits of former villagers (*usong*), is the *sine qua non* of a true village, distinguishing it from the ephemeral and more or less haphazard collections of houses that sometimes emerge around gardens in the bush. Marked off and set apart from the remainder of the village by a living fence of red ti plants (*Cordyline* sp., *tobaa*), the *yolam* is forbidden to women and children. It is from the *yolam* that the *usong* keep watch over the family houses of the village, and it is in the *yolam* that men focus upon their activities in rites upon which the welfare of the village depends. In both organizational and cosmological senses, the *yolam* serves as the anchoring-point for the village, the firm centre around which the rest is built. Men in everyday contexts are preoccupied with the business of managing households and the affairs touching upon their wives and children, but in the *yolam* the men of the village achieve collective identity as a ritual congregation, transcending their several and separate identities as family heads. If the activities of gardening and village membership speak for humanity generally

in Telefolmin, it is with his admission to the world of the *yolam* in a complex series of graded initiations that a boy becomes a youth and that a youth becomes a man.

If men become truly so with their admission to the *yolam*, both men and women enter life in a house of a very different sort, the *dungam*. Situated behind and outside the closed oval of inward-facing dwelling-houses, the *dungam* is already on the margins of the bush, lying astride the seam between *abiip* and *sep*. Here, in an uncleared area surrounded by grass and often on the edge of the forest, women come to give birth or to seclude themselves during their menses. The *dungam* is, as Telefolmin say, the path by which all men enter the world, and it is for this reason that in the days of warfare an entire enemy village--*yolam* and all--might be razed to the ground, yet the *dungam* remaining standing. As the *yolam* is forbidden (*amem*) to women and children, so the *dungam* is forbidden to men. With the *dungam* we leave the last and most peripheral of village houses, passing once again to the bush.

"The bush is not really ours, but belongs to Bagan Kayaak."  
--Dakasim

Bagan Kayaak, the 'ground person' or 'owner of the ground' is a ubiquitous bush spirit, and if the village is the domain of men, part of the legacy Afek left the Telefolmin to arrange their ways, the bush is still pre-eminently the domain of another, another who is not and never was a man. And as Bagan Kayaak is both other and largely unknown, so the bush has much of this character for the Telefolmin. It is difficult to convey a sense of how Telefolmin relate to the bush, for though the bush is indeed a place where man's hegemony no longer holds, it is not quite correct to say that Telefolmin are ill at ease in the bush. Certainly they feel more at home in their mountain forests than do policemen or other civil servants from other parts of the country: coastal men complain unremittingly (as I did) of the exhausting

climbs along steep tracks in these high elevations; Highlanders from the broad grassland valleys east of the Strickland bemoan the dark and tangled muddy paths, which are alien to their home experience. By contrast, Telefolmin of both sexes and all ages seem to move lightly, effortlessly, and tirelessly through the bush, more often than not heavily laden with burdens of taro or planting stock. Though others may feel as babes in the woods, Telefolmin show themselves to be excellent masters of bushcraft. From the time they are children, they acquire the knowledge and skills that equip them to deal not only with the day-to-day activities of gardening and hunting, but with out-of-the-ordinary exigencies as well. Being expert trackers, Telefol men rarely get lost, but should they do so, they have well-established methods for finding their way out again. Though nobody is quite certain when the last famine took place, all are aware of a large number of varieties of forage foods to be found in the bush--today these are almost never eaten, but people say that should gardens fail, they may resort to such famine foods. For my own part, I was always mystified by how matches could be kept dry in forest downpours, but Telefolmin have little difficulty in building roaring fires in the midst of heavy showers, despite the total absence of dry wood. In short, Telefolmin display remarkable skill and competence in the forest. But, having said this, it is also necessary to add again that the bush is not man's preserve: it holds dangers, some of which are known, and others of which may only be guessed at.

Things happen to men in the bush in strange and sometimes unexpected ways. Despite their expert knowledge of the terrain, some men are lost. Some have disappeared altogether, others emerge after a few days with little recollection of their absence. While villagers often suspect that such absences might be deliberately fabricated (see Jones 1976), in other cases a genuine mystery arises, one which remains an enigma. Sometimes hunters alone in the forest at night see things, such as lights silently hovering over the

valley. Perhaps, some speculate, these are ghosts, *bagel*, or the souls of those slain with bloodshed, *momoyok*--but such things are uncertain, and the conclusions remain speculation.

The bush is pre-eminently the setting for those events that remind men of an unseen dimension (cf. Wagner 1967; Schieffelin 1976) impinging on their world: it is almost always impossible to see more than a few yards in the bush, and while men can deal with that which is visible and known, presences beyond the shadows evoke fears and uncertainties. Whistles in the darkness may only be birds, but they may also be *bagel* or *momoyok*. In days all too vivid in the memories of many, each track--particularly at some remove from the village--bore the threat of enemy ambush. It is for this reason that, even today, men almost always precede women and children on forest tracts, and in the past couples were careful not to have more than one toddler at a time, lest a second overburden his parents in flight from attackers. While today this is all part of the past, *biit* sorcery goes on unabated, the silent bands of sorcerers assaulting lone and unwary travellers in the forest. Because *biit* depends upon secrecy--and hence the lack of witnesses--for success, it is rare for any except armed hunters to venture out into the forest alone; because of the possibility of *biit*, I was after a few months' residence always assigned a companion whenever I went into the bush, though the companion may have been no more than a youngish child.

Because of such dangers and uncertainties, Telefolmin have a custom whereby travellers in the bush call out "*kabo wanta ya?*" ('who are you?') loudly three times if any suspicious sounds are heard. Men--or spirit beings--who fail to identify themselves after the question is posed the third time run the risk of being shot on sight:

A man from Falamtigin [village] noted for his fearlessness when faced with *bagel* was hunting for marsupials one night recently in Nongkaman. He was waiting and quietly watching by a run for marsupials and heard some rustling in the undergrowth. Soon he heard the sound of approaching voices

He hid himself, and when the noise got closer he switched on his torch and saw some men coming his way. He asked them three times who they were, but they remained silent and the first man in line averted his face. This one kept approaching, and the hunter shot him in the ear with a blast from the shotgun he was using, and the man collapsed at his feet, dead. While the hunter was trying to reload, his torch went dead--as often happens in such encounters--and one of the other *bagel* grabbed the barrel of the gun and tried to pull it away from him. The two struggled and eventually the hunter ran off with his dead torch, leaving the shotgun behind. As soon as he got a little distance away from the scene of the encounter, his torch worked again and he returned to collect the gun. When he got there his shotgun was lying on the ground, but there was no sign of the party of *bagel*. Seizing the gun, he returned back over the mountains, singing out as he came. After daybreak, he and some other villagers returned to this spot. They saw blood and many tracks, but the tracks led nowhere and petered out--nor was it possible to tell where they began....

Yet other strange and possibly dangerous encounters take place in the bush:

When he was a young man, before the Europeans came, old Kwiylim had gone hunting for marsupials high in the bush not far from Ifaaltigin. He had tracked one marsupial to a hole in a tree and sat down to wait for it just before dawn. After a while he nodded off and then opened his eyes again with a start--everything was red, the colour of blood. He looked up and saw a pile of boxes as tall as a tree, and on top of them all sat a little man. Kwiylim realized that this must have been Bagan Kayaak in some guise or another, and he began to call some of Bagan Kayaak's secret names so the latter would know Kwiylim realized he was being tricked or deceived. Kwiylim called out the names he knew and then ran home to the village. Nobody knew what this meant, though when the Europeans later came they knew that what Kwiylim saw had been a portent of this.

Though such encounters are most likely when men venture alone into the bush, this is not always the case. About a generation or so ago, cassava (*tobaabu*) was introduced into Telefolmin in the following way:

A party of four men from Biiltevip [in Eliptaman] had gone down into the low hot country of the Ok Om to hunt wild pigs. Having no luck in their usual hunting grounds, they crossed over some mountains and descended into another low-lying river valley. This was *terra incognita*, and no Telefolmin had gone here before. They made a camp in the bush and had some success in the hunt. One day they followed a tributary stream and came upon what was obviously a garden clearing.

In this garden they saw many of the usual crops, but they also saw something planted that looked like small trees. They dug some of these up and found that they had large tubers, so they took some of these and some other produce back to their camp with them. In the evening they sat round the fire, cooked, and ate. Suddenly, one of the men was transfixed with an arrow, and another fell an instant after. The two survivors quickly dashed in the shadows, where they heard a woman singing a victory song in the depths of the forest. Armed and alert, these two gave swift and silent chase. Further down on a dimly lit track they saw their assailant, a tall woman carrying a bow and arrow and wearing a white pubic shell instead of a skirt. Each man took aim, but the woman turned around and darted behind trees, evading their arrows while shooting her own. Back and forth they skirmished, soon running short of arrows. One of the men had exhausted his supply, and with a cry the woman fell upon him and killed him. Taking up her song again, she made to go when the last man fired an arrow that struck home, and then loosed the remainder into the body of this woman. He examined the body and then removed the pubic shell and saw, sure enough that she was a woman. Then he returned to camp, took up planting stock for the *tobaabu* and some of the smoked pig, and set off that night for home.

Since this time Telefolmin have had cassava to supplement their crop inventory, and since this time Telefolmin have avoided this valley, for the woman who killed these men was a *kundunang*. *Kundunang* are amazons who live in the deepest reaches of the bush, are extremely dangerous--indeed, this man was lucky to return alive--and are objects of fear and loathing in Telefolmin. *Kundunang* hunt and are cannibals, and live their lives entirely without men. Instead of having men for husbands, *kundunang* mate with male wild dogs, *dunkiil*, who are likewise feared and avoided. When *kundunang* give birth, it is to four different kinds of children: (a) male dogs; (b) female dogs; (c) male humans; (d) female humans. Wishing to have neither female dogs nor baby boys, *kundunang* kill these and, with their dog husbands, eat them.<sup>2</sup> Thus the regime continues of these wild women and their dog husbands. Being on the extreme margins of the Telefol cosmos, men rarely encounter them and go out of their way not to do so. But there are occasional reminders of their presence, and in 1974 it was rumoured that a plane with Europeans aboard had crashed in the land of the *kundunang*. Men suspected that the administration would mount

a patrol into this area, either to rescue the Europeans if they survived, or to kill the *kundunang* if they had not. Though for unknown reasons this patrol was never mounted--at least not from Telefolmin--many men were eager to join this, trusting in the efficacy of police rifles and looking forward to the opportunity of killing the *kundunang* or seizing them as wives.

Encounters such as these seem most often to happen to men, who range deeper into the bush than women, and who are more likely to go into the bush alone or at night, when such encounters seem to occur. But that this is not exclusively the case is hinted at in *utuun sang* shared by families around an evening's fire.<sup>3</sup> Though *utuun sang* are not to be taken as literally true, they nonetheless often deal with themes not far removed from experience, and the following tale represents a woman's encounter with a *bagel*:

Once a fine night came when there was no rain and the clouds left the sky, and all the men went to the bush to hunt marsupials and the women went to find frogs. Some others got taro from a large garden and went back to the village. A widow and her daughter had also been out looking for frogs and then began to make their way back to the village. While the two of them walked along, a *bagel* boy was watching and waiting for them. He waited atop a tree trunk that had fallen across a narrow ravine, into which the track descended. The mother came and the daughter followed, and as the daughter passed under the fallen tree the *bagel* boy jumped down on top of her, his two legs piercing her body on either side and just behind the collar bone. The girl was nearly killed, and her mother beat the ghost-boy in an effort to get him to remove his legs from her body, but to no avail. The *bagel* boy remained on the girl's back, his legs firmly embedded in her flesh. The girl walked about, carrying him wherever she went. Perched upon her back, he would defecate on her, but he would also carry firewood, and would show the girl and her mother where to find frogs at night. A while later another night came like the first one, when there was no rain nor any clouds in the sky. Again the men went to hunt marsupials, and again the women went to find frogs. The widow, her daughter, and the *bagel* boy went as well, and soon came to a stream where they lit a fire and made their torches with which to find frogs. Calling the old woman "mother", the *bagel* boy said, "there are some frogs, let's go and get them there". They got the frogs and ate, giving some to the *bagel* boy. Then the mother decided to try her luck upstream, and the girl and the *bagel* went to a waterfall. The *bagel* boy said he saw many frogs there, and urged

the girl to go down to get them. She looked down, and then said, "ee! the way down is very steep--its tricky and hard for me to go down with you on my back...". So the *bagel* boy withdrew his legs from her body so that she could go down to get the frogs. When he got off her, the wrench nearly destroyed her heart, and she bent over as pus and blood issued forth from her wounds. Then she went to the stream below, and when she found her way to the bottom, she left her torch burning by the side of the water, to deceive the *bagel* boy. After a while he called down to her, saying, "I'm cold now--let's go". But while he was up there, she circled around him from behind to approach him from the rear. She made her way stealthily up and kicked him from behind, tumbling him over the edge and into the water below. The girl left the falls and went to join her mother, and the two returned home. Later, some villagers told them that they saw the body of the *bagel* boy in the stream and that he was dead.

Though women may be at a disadvantage when dealing with *bagel*, unable to take the men's tack of main force, they nonetheless are able through deception to gain the upper hand.

While the kinds of encounters with strange beings are many and varied, they all partake of the general nature of the bush, a green encompassing sea stretching beyond the horizon and filled with potential and uncertainty. Distant and foreign places are termed *asit-tem* (literally, 'green/raw place') in Telefol, a usage which affords some insight into the Telefol conception of the bush. *Asit* carries the meaning not only of the colour green, but also of a state of not being cooked or 'done', as with improperly cooked food. But *asit* in this sense can also combine the sense of 'alien' or foreign with 'undeveloped' or 'not completed'. Such textures of meaning are active in Telefol thought. Thus, before Afek founded the true village of Telefolip, she attempted to make another village named Asitevip (green/raw village)--this village failed because it was premature, not properly laid out. This was, in an important sense, a 'foreign' village, unlike the village of Telefolip from which Telefolmin take their name. Later, when we find allusions to men 'cooking' boys' skin in initiation, we shall be able to understand this as part of an idiom that equates being 'done' with being fully developed



Telefolmin, as opposed to strangers and foreigners. Conversely, strangeness--the alien--is the green and the raw, and in spatial terms the distant. The interplay of ideas here is complex, but it is perhaps in this light that we may note that the colour green tends to be largely absent from the village scene, the browns and greys of weathered wood and faded thatch predominating instead. Thus the simple but assiduously pursued act of plucking weeds and grasses--intrusive bits of green--bespeaks not only a simple tidying-up, but a perpetuation, on a day-to-day basis, of the project of clearing, of maintaining the *abiip* (both village and clearing) against the encroachment of the bush, and of the alien, strange, and hidden. Here it is as though the quiet, individually performed but collective act of weeding were an exorcism, banishing the bush to the outside, and we may note in passing that Telefol men can gauge the tenor and vitality of life in a particular village not only by the state of repair of the *yolam* and other houses, but also by the presence or absence of stray tufts of grass growing in the village plaza. It is a sorry village indeed that allows grass to overrun its plaza, though this sometimes happens.

Village and bush are true polarities, not only to Telefol thought, but of activity and experience as well. The boundary between the two is a threshold beginning at the end of the village clearing, a threshold which men, women, and children cross on a daily basis for most of their lives.

#### iv. Friends and Enemies

The days of warfare for Telefolmin passed--as did their autonomy--when the first administration post was established in the late 1940s. Since then the range of amicable--or at least peaceful--relationships has expanded considerably. Men are now free to visit friends in distant villages without the threat of ambush or the more remote possibility of betrayal by erstwhile hosts. For some, the end of warfare allowed new friendships to be struck, and there are men who now enjoy visiting relationships with others who were

enemies barely two decades ago. Despite this, warfare is of more than historical interest. The experiences of men and women of the senior generation carry the imprint of the days of fighting, and though old enmities may for the present be held in abeyance, they are recalled readily enough when relations between villages become strained and troubled. The memories are rekindled in each village with recollections of men who lost brothers, women who lost husbands, children who were orphaned. Each village also recalls, with more frequency and ease, the names of their men who made the enemy feel their arrows, who left settlements in smoking ruin, who forced the enemy to take flight and wear the clay of mourning. It is in such recollections that Telefolmin find one of their sources of pride, for Telefol villages have stood since the founding of Telefolip despite the attacks of their foes, and Telefol men became known throughout the mountainous region of the Sepik headwaters as men to be reckoned with, valuable allies and fearsome enemies.

"In the *mafuum ban* they give us two kinds of straight talk: to have a soft heart and to be hot or stinging."

--Dakasim

The *mafuum ban* is the fourth initiation through which youths pass. In the *mafuum ban* the youths are told many things, and part of what they are told falls into the category of *weng kem*, 'open/visible/revealed speech', which I translate here as 'straight talk'. *Weng kem* is, unlike most of what the initiands are told, public speech, and may be used on any occasion with any audience: its main content is a species of ethical instruction illuminated by tales with explicit moral content. With *weng kem* youths are formally and collectively told of the obligations of manhood and proper conduct. These Dakasim sums up in terms of two different ways, ways of dealing with friends, and ways of dealing with enemies: *bet bubul* and *atul tebesa*.

To be *bet bubul* is to have a soft and gentle heart--the heart (*bubul*) is the seat of thought and emotions, and to have a soft heart is to

be sensitive and open to others. Such a man is always attentive to the demands of his fellows: if somebody needs help building their house, he goes unasked; if a neighbour's children are heard crying for lack of food, he quietly makes a gift of taro; if a man visits him, he offers hospitality; if a villager offends him, he holds his tongue, and if others are found wanting, he does not shame them; if a youth is to be married, he contributes what he can to the bridewealth without hesitation. A man who is *bet bubul* speaks quietly, does not hurt others with his words, does not boast. As a man who meets the demands of others, he is also careful not to demand too much in return: if he has given a man a gift of pork or perhaps of *bonang* (small cowrie valuables), he does not press for repayment--to do so would be to shame the other. If he gives things to others, he does not think to himself, "this man will pay me back, that man has nothing and so I will give him nothing". He gives to show his regard for all his kin, friends, and fellow villagers, without regard for return. A man who behaves like this is universally liked and may be known as *tenum tambal*, a 'good man' who has nothings of his own because he is forever giving them away to friends. If his generosity is matched by his labour and industry, he will acquire a name far and wide, spreading with each act of kindness or consideration bestowed on others, a *win-so tenum* or man of note ('man with a name').

Instances of kindness and generosity are not hard to find. Telefol etiquette makes it extremely difficult to deny the requests of friends, kin, or fellow villagers, and if a man denies such a request he gives shame (*fitom*) to the man who asks. Such denials are not common, for they not only shame those who ask, but also reflect poorly on those who refuse. In most instances, explicit requests are uncommon, and it is the high point of Telefol etiquette to offer things or to render assistance in anticipation of others' needs before they are expressed. While I lived in Derolengam, old Konungen, Dakasim's mother, decided that since my own mother had not accompanied me to

Telefolmin I would need another: I had hardly moved into the village before she had, after her fashion, adopted me. With few words--since I had not yet learned any Telefol and she spoke no Pidgin--she would enter the village at dusk after a day's work in the gardens, bearing among her heavy load some firewood, taro and greens for me. If I offered to pay her for her trouble, she would giggle and turn away shyly. If she did accept payment, I would often as not be called to her house the following morning where a meal of roasted taro was garnished with tinned fish, purchased from the mission trade store with the money I gave her. Though Telefolmin are generally sober and dour, and treat both strangers and other Telefolmin with reserve, many of my neighbours in Derolengam were no less kind. On those few nights when I had no visitors, the aged Olmamsep would come and tap at my door, carrying firewood, tobacco, and a blanket with him. He had come, he would always explain, because nobody else was with me and I would feel lonely in the house by myself. So saying, he would spread his blanket on the floor next to the hearth, comment on my fire-tending abilities, and settle in for quiet and unhurried chatting that--interrupted by cat-naps--would continue until morning. Beksep, a young and respected married man, would come in the evenings when I wasn't working to share some morsel of game with me or to serenade me with coastal songs he had learned to sing and play on his newly-acquired second-hand guitar.

Such kindnesses are one of the commonplaces of life in Telefolmin, the small but invaluable currency of life with friends. Meeting a grandmotherly and heavily burdened figure along the track one afternoon, Dakasim lightened the old woman's load by helping himself to some sugar cane while--without a word and with no hesitation--he divested himself of a sweatshirt I had recently brought back for him from Port Moresby. Later, I asked if this woman was a kinsman of his--an anthropological habit rendered largely irrelevant by the fact that most Telefolmin are in one way or another kin--and he of course replied that she was. In fact, she was his father's sister

(*baaben*), who had some years before married into Kubrenmin [village]. Much more relevant, however, was that she was a *dup*, or friend, of his. *Dup* are people who think of one and treat one well, and people of whom one thinks. While in the nature of things most *dup* will be kin of one variety or another, this need not be the case, nor is it the case that kin are automatically or even predominantly *dup*, even if closely related. The relationship is rather one of a history of amicability, of mutual regard, and innumerable favours, a relation achieved not by genealogical fiat or the legislation of custom, but sustained rather by acts on both sides that cumulatively betoken friendship. Thus, Dakasim gave the old woman the shirt not because she was his father's sister, nor because he was required to do so. He did it rather because she had, in company with her husband, always treated him and his children well, because he remembered this, and because he felt sorry for the old woman who might take chill on cold nights.

Since Telefol villages are by preference largely endogamous, virtually all villagers are closely related to each other, often in more than one way. Thus, fellow villagers (*abiip kaseɭ*) are simultaneously kinsmen (*fukutilin*--'thinking people', people of whom one should think), and it is out of this general field of neighbours and relatives that the majority of one's friends are found. Though ideally all one's fellow villagers ought to be friends, this is not always the case. Tensions arising over troubles with women, the invasions of poorly-tended domestic pigs into another's gardens, or past failures to come to a villager's aid will all contribute to a certain coolness and circumspection in some men's dealings with others, though rarely giving rise to open hostility. Whatever the shape of such relations or avoidances, each man has a network of *dup* within the village, men with whom he will hunt, to whom he will present larger or smaller gifts of pork, men whose houses he will help build and who, in turn, will help him. Such men will sometimes make gardens in adjacent stretches of bush, though this often

depends upon the particular constellation of land rights in any one area. The simplest and surest way of seeing who a man's friends are is to see with whom he exchanges evening visits and with whom he eats. People who share meals together are almost always friends or will become so. This is underscored by the fact that to eat with a person is, to a certain extent, to accept them and to put oneself in their power. This is true not only to the extent that a more or less diffuse obligation to return is incurred, but also because to share food with someone is also to accept a much more severe risk, *tamoon* sorcery. While *biit* sorcery is never (in theory, at least) practiced on fellow villagers, regardless of provocation, *tamoon* sorcery can be. And since *tamoon* sorcery is a variety of personal leavings sorcery, to share food with somebody is to place the materials necessary for *tamoon* into their hands. Thus, when tension is for some reason present between two men, they will rarely be seen eating together, for if there is any suspicion of bad feeling between them commensality would be foolhardy. Conversely, when men do eat together it may be taken as an indication of their ease and trust with each other.

Men who eat and work together often and are *dup* of long standing may become *blaana-blaana tenum*. These are men who do *blaana-blaana*, men who take freely (but with consideration) from one another's possessions, who are forever ready to help without hesitation, men between whom innumerable small gifts pass without accounting. Though not formalized, such relations are perhaps as binding as any in Telefol society, are extremely close and marked by friendly comradeship and intense loyalty. In short, *blaana-blaana tenum* are best friends, those upon whom one can always depend. Such relations are in the nature of things not common, and there are a good many men who have no such relations with others. Those who do, value such friends highly, and it is with such friends that men will (kinship restrictions permitting) attempt to exchange sisters in marriage or, if already married, try to arrange matches between their children.

Aside from *blaana-blaana* relationships, most men have a number of other close ties. One such relation is that of *ifalop*, men whose mothers bore them at the same time. Though such men do not invariably become close friends, they are from childhood encouraged to do so. *Ifalop* are in a vague and diffuse sort of way felt to share the same fates: their mothers having been in seclusion in the *dungam* at the same time provides a link that endures through life. While for virtually all Telefolmin it is possible to range others on a scale of relative seniority or juniority--carrying minute but noticeable implications of hierarchy--*ifalop* are literally coevals between whom no such discriminations may be made, a paradigm of equality and symmetry which provides a foundation for identification between them. In fact, *ifalop* will often pass through the phases of their lives in rough simultaneity: they are likely to embark upon their series of initiations at the same time, become husbands, father children, and witness the appearance of the white hair of old age together. Finally, one of the most severe blows a man can suffer is to live to see his *ifalop* die. Should a man be predeceased by his *ifalop*, others must take care to avoid the name of the dead man. This is partly because in hearing his *ifalop*'s name the man will be saddened or angered--to remind others of the loss of death is generally avoided--and also because there is a certain sense in which it is feared that to do so would hasten the surviving *ifalop*'s own death.

Just as men who are birth-mates are *ifalop* to each other, so men who have undergone initiation together may also refer to each other as *ifalop*. While this tie does not have the same particularizing force that the *ifalop* relation founded upon birth in the *dungam* has--this cannot be so, for a great number of men may be initiation-mates--it is nonetheless a bond which men value. And if only a few men have "natural" *ifalop* as a result of their mother's simultaneous confinement in the *dungam*, every man has several *ifalop* based upon their joint seclusion (in the company of male "mothers", see Chapter 4) in the

*yolam*. Here the relationship is not merely founded upon coincidence in time, but also upon the fact that they are in a metaphorical sense 'birth-mates', having been (re-)born in initiations together.

The ties between *ifalop* through initiation spread far beyond the village, for although the preliminary initiations may be held by any village, the senior initiations can only be performed in a small number of villages, most prominently, the village of Telefolip. As a result, each man has a number of *ifalop* scattered throughout Telefolmin and even--since some Ulapmin and Fegolmin may also come to Telefolip to be initiated--among neighbouring peoples. Such men may become friends, and these friendships are often significant. In 1975 I had occasion to walk with David Hyndman, who was working among the Opkeemin, to the Fegolmin village of Imigabip to visit Barbara Jones, who was conducting her fieldwork there. Dakasim had accompanied me, partly out of curiosity to see Imigabip, partly in hopes of trading some tobacco for strings of cowries (*bonang*), and partly to guarantee my safety among these foreigners. When we arrived in Imigabip, he began chatting with the villagers and soon an elderly man with a grey beard and drying shrivelled skin made his way over. In an instant the two of them were sitting together smiling and with tears welling in their eyes. This ancient was, Dakasim said with affection and pride, one of his father's *ifalop*, a man who had come to Telefolip for the *mafuum ban* at the same time as Binengim (now dead) had. And so they chatted, reminiscing about things the two *ifalop* had done together, recalling tales that Dakasim had not heard since he was a lad at his father's side. When, just before our departure west into Opkeemin country, Dakasim bestowed his tobacco bundle on his father's aged friend, I asked him about his plans to trade for shells. It was true, he replied, that he would not now find these things. But, he added, he felt sorry for the old man, and this man had been one of his father's friends. Here his father was remembered for his own acts of friendship, and even if Dakasim received nothing tangible



in return, he would now feel free to return to Imigabip to visit and his own son would also have the benefit of friends in distant places.

Binengim, who was a man of some initiative and vigour, had had a number of *ifalop* through initiation that became friends. Such relationships--as with all others--carry with them not only the warmth evidenced so clearly after the years in Imigabip: they also contain the prospect of sorrow when death comes. One of Binengim's closest *ifalop*--also a *dup*--lived in the village of Afogavip in Eliptaman. One day word came to Derolengam announcing that this man had been killed by a party of Falamin while on a hunting trip in the bush. Binengim gathered up his bow and arrows and some of his village friends, and they set off over the mountains for Afogavip. In the evening they arrived, the dead man's father lamenting the loss of his 'hornbill' (*kabeel*), his beloved son. Binengim and his company assured the old man that the loss would not go unavenged, telling the old man not to mourn too severely: the Falamin would pay. The dead man's body had been mutilated by the killers, who carried off a forearm to be eaten. Binengim and his party set off into the bush that night, and when they returned after a day or so they brought with them the severed forearm of a Falamin--tangible proof that killing a man's friends or *ifalop* is not taken lightly.

Here we find the other half of the *weng kem* given to youths in initiation: *atul tebesa*, to become 'hot' or 'stinging'. If the man of *bet bubul* is kind in his dealings with others and finds a valued place among his friends, so too are Telefol youths urged to become *atul*, to be strong and hard (*kun-so*, 'with bone') with their enemies. If the kindly good man, *tenum tambal*, is widely liked, the man of anger (*bubul mafak*, bad heart) is a 'bad' man (*tenum mafak*) who may nonetheless be admired. Binengim was such a man, recalled by his contemporaries as being unusually quarrelsome, and at times a bother to have around. But, as they all point out, he was generous to his friends and in the time of fighting the qualities that made him difficult were

invaluable. Quick to anger and quick to action, men such as Binengim gave enemies pause when contemplating targets for raids.

"They fought! Everybody fought! Their eyes were red with blood, they never slept! They were like wild pigs! The Europeans were afraid of them! They were bad!"

--Welagim

So said Welagim one evening around the hearth when I asked him about the old days before warfare was stopped. Talk about such times is still common, and tinged with an ambivalence that hovers between relief that the bloodshed of the past is gone and a longing for the time when Telefol men were 'hot' and feared not only by enemies, but by the newly arrived Europeans as well. In those days, as Welagim says, men didn't sleep. Sitting together in the *yolam* with the other men of the village, some would doze off while others remained awake. When these latter wanted to sleep, they would be certain that another was awake, listening for the sound of a startled pig or whispers of nocturnal raiders beyond the circle of houses. Such men were always alert, prepared to defend their village or to mount a raid on a moment's notice. Men who sleep easily and long--so it is said even today--will not live to see old age, and even today it is rare to see all the men in the *yolam* on a given night deep in sleep. Seemingly restless, there is always someone stirring, and the men are likely to spend the entire night alternating between quiet chats and cat-naps. Though today men spend more time than in the past sleeping in their family houses (*unangam*) with their wives--something of which older men seem not to approve, attributing this fashion to the absence of threat or the beguiling qualities of women--men still prefer to keep late hours. It is for this reason that instant coffee--newly introduced and still very expensive--is so well appreciated: if one drinks coffee, one is able to stay awake longer. If this is largely significant now because it enables

hearthside conversations to extend far into the night, it is still the case that men feel more secure when their eyes are open.

If the evening conversation has exhausted the usual topics of gardening, hunting, current events or the occasional *utuun sang*, the discussion is likely to turn to a well-remembered *waasi sang*, 'enemy tale'. One favourite *waasi sang* concerns Tetumnok, the father of Binengim's father. Sitting with some men in the *yolam* one night, I was told the tale:

One night Tetumnok was sitting in the *yolam* with a single old man, Sitkemnok ['toothless one']. The other men had gone to Telefolip for an initiation, and only the two of them remained in the village. They were sitting by the fire talking when the old man was hit in the eye by an arrow shot through the doorway. Quickly, Tetum broke up the fires in the hearths and darkened the house. Outside he heard the voices of Falamin men while the women in the *unangam* were crying. 'Now we will die', they were crying. Tetum yelled out to the Falamin. He gave them hot talk [*weng atul*], he said they could kill him but he would kill them too. While he was saying this, he gathered his bow and many arrows. Some of these arrows he shot out the doorway, but the rest of them he held. He yelled at them all the while and they yelled back at him. He looked out through a crack in the bark lining the walls of the *yolam*, and he saw the Falamin men standing outside the house with their bows taut. He grabbed a *naam* [cuirass-like body armour made of cane wickerwork] and continued yelling out at them, saying he was going to come out and kill them. He yelled and yelled like this, and then he said, 'now I'm coming for you!'. Then he hurled the *naam* into the darkness outside. The Falamin were afraid and they all shot their arrows at this thing, and while they did this Tetumnok dashed outside. Before the Falamin could get a second shot off at him he had disappeared into the tall grass of the swamp next to the village. There he called out and cried to the men of Ankevip and Falamtigin nearby that they should come to kill the Falamin. He did this, and as he did so he crouched in the high grass and shot his arrows at the Falamin. Soon the men from Ankevip and Falamtigin could be heard shouting and the Falamin became frightened and ran away. The Falamin ran away and only old Sitkemnok was killed.

Of all their enemies, the Falamin were perhaps the most persistently troublesome that Ifitaman villagers had to deal with. This was not always so. Afek originally left Telefolmin with two sets of enemies: to the west, the Tifalmin, to the east, the Nukokmin ('*nuk*-mother/echidna

children'). The other peoples with whom Telefolmin traditionally fought--the Iligimin and Miyanmin to the north and the Dulanmin to the northeast--had at the beginning of things not been enemies. Falamin themselves were late-comers, who only came into being in Tekintaman not as independent descendants of Afek, but as the result of the annihilation of the Nukokmin people by the Telefolmin. Unlike other peoples of the area, the Nukokmin were an aboriginal population of Tekintaman, encountered by Afek when she first came to establish Telefolip. Not being children of Afek, the Nukokmin instead claimed descent from animals, stones, trees and the like. And when Telefolmin held rituals at Telefolip, the Nukokmin never came to participate. Old men say that Nukokmin and Telefolmin fought for a long while, but there were also periods of peace. Eventually, however, fighting once more broke out, the result being the end of the Nukokmin as a people.

Both Nukokmin and Telefolmin maintained gardening areas in Nongkaman, the former using the downstream portion of the valley. In the old days when gardens were made near an enemy frontier people made their gardens together in one large clearing, and in the centre of the clearing stood an *elam*. *Elam* were strong houses, specifically designed for fighting. In those days the women never accompanied the men for the initial garden clearing, and one of the first tasks the men would perform would be the construction of an *elam*. First selecting a large and strong tree, the men would clear around this, leaving the tree intact. This would be the foundation of the *elam*, for *elam* were always built elevated high above the ground. At a height of around twenty feet or so the floor of the *elam* was built around the trunk of the tree. This floor was constructed in two layers to prevent arrows from below finding their mark, and it was through a trap door in this floor that the men would enter. The walls of the house were also made of double-thickness, with slits and gaps here and there to allow defenders to rain arrows down on attackers in the garden clearing below. Such *elam* were strongholds to which

large gardening parties would retire if threatened by enemy bowmen.

Skirmishing in Nongkaman developed between Telefolmin and Nukokmin, and eventually an *elam* burnt (with occupants) by the Nukokmin was repayed with a similar razing of a Nukokmin *elam* by Telefolmin. Though some say that this was because the Nukokmin had belittled Telefol taro, nobody is as certain of how or why this came about as they are that it did take place.

For some time there was another lull in fighting. In the meantime, some trouble had broken out in the Telefol villages of Falamtigin and Komtigin (an old name of Derolengam) over women. Factions from each of these villages set up gardening camps east of the Sol, bordering on Nukokmin territory. There they built *elam*, and when the gardens matured the men built a *yolam* there, to which they had brought relics (*men amem*) from their former villages. In a short time fighting broke out between these Telefolmin and the Nukokmin living near the present site of the Falamin village of Igimduvip. This began because one night some Telefol women had gone out in search of frogs and were heard singing that the Nukokmin should be killed. The Nukokmin attacked, but the new Telefol settlement remained, and in a short time the other Telefol villages came to their aid, routing Nukokmin from each of their villages in turn. Driven out of the floor of Tekintaman and away from their gardens, the Nukokmin took refuge in the high mountains to the east of the headwaters of the Ok Tekin. There they lived for months, foraging for food and living off wild pandanus. Many died of hunger, and soon they sent word to Telefolip, asking if they could return. In reply, the Telefolmin invited them to come down out of the mountains to an oil pandanus feast at Telefolip.

Telefolmin remembered how the Nukokmin would insult them, saying the Telefolmin had no taro and were lazy and always hungry. They remembered this when they invited the Nukokmin to come for a feast. When the Nukokmin arrived at Telefolip, the men were told to wait in the *yolam* and the women in the various *unangam*. There they were to wait while their hosts prepared the

feast to come. Telefolmin brought great numbers of pandanus to be cooked--but it was an inferior variety, barely edible. They lined up numbers of the large bark dishes used for pandanus, and when these were filled with grated taro cakes and pandanus sauce, they sprinkled ash-salt (*yol*) over it. But, unbeknownst to the 'guests', this wasn't really ash-salt, but the ash from discarded women's skirts (*unam*), made from rushes. They sprinkled this over the pandanus and then asked the Nukokmin to come and sit--they had surely been hungry for so long that they should eat before their hosts. The Nukokmin sat, and as they did Telefol men stood behind them. Then the Nukokmin were reminded of their past insults about food, and the Telefol men fell to killing them with their fight arrows, with their *biyal-sinam*, and with their disc-headed stone clubs (*tingii*). All were killed except for one man who was wounded but escaped. He made his way over to Eliptaman, where his sister had married among the Iligimin, and there he was sheltered. This was the end of the Nukokmin. Their lands and their old village sites were taken over by some of the Telefolmin, and it was these Telefolmin who became known as the Falamin. Though nobody is certain just how it is these Telefolmin came to be enemies of the Ifitaman Telefolmin--some say it was fights over women, others say over failure to reciprocate feasts--Falamin became implacable enemies, and many men say that they had simply taken the place of the Nukokmin not only in terms of the land they occupied, but also in terms of their enmity with the Telefolmin.

The most severe threat Telefolmin ever encountered was with the Iligimin, the former inhabitants of Eliptaman. Though there had from time to time been fighting between Telefolmin and Iligimin, most of these were skirmishes in the bush as hunting or gardening parties encountered each other. But in the time of Fupsanim, Tetumnok's father, the Iligimin perpetrated an outrage that threatened the very existence of the Telefolmin as a people.

A number of men had gone to Telefolip for an initiation that was in progress. During the night they were dancing in the *abiip-mat*. Suddenly

someone noticed smoke rising from the *yolam*, the Telefolip, the house Afek herself had built and upon which the welfare of Telefolmin and of all the other children of Afek depends. Soon the house was engulfed in flames while the men stood helplessly by. When dawn came, the house that had towered over the village was a smoldering ruin of ashes. As a column of black smoke drifted up from the heap, the men addressed it, asking the house to tell them who had done this thing. They called the names of each of the neighbouring peoples--allies and enemies (*abin* and *waasi*)--in turn. When they called out the name of the Iligimin, the column veered sharply to the northward--the direction of Eliptaman, the home of the Iligimin. Parties of armed men found tracks behind where the house stood and combed the valley for signs of the passage of an enemy party. At the north end of the valley they found what they were looking for--the track over the mountains leading to the Iligimin villages of Afogavip and Telapdavip was alive with signs of the enemy.

Word was sent out and men gathered at Telefolip to decide on a course of action. Not only Telefolmin came, but also men from as far away as Ulapmin and Fegolmin, for the Telefolip was their mother as well. Being Afekman--children of Afek--the Iligimin had destroyed their own mother too, and the men said to themselves, "yes, you have cooked your own mother--now you will be finished".

The men decided not to attack quickly. To do so would be expected, and it would be better if the Iligimin were struck when they thought the danger of retaliation was past, when they thought the Telefolmin were too weak to pay them back. And since the Telefolip had been destroyed, the Telefolmin had little strength with which to retaliate. To attack immediately would have been foolhardy, and the first priority was to rebuild the Telefolip, and renew the strength of the Telefolmin. Men from all the Telefol villages and allies from Ulapmin and Fegolmin assembled at Telefolip for the *am dekota*, the rebuilding of the Telefolip. So many came, each contingent dancing

into the village from the bush, that the *abit-mat* could scarcely hold them all. The men were as leaves on the trees, they were so numerous. When the *amogen*, the Telefolip was being built, the valley rang with their singing, and when the house was finished the air was filled with sound of pigs meeting their end. The feast over and the house restored, the men returned to their villages to await word from Telefolip.

Some time later men from all the villages were again summoned to Telefolip. Now it was time for a *saaman ban*, the wild pig initiation and now a prelude to war. Parties of men ranged all through Ifitaman and even further afield, killing wild pigs and carrying the smoked meat back to Telefolip. Soon the wild pigs of Ifitaman had been killed or pushed out beyond the valley. Arrows found their mark, the men were now hot, the arrow-smoking rite (*un baal*) had been successful. Once more contingents from each village danced and sang through the forest on their way to Telefolip, led by their war shields, the painted and flashing *at kom*. The time for the Iligimin to pay had drawn near.

Plans were laid. Each village assembled their men--including, again, Fegolmin and Ulapmin contingents. The men from the eastern villages--Kubrenmin, Telefolip, Falamtigin, Komtigin--divided their parties to hold the villages in the event of attacks from the Falamin, who were now on friendly terms with the Iligimin. Women went out into the gardens and harvested huge amounts of taro, some of which was cooked and set aside as provisions for the men who were to fight, the remainder to be carried by women, old men, and boys for the fighters. Old men put the finishing touches on arrows they had been making and stockpiling. Then, at night, men throughout the Telefol villages exchanged their red *dufaak-kon* (parrot) headdresses for the white *bogol* (eagle) crowns of war, turned their wild pigs' tusks upwards (cf. Schwimmer 1973:55, 64, 138ff). That night the men set out--quietly, without singing--for the high mountain bush near the head of Okfekaman.



Silently waiting in the forest in camps with no fires, the men from each of the parties met and gathered. Women carried cooked taro for them to eat, young boys and old men carried bundles of arrows. At night, scouts went silently into the bush in search of a promising site for an ambush. Crossing over to the near slopes of Eliptaman, they located a large gardening complex not far from the present Eliptaman village of Misinmin, a garden that was currently bearing taro--a garden to which a large party of Iligimin might be expected to come. The scouts returned, and the following night the trap was laid. While the main party remained concealed in the high forest, warriors went down in the darkness carrying their shields and weapons over the narrow and tangled tracks. When they reached the garden, they concealed themselves in the surrounding undergrowth.

After daybreak, a party of Iligimin men and women, numbering perhaps fifteen or so, entered the clearing to begin a day's work. While posting men to watch the approaching tracks, the raiders emerged on the edges of the garden. The Iligimin men went for their bows but were all killed before they had a chance to draw them, and the women and children were all caught and dispatched with clubs. Word was sent and the main party came down into the garden, where they set about rapidly building an *elam*. This *elam* in the Iligimin garden was to be their base for raiding the Iligimin settlements themselves, for the aim this time was not merely to make a hit-and-run retaliatory raid, but to exterminate the Iligimin themselves. From this base, enemy taro filled Telefol bellies, while meat was provided by the smoked corpses of their victims.

Today nobody remembers just how many warriors killed the Iligimin, but they were many. Using the same pattern of attack, *elam* were established in enemy gardens, and as the Telefolmin lived off these, so the Iligimin who retreated to their villages were deprived of food. One by one, Telefol war parties leap-frogged from one garden complex to another, closing on the

villages until they were surrounded, and eventually killing those who failed to escape to villages not under attack. The fighting went on for some time until all of the Iligimin villages in the lower part of Eliptaman had either been destroyed or abandoned. Finally, all the remaining Iligimin fled to the village of Agamtevip, at the head of Eliptaman. There they sought to withstand the attacks of the Telefolmin and their allies, for by this time it was clear that the Telefolmin meant to finish the Iligimin.

Telefolmin pressed the attack home, once more seizing Iligimin gardens and turning them to their own use. The village of Agamtevip was surrounded, and all the surviving Iligimin men, women, and children sought refuge in the *yolam*. Several times men tried to dash out, either in search of food or to escape, but all of these attempts--with one exception--failed. Finally, weak from hunger and near starvation, the Iligimin came out and delivered themselves into the hands of the Telefolmin. The men, women, and children were all herded to a spot on the banks of the Ok Abung, and there they were lined up. All the men were killed, with the exception of some of the old men who were allowed to remain so that they would instruct the Telefolmin about the forbidden spots (*abentem*) in Eliptaman and so that their bones might be used as relics for *men anem* in Telefol *yolam*. Many of the older women were killed, as well as any of the younger women or children who were troublesome to their captors. The remaining survivors were given to Ulapmin and Fegolmin allies for their help, or to young Telefol men without families who would establish pioneer settlements in Eliptaman. Though many of the Iligimin women hanged themselves out of grief, a number remained with their new Telefol husbands. Thus the Iligimin as a people were destroyed for their burning of the Telefolip, and thus the old Iligimin village sites became the sites for new Telefol villages in Eliptaman.

During the time that Agamtevip had been surrounded, a small body of Iligimin had managed to break out of the village and escape into Omtaman,

where they sought shelter with Dulanmin allies. At the time they escaped, Telefolmin did not give chase, but instead pursued their siege of Agamtevip. Once the rest of the Iligimin had been killed or taken, however, a party was sent east over the mountains to hunt them down. They came upon a Dulanmin longhouse where the Iligimin were being sheltered, and when they demanded that the burners of the Telefolip be turned over, the Dulanmin answered with arrows. Thus Telefol warriors once again attacked, razing the Dulanmin longhouse. Some of the men from this longhouse, however, managed to escape north over the mountains to Nenataman--including some of the Iligimin men.

Word was sent back, and a larger party of Telefolmin assembled and went in pursuit. They finally located a small hamlet in Nenataman where the fugitives had gone, and there they destroyed everything--people, pigs, houses, and all. Nenataman was a new valley to Telefolmin, and some thought the prospects of gardening and hunting there were promising. This is how the two small Telefol villages in Nenataman (near the Frieda River copper site) came into being, and there are men living there who can still trace their connections to the original Telefol raiders from Ifitaman who had run down the last of the Iligimin. The men who had cooked their mother were finished, nothing remaining but their name.

Though the Iligimin were now finished, Telefolmin acquired new enemies after moving into Eliptaman. To the east, the Dulanmin of Omtaman were now much closer. Though Dulanmin have the reputation of being ferocious fighters, they seem never to have actually mounted raids against Telefol villages, instead attacking parties of Telefolmin in the bush while hunting or gardening. Fighting with Dulanmin was intermittent, though fierce. Women or children were often taken in Telefol raids on Dulanmin gardens, with the result that a good many Eliptaman Telefolmin now have kin through wives or mothers in Dulanmin. It was one such raid that brought Dakasim's mother as a child to Derolengam, and though she grew up as a Telefolmin, she now receives visits

from Dulanmin who come to Telefolmin, and her children make similar visits to Omtaman.

To the north of Eliptaman lie the Miyanmin. Some men claim that the Miyanmin were originally migrants from Telefolip who left after disputes over women. Others are not sure of this, but say that when Telefolmin first moved into Eliptaman their relations with the neighbouring Miyanmin were peaceful. Not long after the Eliptaman villages were established, however, fighting broke out between them, perhaps over women, or gardening and hunting rights in the lower-lying valley of the Ok Fak to the north. The Miyanmin were formidable foes whose attacks against the Eliptaman villagers seem to have been as severe as the Telefol raids in return. Telefolmin say that part of the Miyanmin success in killing is due to the fact that they had recalled the details of war rites from their days at Telefolip, and also because they once killed a Telefolmin and put his bones in rotten wood in the forest, thus 'cooling' Telefolmin who ventured there. Whatever the case, Miyanmin were dangerous enemies indeed, men whose ferocity and wildness is both grudgingly admired and inspires revulsion epitomized in the Telefol claim that Miyanmin warriors eat the vulvas of slain enemy women raw.

It was against such enemies that men like Miyaamkaalengim--'oak skin', because arrows wouldn't pierce his flesh--made their names. Old Nifinim of Derolengam once visited Miyaamkaalengim in Ibatigin [Eliptaman]. Shortly before, Telefolmin had attempted a raid in Miyanmin country and had been severely beaten, losing several men. Among these was Miyaamkaalengim's brother. He and Nifinim had gone into the bush near a cane bridge across the Elip. They heard noise in the bush on the far side, and soon a party of Miyanmin wearing feathers and with their wild pigs' tusks turned upwards appeared on the bank. Miyaamkaalengim told Nifinim to give him all his arrows, and then sent the latter back to the village to summon help. He was

going to stay because he was angry over his brother's death and wanted to kill some Miyanmin. Off Nifinim raced, but when he got to the village, Miyaamkaalengim was there to meet him, all of his arrows having been expended on Miyanmin. Later they went back to the bridge and found some dead Miyanmin there--Miyaamkaalengim had killed these men and then transformed himself into a bird to return to the village ahead of Nifinim. Miyaamkaalengim had faced the enemy several times, but they never killed him, partly because he was a huge and ferocious man, partly because he knew the secret words to change himself into animals or trees if enemy arrows came too near. Though now only a very few old men know these words, it was such knowledge that helped Telefolmin in their struggles against enemies.

The Miyanmin were feared and hated, and it was for such reasons that Telefol carriers--and occasionally police--were eager to accompany the initial contact and pacification patrols staged by the administration into Miyanmin country. Trusting in the power of police rifles, Telefolmin knew that Miyanmin would be sure to attack such patrols and watched with relish whenever charging Miyanmin fell before gunfire. And though today Telefolmin seem relatively at ease and friendly with formerly bitter enemies such as Dulanmin, Falamin, or Tifalmin, there is still great hostility towards Miyanmin. And if raids and fighting have now come to an end, Telefolmin point out that the killing now goes on through other means, Miyanmin and Telefolmin now slaying each other secretly with *biit* sorcery.

Of all the enemies of the Telefolmin, those of longest standing are the Tifalmin. Tifalmin became enemies through the acts of Afek, laid down as part of the scheme of things. But of all the enemies of the Telefolmin, the Tifalmin seem to have been regarded as of relatively little consequence. Few Telefol villages can recollect any raids by the Tifalmin, and the brunt of Tifalmin fighting seems to have been borne by the Ulapmin, who were allies of

the Telefolmin. When Telefolmin fought Tifalmin this was usually to aid the Ulapmin in their attacks. Though the Ulapmin seem to have wanted to wage a campaign against the Tifalmin similar to the one that resulted in the extermination of the Iligimin, Telefolmin say that this would have been more trouble than it was worth. Tifalmin are not particularly numerous and, as Telefolmin point out, they seem to have been so preoccupied with fighting other Tifalmin that they offered little threat. Today, relations with Tifalmin are peaceable, and many men now take advantage of this to exchange for bows or strings of cowries, either with Tifalmin, or directly with the Opkeemin people lying to the south of the Tifalmin.

Warfare, enmity, and enemies are all denoted by the Telefol term *waasi*, and all of the enemies mentioned above--Nukokim, Falamin, Iligimin, Miyanmin, Dulanmin, Tifalmin--were enemies of the Telefolmin collectively, those against whom raids might be made with little in the way of justification, those whom Telefolmin could eat--if they so chose--with little compunction. Such enemies with whom a more or less general and prevailing state of hostility existed are termed *sepwaasi*, 'bush enemies'. Though fighting between *sepwaasi* was not always constant and temporary lulls in raids would sometimes approximate an armed truce, there was never any sense in which peace between *sepwaasi* was seen as inherently desirable, or even possible. Killing between *sepwaasi* was regarded as the inevitable and normal state of affairs, and unlike some peoples of Papua New Guinea, Telefolmin had no system of compensation or indemnities whereby deaths could be translated into more peaceful channels of exchange. Thus, the only satisfactory method of redressing the loss of friends or villagers to enemy arrows was retaliation in kind, each death bringing the promise of more killing in return. And if Telefolmin seem to have gone beyond the tit-for-tat characteristic of revenge among some other New Guinea peoples, the ferocity of their attacks bespeaks the depth of their sorrow and anger at loss, the hardness of Telefol warriors, and the organizational reserves

inherent in the system of initiatory rites that bestows *ifalop* on all Telefol men through their participation in the Telefolip, the mother house, the house Afek built for the men among her children in Telefolmin.

While *sepwaasi* are bush enemies, Telefolmin also have other enemies closer to home, enemies who should not--ideally--be killed and eaten, enemies who are not always so and between whom fighting should not continue indefinitely. Such enemies are called *amwaasi*, 'house enemies'. Each Telefol village has, over the course of time, dealings with other Telefol villages which can give rise to trouble and disputes. Commonly, such disputes appear not as discrete and isolated incidents, but as part of a history of tensions and acts--both spurred by and fueling tensions--that result in temporary flare-ups of fighting. At any one time the focus of troubles may be found in the suspected or known theft of a pig, the unauthorized clearing of land claimed by a fellow villager, slights or poor showings at feasts, or anger over adultery or the loss of women to another village in precipitate and unsanctioned marriages. Though such troubles may remain contained in a flurry of abuse and accusation between the individuals whose interests are at stake, it is not rare for these to end in assaults, confrontations, and general brawls. When these vents become part of the fabric of accounts between villages, it is likely that they will become *amwaasi* if they are not already. In the past relations could occasionally deteriorate to the point where individuals might be murdered or open fighting break out between two or more villages, occasionally with the help of other villages. But if this happened, it was seen as a breach of the peaceful (if not always amicable) relations that should prevail among all Telefolmin, and such fighting never had the aim--as it did with *sepwaasi*--of the destruction of settlements or the annihilation of their population. When *amwaasi* were killed, it was an ambiguous victory--though the killers might themselves feel that they had settled scores, they also knew that the fellow villagers of their victim would tend to take the

opposite view. Since *amwaasi* consisted usually of those villagers who, often because close at hand, had frequent dealings and encounters with each other, and since there was never any question of the obliteration of such villages, it was clear that the consequences of such killing would be difficult to escape. Further, it was also clear that it was prudent to moderate and temper hostilities with *amwaasi* since, whatever the grievances, all Telefolmin--*amwaasi* or not--had to rely upon each other in the face of much more deadly threats from *sepwaasi*.

There were other reasons as well for restraint in dealings with *amwaasi*. One of these was that it became difficult for villages as collectivities to reach consensus on means of redress. Though ideally all villagers should support one another in dealings with outsiders, this is complicated by the fact that villages are sometimes connected to each other by virtue of ties of kinship, marriage, *ifalop* and *dup* relations between various members. There are thus in any particular case a number of ready-made intermediaries (*iip-tenum*, 'middle men') who would be morally incapable of whole-heartedly supporting the interests of fellow-villagers against those in other villages to whom they are bound. Few men would be prepared to jeopardize their friends, brothers-in-law, or *ifalop* in other villages unless their own interests were directly involved. Often such men would plead for moderation or at least remain as neutral non-participants in whatever hostilities took place. It sometimes happened that if the men of a particular village were bent on killing an *amwaasi* connected via an *iip-tenum* to their own village, they would first see to it that the latter was securely bound in his house or the *yolam* to prevent an inopportune warning to the intended victim. In addition, hospitality offers secure sanctuary for a visitor--even if an *amwaasi*--if the host stands by his guest; it is forbidden to harm anyone in the house of another unless the host himself permits it. Thus, if the men



of a village wish to kill a visitor staying with a friend, they must first dismantle the entire house before they molest this person. It is absolutely forbidden (*amem*, 'taboo') to shed blood in the house of a fellow villager, and men told me of a number of occasions where they both provided and enjoyed such shelter in times of trouble. Finally, when tempers have cooled and the anger of the moment subsided, such *iip-tenum* are ideally placed to re-establish peaceful relations between *amwaasi*, often through arranging reciprocal feasts between the villages.

If *iip-tenum*, by blurring the lines of enmity between *amwaasi*, served to keep open hostilities manageable, so the existence of other Telefol villages prevented the escalation of feuding to outright warfare. As neutrals, often with ties to both sides in any particular dispute, such villages at the very least seem to have been able to isolate the conflict as a localized squabble involving relatively small numbers. At best, it was sometimes possible to intervene, and though details here are wanting, this role seems often to have been assumed by the villagers of Telefolip, who would remind *amwaasi* that they were, after all, Telefolmin and not true enemies. Finally, violence seems also to have been tempered by a further consideration: the killing of *amwaasi* carries with it the risk of *amwaasi iiban*, a kind of pollution described as similar to rot. Any village that pursued killing other Telefolmin as though they were *sepwaasi* would open itself to the danger of such contamination, the very site of the village itself emanating sickness and misfortune for its inhabitants. In such cases the only solution would be to abandon the old village site and relocate elsewhere.

If all of these considerations conspire to restrict open fighting between *amwaasi*, they do not act to eliminate the causes of grievance nor the history of outstanding debts to be paid. Such debts remain, are repaid, and are once again incurred not openly in the loud confrontations of armed men facing each other, but rather through stealth and silence, through the

concealed attacks of *biit* sorcerers. While it is relatively easy for Telefolmin to come to grips with the problems posed by men who resort to direct violence, the acts of *biit* sorcerers are hidden and concealed (*magalo*), by their very nature difficult to discover with a surety enabling action. If armed and angry men may be confronted and met, if men can put their trust in such cases in their skill and their friends, *biit* by its very nature eludes a sure reply--the culprits are, if the *biit* is successful, anonymous. When death strikes down active men without warning, one may be reasonably sure that *biit* has been done. It is another matter altogether to be certain who is responsible. Grudges and occasional clues may give rise to suspicions that may, after pondering and discussion, take a more and more definite shape. Following the lead of supposition, men may gather up their weapons and confront *amwaasi* thought responsible. Accusations and denials may follow hotly upon one another, and tempers flare--in the past, such accusations could precipitate a flurry of arrows. But since such suspicions often fell just short of certainties, it was and is more common for the accusers to withdraw to nurse their bitterness and contemplate other possibilities. Since the identity of *biit* sorcerers is always uncertain, there is always the possibility that one of one's village mates has the requisite materials and knowledge for *biit*, and may act as a silent and anonymous avenger on one's behalf. If the death of a fellow villager by *biit* is soon followed by the sudden death of an *amwaasi*, some satisfaction may be had in this evidence that not all *biit* sorcerers are *amwaasi* and that some may indeed be at work for one's own benefit.

*Biit* in Telefolmin is listed by men as the most frequent single cause of death, and tabulations from genealogical material show deaths due to *biit* to in fact have been more numerous than those due to warfare. Here lies what is for Telefolmin a tragedy, for men who have seen the populous highland areas to the east point out that Telefolmin are far fewer in numbers than

these peoples--a consequence of the killing of Telefolmin by other Telefolmin in secret sorcery feuds. These men point out, with sadness and anger, that Telefolmin had never been decimated by *sepwaasi*--the more costly toll was that taken by Telefolmin themselves. One of the boons of self-government and Independence in Telefol eyes was that for the first time the government permitted anti-sorcery legislation, and the problem of *biit* has from time to time provided an important question for the consideration of the Telefolmin Local Government Council. During the period of time I was in the field there was some relief when it finally became possible to prosecute sorcerers under the law. The efficacy of the law was vindicated when, in 1975, one such offender was convicted of attempted sorcery. This man, one Biyupnok of Biiltevip, had in previous months made sorcery accusations himself against the men of Ankevip village. His wife and his brother had both died suddenly--sure signs of *biit*--and in one case it was immediately following visits paid to Ankevip. A loud and angry confrontation between the men of Biiltevip and the men of Ankevip was precipitated by Biyupnok's suspicions. This, however, led to no action, and Biyupnok had decided not to wait for others to silently avenge the deaths. Instead, he had approached an outsider--an Oksapmin man working on the government station--to acquire some of the materials necessary to perform *biit* himself. While promising to acquire the materials, the Oksapmin man reported Biyupnok's doings to the administration and to some of the Local Government Councillors, resulting in the laying of charges and a conviction leading to some months in gaol. For Telefolmin, this case stood as a milestone, for it was now clear that the government stood on the side of the vast majority of Telefolmin, those who deplored *biit* and were victimized by it. And though Biyupnok was not himself truly a *biit* sorcerer--evidenced by his search for *biit-san* ('*biit* seeds')--it was nonetheless hoped that this could be taken as notice served on all *biit* sorcerers that the government would no longer ignore or tolerate their machinations.

Here it is important to note that *biit* has a reality that can not be dismissed with the label 'sorcery' carrying its connotations of superstition and imaginary dangers. The fact of the matter is that *biit* has been practiced, and that it is lethal. *Biit* is a variety of "assault sorcery" widely known throughout Papua New Guinea as *sangguma* among Pidgin-speakers and identified as *vada* among Papuan peoples. From the Western perspective the mechanics of *biit* involve a secret assault upon lone victims who are rendered unconscious and whose bodies are then punctured at various points--notably in the chest cavity and the abdomen--with small thorns or slivers of bamboo. When the victim regains consciousness it is impossible to identify the assailants, and death usually follows fairly soon thereafter from peritonitis. In government patrol reports at Telefolmin station there are at least two definite accounts of specific *biit* cases, and medical orderlies working at the government hospital also give accounts of the technological innovations in *biit* that contact has brought: patients have now been admitted from whom sewing needles, rather than thorns, were extracted,

The essence of *biit* is its hidden character, and a synonym for *biit* is *magalo aamin*, 'unseen killing', the intent of *biit* being that the culprits remain unknown, thus frustrating direct retaliation. That *biit* only takes place between neighbouring Telefol villages is explicable because *sepaasi* have always resorted to more obvious and direct killing--only Telefolmin and those known to them have need of concealing their identities when they kill Telefolmin. Though *biit*, if successful, leaves no outward traces or marks, it is nonetheless a fairly simple matter to diagnose *biit* as a cause of death. The victims are most often active adult men--those who may have in the course of their dealings with others created grievances, and those whose loss would be most severely felt by their fellow villagers. Since *biit* attacks are always perpetrated upon those who travel alone in the bush--nearly always men, who may go out into the bush alone at night to hunt--deaths due to *biit*

invariably follow closely upon the return of the victim from such a sojourn in the bush. Though this in itself serves to prevent most people from venturing out into the forest alone, men who are vigorous and who trust in their own alertness and strength will nonetheless expose themselves to such risks--indeed, it is just such self-assurance and independence that is likely to attract the attentions of *biit* sorcerers, who are particularly drawn to such victims. When the victim returns to the village, the first evidences of *biit* attacks are silence or signs of disorientation. Often incapable of speech and refusing food, the diagnosis is confirmed by death within two or three days. It is the suddenness of death and the silence of the victim that bear the unmistakable marks of *biit*, distinguishing it from the lingering malaise that suggests *tamoon* sorcery or the effects of illness.

Though the overall mechanics of *biit* are relatively well-known, it is difficult to find anyone who knows much more than the broad outlines--understandably so, since nobody is prepared to admit that they know enough about *biit* to be a practitioner. In Derolengam where I worked, men steadfastly claimed that there was nobody in the village who had working knowledge of *biit*. Derolengam, they explained, had no need of *biit* in any event, since the men of Derolengam were numerous and strong and able to sort out their differences with other villages in more direct and open ways. This, they pointed out, was fortunate, for not all villages could make the same claims. And though it is almost unheard of for *biit* to be practiced on members of one's own village, they warned me that had I lived elsewhere those who had grudges against Europeans would perhaps see in me an easy opportunity to even up some scores.

When I suggested that perhaps the village might harbour *biit* sorcerers unbeknownst to the other villagers, men indignantly protested that this could not be so, a claim which they backed up with the following evidence. Since it is known that a number of *biit* attacks are made in retaliation for

other *biit* attacks, it follows that villages which have sorcerers in their midst will also be villages which suffer heavily from *biit* attacks themselves. They pointed out that Derolengam had not suffered heavily from *biit*, self-evident proof that Derolengam people were innocent of this particular sinister skill. Telefolip and Kubrenmin villages, however, were clearly full of sorcerers, as evidenced by the unusually high number of sudden deaths that took place in both villages during my stay: each death was repayed by a reciprocal death in the other village.

Finally, the men triumphantly added, they could be sure that there were no *biit* sorcerers in Derolengam for the simple reason that the men of Derolengam had in the days just before the Australians arrived attempted to acquire the techniques for *biit*, but these proved ineffective. Twice the men had acquired *biit-san* from the Atbalmin people, who are noted purveyors of such materials. In one case an attempted attack on an old woman--normally safe victims when trying out *biit*--resulted in bruises she inflicted on her attackers and hot pursuit by her armed and enraged husband who was only with great difficulty dissuaded from shooting one of the assailants, who was his sister's son (*man*, *unang-man*). In the second case, some of the men had decided to try out their newly-acquired skills on a young woman of Kubrenmin village who had resisted attempts to send her in marriage to Derolengam as part of a planned sister-exchange. The men stole down to a stream where the Kubrenmin women were known to be looking for frogs. After several frustrated attempts to maneuver into position, they finally were able to creep up behind the dark figure of this woman--only to find when they fell upon her that the 'woman' was a member of a *biit* party from another village who was similarly attempting to waylay a Kubrenmin woman! After two such failures it was decided that Derolengam men did not have the knack for *biit*, and they would do better to abandon such attempts before the consequences of failure grew

more serious. Thus Derolengam claims to innocence were bolstered by the experience of failure.

Though the men of Derolengam had abandoned *biit*, there were some men who, with understandable reluctance, privately admitted to a more extensive knowledge of *biit* than most of their fellows. All men know that *biit* sorcerers waylay their victims from behind and knock them unconscious, that they kill the victim then by the insertion of wild sago thorns in the joints, abdomen, under the collar bone. They know that the contents of a dead dog's stomach are poured down the victim's throat, and that more thorns are inserted in the victim's tongue to render speech difficult, and they then know that one of the attackers remains behind to revive the victim, who is told to return home and to die on an appointed day. Such things are public knowledge, as is the certainty that the death of *biit* victims is swift. What most men do not know, however, is how to become *biit* sorcerers.

To become *biit* sorcerers, men must take part in a secret rite--the *biit ban*--whose existence is known but whose details are sketchy. *Biit* was given to Telefolmin by an *aanangen*, a wild woman of the bush. This particular *aanangen* had married a man from Telefolip, and their descendants (through both male and female lines) carry the name of Atemkayaakmin. It was by this *aanangen* that *biit* was revealed, and for this reason her descendants are proficient at *biit*. In order for a *biit ban* to be held, an Atemkayaak man must be present to officiate, for Atemkayaak people are the ones who know not only the general form of the rite, but also know the secret names to be whispered or merely thought to ensure its success. And among the Atemkayaak men, there are only a few who also retain some of the bones of their ancestral *aanangen*, without which a *biit ban* is doomed to failure.

To hold a *biit ban* a small number of men secretly arrange a time when--by different routes--they can unobtrusively leave the village and gather

at an appointed spot deep in the bush and far from gardens. Thus gathered, the man who leads the rite fells a *bong* tree by singing, and he then in the same manner kills a domestic pig brought by one of the party. The men then eat the pig together and afterwards go separately into the bush where they kill terrestrial *nuk* and at least one *sengaa* bird, a brush turkey. They take the legs of this bird off and these *nuk*, to be kept with them. When the men make their attacks, they will leave no traces but the tracks of these animals, and the site of the attack will be clean and free of evidence just as the brush turkey sweeps the debris of the forest floor to heap leaves for its nest. And, just as the brush turkey lays its eggs hidden under a pile of leaves and then departs without a trace, so the men who perform *biit* will leave their work hidden and vanish. Gathered once more at the felled tree, the men beat themselves and each other with stinging nettles to make them hot and angry, all the while singing a song whose words are secret but whose content is to the effect that "no matter if he's my cross-cousin (*nek*), no matter if he's my mother's sister's child (*kabel*), he can die, he can be killed, I can feel no sorrow". Men who kill by *biit* must be hot and hard, and can feel no remorse. When this is done the man who keeps some of the *aanangen*'s bones takes the netbag (*men anem*) in which they are kept and places it on the head or around the neck of each man in turn. Carrying this netbag on their backs after the fashion of women carrying a netbag of taro, each man bears it and the weight of the *aanangen* as he proceeds to balance himself and walk the length of the fallen *bong* trunk. If a man reaches the end of the trunk, he then returns--a man who successfully negotiates this passage without falling may be powerful with *biit* indeed, and will range to distant places in his attacks; a man who falls will only be able to carry out his *biit* close to home. Then each of the men present is given a small packet of *biit-san* containing perhaps one of the bones of Ungkigingim, a huge snake, and with this some thorns of the wild sago



palm from the low and hot country of the Atbalmin. When this is done the Atemkayaak man once again begins to sing, and as he does so the felled *bong* tree is raised up again, leaving this spot in the bush as it was before they came. All traces gone, the men then return to their village where they will test the efficacy of the rite. Under rules of secrecy, no man may reveal the details of the rite to others, for should he do so the other participants of the *biit ban* will kill him with the skills they have thus acquired.

When they have returned--again by various routes--to the village, the men wait some time until a sunny day comes and there are only a few women or children around. When nobody is looking, they take a few pieces of firewood and a bamboo arrow blade and place them in the centre of the *abiip-mat*. From a vantage point in the *yolam* the men keep watch. If the women and children walk through the *abiip-mat* but fail to notice the wood or the blade, they have met with some success and are now ready to proceed to the next stage; if the wood and blade are noticed, the men have failed and will fail in *biit*. Some days after this, they then practice their *biit* on a dog (an act which is, incidentally, tabu--Telefolmin are forbidden to kill dogs). If the dog dies they are ready for the next step, but if it fails to die they must abandon their project. Providing they have met with success so far, the men then decide upon a member of their village upon whom they may try out their technique. Favourite victims here are old women or small children, who are unlikely to offer much resistance if attacked, and whose deaths will not usually be attributed to *biit*. This is often difficult, for it is rare for all but the most incautious women or children to go out into the bush alone. Nonetheless, this final step must be taken before the men risk attempting *biit* on adult men from other villages. Here again, if the men succeed they may feel secure in their ability to perform *biit*. If they fail at this stage, it would be foolish to carry the process further.

When all of these steps have been taken, the *biit* sorcerers are now ready to carry out their secret killings. In small bands of perhaps a half-dozen or so they will beset their solitary victims from behind. When the attack has been completed, one of them will revive the now-dead victim with stinging nettles. If the attack has been carried out properly, their hapless prey will be confused and speechless--to make sure, one of the assailants tests him with questions such as "whom am I?", "where does the sun come up?", and so on. If the man can answer, the attack is repeated once again; if no answer is forthcoming, all has worked well. The man is then sent hom to his doom and the attackers melt away in the forest, confident that their identity will remain hidden. Their victim will tell no one, and indeed cannot even know who his attackers were even if he were capable of articulate speech. On a day set by the sorcerers, the man will die, and if they are particularly meticulous about covering their tracks, there is yet a further resource at their disposal. The man who revived the victim will keep the nettles used to raise the dead man. If he wishes, he may hang this bundle from one of the rafters in his house, thus assuring that the victim will hang himself in a matter of a few days. The work is completed.

For Telefolmin the polarity of *dup* and *waasi*, friends and enemies, has always been an important context of their lives. But is also one that can be blurred and muddled, filled with uncertainty--if it is easy to distinguish *sepwaasi*, enemies of the bush, from Telefolmin, it becomes much more difficult to know precisely who among other Telefolmin may truly be a friend, and who may--perhaps without one's knowledge--be an *amwaasi*, an enemy at home. If there is the possible risk of *tamoon* sorcery in the village--a variety of sorcery that is only rarely lethal and rarely seen--one can at least be sure that one will not suffer death by *biit* at the hands of one's neighbours. But beyond the village, even among other Telefolmin

and among men from further afield who appear to be friends, no such certainties hold. It is in the range of such relationships that the tension between the two kinds of *weng kem*--talk of the men of soft heart and of men who are hot and stinging--becomes manifest as ambivalence. If tact within the village and ferocity with *sepwaasi* are the norm, relations between men of different Telefol villages are often tinged with a curious mixture of circumspection and confrontation, coolness and volatility. Friends, *ifalop*, and the like are valued but there may nonetheless be flickering doubts--who here bears a grudge?, who here might be a *biit* man?

One means men have of coping with their doubts is to be sure that they never give others reason for anger. Youths are counselled to follow this path, but it is in the nature of things that few men will be able to do so, and fewer still will allow the inevitable trespasses on their interests--at least at the hands of men from other villages--go unremarked and unresisted. If men are worried about the prospects of *biit*, they will take care to see to it that they never go into the bush unaccompanied. But few men will resist the temptation to hunt for *nuk* on moonlit nights simply because they have no one to go with them, and while Telefol men do not go out of their way seeking danger, men of strong character are unlikely to allow the fear of *biit* to make them stay-at-homes at night like the women. Most of all, men must be alert and keep their eyes open, both figuratively and literally. The key is always to be sure of who one's friends are, as illustrated in an *utuun sang* that has the nature of a cautionary tale:

A Telefolip man had a *dup* in Fegolmin who he called *nek* ['cross-cousin']. The Fegolmin came to Telefolip to visit and his Telefolip *dup* made a present to him of some valuables [*tisol*]. The Fegolmin went back home and didn't visit again for a long while. After some time the Telefolip man became impatient and went down to Fegolmin country to get his return gift. He went down several times, but each time the Fegolmin put him off. After a while, the Fegolmin tired of this and decided the next time his *dup* came from Telefolip

that he would kill him. The Telefolip man set off again for Fegolmin to visit his *dup*. He at first planned to go alone, but his sister's son (*man*, *unang man*) insisted that he be allowed to accompany him, so the two went off together. When they arrived in Fegolmin they were given food and then went into the *yolam* to sleep. The boy's mother's brother (*moom*) fell asleep immediately and soundly, but his sister's child only slept lightly and kept one eye open. Soon one of the hosts, the Telefolip man's *dup*, came in and placed a red *telap* seed on the chest of his sleeping *dup*. By doing this, he marked this man for killing--but the boy alertly saw this, and as soon as the man left, the boy took the seed and placed it on the chest of a Fegolmin who was sleeping next to him. Soon some men came into the *yolam* and took the marked man out. Only feigning sleep, the boy got up and followed them. The men butchered the man they had taken out, and the boy was given a parcel of the meat and some greens from the wife of the Fegolmin *dup*. [This is the Fegolmin analogue to Telefol *biit*, called *bis*.] The boy took these things and returned to the *yolam*, where he woke his mother's brother and told him they must leave immediately. As they were leaving, the Fegolmin who had been killed was put together again and brought back into the *yolam*. By the time dawn broke the two of them had reached the top of the escarpment overlooking Fegolmin country. The man saw the boy's parcel and asked him what that was, and the boy told him of the man who had been butchered the night before. The two then sat down to eat and as they ate the sound of mourning wails drifted up to them from the village below....

The lesson: know whom you can trust, never press friends in other villages too insistently, and stay awake. It is in the background of such tales and of more immediate experience that men find and make friends among other villages; it is this background that makes firm and trustworthy friendships such a highly valued achievement.

#### v. Parents and Children

One of the most important projects in the life of any Telefolmin is the care and nurturing of children. Children are universally loved, and whenever the women gather together in the village to chat, joke, or exchange news and gossip it is almost inevitable that they will be attended by a hovering flock of small-fry who are their constant companions. If there are

any new additions to the village, their introduction and welcome to a warm circle of affectionate women will be prompt and informal, the infants being passed from their mothers' arms to those of beaming young girls (who as yet have no children of their own), or to the embraces of jocular and frail old ladies. Constantly cuddled and played with, a newborn child is a welcome member of the village who is treated to a deluge of hugs, loud smacking kisses, and an endless supply of fingers to grasp and breasts to fondle. Mothers and small children are inseparable: if mother goes to the gardens, her load of netbags is augmented by another suspended from her head in which the infant is cradled in a layer of soft tree bark and leaves. Swaying with each step, the child is gently rocked as mother makes her way across streams and steep slopes to where she will work. Here in the garden clearing the babe's bark-string netbag becomes a tiny hammock suspended from the branches of a shady tree. When the little one stirs, or when mother takes a break from her work, the infant will be brought out from its nest to nuzzle or to take milk from its mother's breast. When the baby has grown into a toddler the netbag is left behind, but the contact continues, and small children spend as much time travelling astride their mothers' hips or perched on their shoulders as they do trying their own legs. If fathers seem to spend less time in such close physical contact with their children, they are no less affectionate: men will spend odd hours in garden shelters or at home dandling their children on their laps or sharing choice morsels of game with them, game that is likely to have been bagged with this end in mind. A father's care can be shown by his industry, labour which finds its compensation and reward in squeals of delight when he carries home a bundle of sweet succulent sugar cane or a tasty pandanus fruit for his young ones. It is in relations between parents and children that Telefolmin find a focus for many of their attachments and sentiments, and it is in such relations that toils of daily life acquire the tangible significance of caring and concern for others.

*"Abeen a yut-telala, abeen a yut-telala--  
 Man boyo amanbu ya,  
 Yut-telala,  
 Muuk kobe,"*

--Telefol song (*asengl*)

"Mother come quickly, mother come quickly--the child crying, come quickly, give the breast." So goes the song, a pleasing ditty which neatly formulates the relation of nurturant concern that obtains generally between parents and children. In fact, small children are in the habit of crying a great deal, and the panacea for managing the troubles of toddlers is to offer them the breast. This pattern lasts far longer than the period of suckling, and one way that Telefolmin generally cope with familial discord is by proffering items of food. In this way the bonds between parents and children are actualized, a means whereby the diffuse and expected solicitude of mothers and fathers acquires substance and becomes a history of nurturing. The care that parents bestow upon their children occasions pride on the part of the parents and fondness and gratitude on the part of their children. Thus, when recalling his dead father with sorrow and affection Dakasim not only dwells upon the things they did together, or the places they went, but also the small game or other prized foods that Binengam shared with him. The facts of physiology and paternity aside, the foundations of parenthood lie in precisely this, where nurturing partakes not only of the nature of the gift, but also of the actual processes of nourishment and growth so that children may be said to owe their existence to those who have looked after them. It is this bond that makes children mindful of their parents. A recalcitrant son may be reminded by his father that they will meet again in Bagelam, the land of the dead, and that if the son fails to think of his parents then his parents will not bother to share food with him when they meet in Bagelam. In more immediate terms, parents rely upon their children's awareness of their indebtedness for security when the latter are grown and the former too old and frail to do the heavy work of gardening. And while it

is a point of pride with wrinkled ancients like Olmamsep to pursue their labours despite shortwindedness and aching joints, old people find themselves inevitably dependent upon their children for numerous things, from house-building to hunting. For Telefolmin, the indulgence of children thus becomes a means of safeguarding one's last years. Dakasim was forever giving small tidbits to his small son Saalat, and tantrums or fits of pique on Saalat's part often occasioned small purchases of biscuits from the mission trade store. When I asked Dakasim why he was so painstakingly solicitous of Saalat--who appeared to me to be exploiting the situation and was, by North American standards, being spoiled shamelessly--he gave me the following reply. "When Saalat is grown it wouldn't be good if he thought back and said, 'you didn't look after me well, you didn't give me things'. Then he might not think about me. But if he thought, 'yes, papa always took good care of me, he gave me meat, he gave me biscuits, he gave me good things to eat', then he would stay with me. He wouldn't go anywhere else or leave me, he would stay with me and look after me because he would remember." And though it was clear to me that Dakasim's care for Saalat embodied genuine love and affection, it is also clear that Dakasim's words expressed real concerns, and it is equally clear that in Telefolmin parenthood is not only a state, but an activity. People are parents not simply by virtue of physiological paternity or maternity, but because they perform the acts of parents: they look after their children.

Here we touch upon the fact that relations between parents and children in Telefolmin are, like most others, contingent and open to change, for parenthood is not so much a given as an achievement. The autonomy of the person in Telefolmin is nearly absolute, and this is so even in the case of relatively small children. In this context, parents are always careful not to abuse their children, nor even to exercise compulsion or authority over them. Though children may be chastised or scolded, and occasionally cuffed

if they try their parents' tempers, it is nonetheless exceptional for parents to strike their children. The notion of using force as a corrective is alien to Telefol notions of the proper relations between parents and children. The idea itself makes no sense, at least in the context of notions of what ought to be (as opposed to what is): "How could I hit my children? They're my own blood (*isak atok*)!". And though fathers are in theory capable of killing disobedient children by cooking the juice of two varieties of red sugar cane (*kwet tenep* and *kwet afaayim*) on hot stones, this remains only as a theoretical possibility, since nobody could recall any cases in which this was done. There are good reasons for parents to moderate their anger, for a child who feels ill-treated at home is free to translate dissatisfaction into action by moving out of the parental household and taking up residence in the houses of other relatives. Thus, when Imbil, Dakasim's eldest daughter, was scolded for prematurely harvesting some taro from one of the family gardens, she took up her netbags, planting stock, and bush-knife and amidst tears and angry shouts left her father's house and moved into the house of her father's brother and sister. Though the estrangement in this case was only temporary--Imbil moved back into Dakasim's house after a few weeks--it nonetheless adds another reason for parents to be solicitous of their children, for children may leave their parents.

"She takes up her netbag,  
she loads up her taro stalks,  
she packs up her skirts...."

--Telefol song

"Oh sorry mama,  
I want to go to the Sepik school...."

--Pidgin song

"When a boy grows big he will marry, then he and his wife will go to their gardens. He's married now, and he will stop thinking about his mother and father. This is how it is with us Telefolmin...." Though Telefol mothers



and fathers are at pains to maintain good relations with their children, the time will nonetheless come when the children grow to adulthood and their attentions will turn to their own problems of family life. With the birth of their first child, a newly married couple acquires a new identity, for adults become generally known by teknonyms, names taken after that of their first child. Such names signal the joining of husband and wife in the common project of caring for their children, and announce to the community as a whole the achievement of parenthood. Though couples may spend the early part of their married life sharing a house with the parents of either the husband or the wife, it is rare for such arrangements to endure long beyond the birth of their first children. From that point on, the new couple will establish a separate household in the village, often joining together with the family of one of the spouses' brothers or sisters.

That children establish new households with marriage is of course well understood and expectable, and need not mean that relations between children and parents are severed. But it is nonetheless a fact that gives parents concern. Children of both sexes are highly valued, partly because aged parents are largely dependent upon sons for hunting and help in their forest clearance, while daughters often help with weeding and planting. The marriage of children thus represents a potential loss of this assistance, which becomes more valuable as the parents become older. For this reason, as well as for reasons of affection, parents are often reluctant or ambivalent when faced with this potential loss. This is more marked in the case of daughters than of sons, for while sons almost invariably remain in their parents' village, daughters may sometimes marry men of other villages, to which they will move. Since, formally at least, marriage arrangements are in the hands of the parents of the bride, this reluctance is often made manifest in attempts to put off or defer the marriage of daughters. It is in recognition of the parents' loss, and more specifically, of their anger and

resentment of the loss of a daughter, that bride wealth (*unang kun*) is paid. Though some fathers may drag their feet at the prospect of their daughters' marriage, this delaying tactic can only be employed for so long, since young women are notorious for taking such affairs into their own hands by eloping, and community gossip may spur a father to action with veiled hints of incestuous connections. The most common solution to the problem, and the one which receives the widest public approval, is for a man to betroth his daughter to a young man of his own village. This preference, seen collectively as village endogamy, is favoured for a number of reasons. Firstly, the potential son-in-law will be well-known to the girl's parents, and they will be in a position to assess his character and the likelihood that he will be both able and willing to assist them: in such cases, they will not so much be losing a daughter as gaining a son. Further, Telefolmin hold the notion that children should remain as replacements for their parents in the village. An intra-village marriage makes it possible for both the parents of the bride and of the groom to be satisfied on this score, and a man will have the additional satisfaction of knowing that land that he has brought under cultivation will be re-used in subsequent generations--his labour is not lost. In addition, Telefol attitudes towards marriage see the situation in terms of the loss of women, and ideally a woman given to one family in marriage ought to be compensated for by the giving of another woman--as replacement--in return. Though in practice it is difficult for a number of reasons to realize this notion of what is fitting, it becomes even more difficult to manage when the marriages take place between different villages: short of abduction or open confrontations, it is virtually impossible to enforce the return of a woman in compensation from another village. Within one's own village, arrangements are made more easily and more subtle pressures can be brought to bear, and it is in fact likely that an intra-village marriage will be viewed as the fulfillment of past debts. Finally, intra-village marriages receive

general public approval, for men believe that by retaining the women of the village in marriage that they are bolstering the overall strength of the village in numbers, and at the same time incurring no losses to other villages. For these reasons, it is perhaps not surprising that parents seem to be more casual about bridewealth payments in the case of intra-village marriages, while--if the match is permitted at all--bridewealth negotiations in inter-village marriages tend to be much more demanding and are carried on in a general atmosphere of restrained hostility.

The song referring to a woman gathering her belongings is a popular lament, the crying of the girl's parents as she prepares to leave her home to marry a man elsewhere. Stereotypically, if a girl runs off to another village to marry her parents will confront the man, saying, "Why did you come and take our child? Did you send us your sister to marry here, did she bear many children that they defecate on our verandahs? For what reason did you come and take her?".

Some sense of the depth and extent of parents' attachments to their children, and their feelings of anger and resentment at their loss may be had by a look at one particular case involving old Welagim and his daughter, Kilasep. Welagim's biography is full of the reverses that beset Telefol men, the kinds of events that bring sadness to their lives. As a young man, Welagim and his wife had four children, two boys and two girls. Of these, one boy and one girl died in infancy, children whose loss is still felt by Welagim in his lonelier moments. Some time afterwards, Welagim's wife had an adulterous affair with a man from Ankevip, whom she eventually ran off to marry. Disappointed in the failure of his fellow villagers to come to his aid to retrieve his wife, Welagim held fast to his two surviving children, the daughter Kilasep and his son Tegemsep. On his own, he looked after both without the aid of a wife--something which was hard work, and curtailed his scope for creating numerous exchange relations with other men. Being

ambitious for both his children, Welagim also undertook periodic work on government labour gangs to acquire the money to pay their school fees, all the while keeping his gardens in good order and expanding his cultivations so that his children would have much land of their own. While at school, Kilasep met and made friends with children from a number of other villages, including a youth from Kubrenmin village (Eliptaman). When Kilasep grew into a full breasted young woman, she and her friend from Kubrenmin eloped. She ran away with him to Eliptaman, and they were soon pursued by angry men from Derolengam. Welagim cried and lamented to his fellow villagers that first he had lost his wife, and then a stranger had come and taken his only daughter. The younger men of the village became furious at this--there had been other grievances against the men from Kubrenmin--and took up their weapons and hiked over the mountains to Kubrenmin. When they arrived at Kubrenmin, the couple had gone into hiding in the bush. In an angry confrontation, the men from Derolengam made many threats, and the people of Kubrenmin disavowed any sanction for the match. Kila and her young man remained in hiding in the bush, living exclusively around distant garden clearings for a period of months. Later, when the couple had returned to Kubrenmin, the young man sent word that he wished to offer bridewealth for Kilasep. Once again young men from Derolengam took up their bows and arrows and went off to Kubrenmin. Bridewealth was refused--Welagim would not part with his only daughter--and Kilasep was seized, bound, beaten, and carried back to Derolengam. Though violence is theoretically curtailed with the advent of government administration, Welagim and others made it clear that Kilasep would not be permitted to marry out of the village. Very shortly thereafter, Welagim bestowed Kilasep upon Robinok, a man of Derolengam. In this way Welagim was able to keep his daughter at home, and Kilasep now helps her aged father from time to time in his gardens.

Though such incidents are most common in the case of errant daughters, who--being women--are more likely to heed their fancies than their ties at home, sons also give cause for concern and Welagim is not alone in his worries over the loss of his children. Though in the past sons could be relied upon to remain in their parental village, the advent of government administration has brought with it a new range of problems. The establishment of the Baptist mission, with its bible school, the availability of contract plantation labour on the coast or in the central highlands, and the government-sponsored schools all act to exert a powerful influence on eager and adventuresome youths, and in the process threaten to sever the links of children to their parents. Though not typical, the case of Olmamsep's relations with his children illustrates some of these difficulties.

Old Olmamsep and his wife Okmanip have several living children, one son and three daughters. In addition, Olmamsep had had another son, who died as a child in a house fire. Of Olmamsep's three daughters, the two youngest attended school for some time, one of them marrying a civil servant from another region, with whom she lives with her children in Vanimo, the district headquarters on the coast. The other school girl eventually, after much strife, married the Kubrenmin man from Eliptaman with whom Kilasep had eloped some time previously. The third and eldest daughter, Tenumtelen, now lives with her parents in Derolengam after she was divorced by her husband (also of Derolengam) for suspected adultery. When her marriage came to an end, her eldest son and daughter remained with their father, while her youngest son and daughter returned with her to Olmamsep's household. (This is particularly fitting in Telefol eyes, since both the families of the mother and the father each retained custody of an equal number of male and female children.) Olmamsep, while not pleased with the loss of two of his daughters to husbands from beyond the village, nonetheless enjoys the presence of Tenumtelen and his grandchildren. Despite this, however, Olmamsep is saddened and preoccupied by

the fact that his only surviving son--his replacement--left the village long ago. Olmamsep's son, Barton, ran away as a young boy to live at the mission bible school where he became literate, and where he was supported both by the mission and by one of his cousins who was also in residence at the school. At first, Olmamsep would go to the mission station to reclaim his son, but each time he went Barton (whose original name is Magasimnok) would run off into the forest and remain in hiding until his father left. Finally, Olmamsep acquiesced, and Barton was free to pursue his studies and his ambition to become a pastor for the mission. When the government school with English instruction was opened, Barton attended classes there, and eventually did well enough so that he was able to pass the examinations for entrance to high school in Wewak, on the coast. Thus, Barton left Telefolmin as a youth, though he remained in contact via letters or messages sent to the government station, or on occasional visits home during his school holidays. After finishing high school, Barton continued his education, taking special courses in Port Moresby and in Australia for training in counselling and youth work. During this time, a young woman of Derolengam, who was both a Christian and educated--a nurse--had been betrothed to him by her father, a friend of Olmamsep's. It was partly by such means that Olmamsep hoped to attract his son back to the village, or at the very least to solidify Barton's ties to the village. But, naturally enough for a young man with goals and aims, Barton was reluctant and refused the match, an act that angered many of his kin at home.

During the time I was living in Derolengam Barton was staying in Port Moresby, where he was engaged in government work. One of the questions I continually faced whenever I encountered Olmamsep after receiving some mail was whether or not I had any word of Barton's whereabouts or circumstances, and the old man was always disheartened and crestfallen because my replies were always negative. Barton did, however, send letters home from time to time, which were read to the old man by one of the handful of literate men in

the village and such letters were often accompanied by gifts of money for Olmamsep and Okmanip. Olmamsep would sometimes dictate replies, either to one of the schooled men or to myself, in which he would make small requests or ask when Barton might be expected to return to the village.

Finally, in 1974, Barton sent word that he was going to marry a nurse he had met from Wapenamanda (Enga Province), and solicited help from his relatives to raise the required bridewealth, which was exorbitant by Telefol standards. Though a number of Barton's kin were infuriated--arguing that he had neglected his father and his village, but now required their help, that he had refused to marry a desirable Telefol woman who had been betrothed to him, thereby embarrassing her, and that with his steady cash income it was galling that he should ask his impoverished village-mates to contribute to satisfy the greed of his Wapenamanda affines--a number of men put by small amounts of cash (for Enga people demanded cash) or bundles of plumes or strings of shells to aid him. In this, Barton also announced that he would visit his family in Derolengam after several months' time. Though upset that Barton was going to marry a foreign woman--and also disgruntled, since foreigners were often known not to observe the Telefol custom of making a return payment for the handing over of the bridewealth, let alone sending a woman in return, Olmamsep was nonetheless excited at the prospect of Barton's impending visit, and he set about taking steps to assure a proper welcome for his son's return. Olmamsep began acquiring a number of piglets, and when his sows had litters he retained all the offspring instead of following the normal practice of agisting them with friends. In this way he hoped to accumulate pigs to slaughter and present to Barton when he arrived.

The work of pig-rearing is hard and demanding, and more so for an old couple whose bones begin to trouble them and whose strength and endurance are not what they were. Partly because of the trouble of moving pigs from village to garden and back again, and partly because of the risk that the pigs might

cause trouble in neighbours' gardens, Olmamsep and Okmanip took their pigs and retired to a house of theirs located in the tract known as Ninipbil, some hours' walk east of the Sol. Here the couple had a number of producing gardens and set about the task of clearing others with which to feed themselves and the small herd of pigs that they were tending. This, however, came at some cost. Olmamsep's protracted absence from the village--lasting over a period of months, punctuated by brief returns--was noted and became a topic of unfavourable comment for many of his friends, neighbours, and relatives. Half jokingly and half seriously, he and Okmamip came to be referred to as the Ninipbil Kasel, the Ninipbil people, as some noted that he seemed to be more preoccupied by his pigs than by his fellow villagers. Further, many were concerned that by his long residence in Ninipbil, he and his wife, who lived there alone, would expose themselves to the risk of *biit* sorcery.

In a matter of several weeks, more severe problems began to arise. The country in Ninipbil is broken terrain, and since Telefolmin do not fence or confine their pigs--something felt to be a sort of cruelty, which they liken to gaol, and which is felt to adversely affect the pigs' growth--a number of pigs from Olmamsep's herd managed to wander off through the bush, from which they had to be retrieved after some strenuous tracking and chasing. Nor was this all, for people from a number of Telefol villages--as well as some Falamin--maintain gardens in Ninipbil, and not all of these are fenced, since wild pigs had at this time been driven from the area. As a result, a number of Olmamsep's pigs had made their way into some of these gardens, where they wrought great damage and aroused the anger of the gardeners. Soon Olmamsep found that his pigs had gotten him into trouble with a number of people, not all of whom were fellow villagers, and who were thus people who might be expected to resort to *biit* if their anger were not assuaged. In all of this, Olmamsep had to manage his affairs alone, since Okmanip had grown frail with advanced years and was unable to be of much help in tracking down



wandering pigs. Though he had compensated some of the wronged gardeners with replacement planting stock, the situation soon got out of hand and he found himself obliged to kill the most troublesome of his pigs and offer cuts from them to forestall the resentment of others who gardened in Ninipbil. Thus, his herd soon dwindled to manageable size.

During all of this time word of these happenings produced concern among the old man's friends and neighbours, for they began to entertain serious fears that it would be only a matter of time before a *biit* attempt were made. To this was added the less altruistic concern that a number of Olmamsep's pigs had been killed and given away to strangers, rather than shared with fellow villagers.

The situation came to a head when Olmamsep and Okmanip returned to the village because Okmanip was suffering from a lingering ailment: her condition had grown so bad that Olmamsep wanted her to be able to go to the government hospital for treatment. This coincided with the return of Kunilok, a younger brother of Olmamsep, from a long period in the bush, and Kunilok appeared to be suffering from a similar ailment. There was much speculation among the villagers as to the cause of these disabilities, some hinting that the prolonged period in the bush and the hard work of tending pigs were responsible for Okmanip's condition. In the midst of this talk were also observations that Olmamsep had become obsessed with the pigs marked for his son, and that it was this that made him unmindful of both the welfare of his wife and the feelings of his fellow villagers. His pigs had drawn him to the bush and away from village life, exposing him to risk, exhausting the old man's energies as he tried to look after his now-dwindling herd. In his anxiety to provide a good showing and a dramatic welcome for his son he had even refused to reduce his labour by agisting his pigs, since to do so would have meant that he would have had to give a share of these pigs to the tender.

In a matter of a couple of days a diagnosis of both Okmanip's and Kunilok's illness had been arrived at: the cause of their misfortune was to be found in the anger of the spirit (*usong*) of a set of relics (*men amem*) entrusted to Olmamsep's care. The *usong* was angry for being neglected by Olmamsep, who not only failed to keep it company due to his absence in the bush, but had also killed a number of pigs in the bush without returning with a portion to give to the *usong*, something which Kunilok had also been negligent about. In its anger, the *usong* brought illness to Olmamsep's wife and to his younger brother. In order to put things right, Olmamsep had to hold an *ugem kong* curing rite in which a pig was killed to pacify the resentful *usong*, and to which villagers came to share in the pig and enhance their own well-being. With this came the advice of Olmamsep's friends, who urged him to reduce his commitment to tending his pigs in the bush and to remain in the village. Force was added to this by the hint that if he failed to do so, other villagers would refuse to give him piglets, either as gifts or merely as wards to tend.

Later, when Barton eventually paid his visit home, Olmamsep feasted him with two large pigs. The welcome had been made, the contributions to Barton's bridewealth were collected in exchange for promises of repayment, and Barton again departed.

In the case of Olmamsep we can see the extent to which a parent's anxieties concerning his children, preoccupation with fears of loss and estrangement, and the desire to bind them to him can take precedence over the concerns and obligations of village life, even to the extent of jeopardizing the health of himself and those close to him. This was the moral content of the diagnosis--which became largely a community affair--of the *usong*'s role in Okmanip's and Kunilok's illness, for not only had Olmamsep allowed his feelings for his son to interfere with his participation in village life. His preoccupations had threatened relations with other gardeners in Ninipbil, and

by neglecting the *usong* (which, as we shall see, are closely identified with the village as an entity) had allowed his anxieties concerning Barton to endanger his wife and brother, putting his sense of estrangement from his only son before his ties to others. Though Olmamsep did abide by the advice of his fellows, these preoccupations continued to dominate his thought, for of five children he had fathered, the only one that remained to him was his divorced daughter. It is perhaps not so surprising that later, in the middle of 1975, Olmamsep spend forty dollars--a princely sum in Telefolmin, sent to him by Barton--to provide for a seance in the Ok Bembem cult (see Chapter 4) in order to contact the spirit of his other son, who had perished in the burning house years before. If the old man's loneliness was not to be remedied by his relations with his living but distant son, perhaps it would be alleviated by contact with his son in the land of the dead.

Though Olmamsep's case is perhaps extreme and the fact of his separation from his son attributable to relatively recent changes at work in Telefol society, his experiences nonetheless highlight the tremendous value parents place on their relations with their children, and on the fragility of such bonds. If such situations in the present seem to us to be novel, we must remember that before there were missions or schools there was warfare, and in both past and present the most irreparable sundering of child from parent comes with a child's death. The death of a child is a denial of all that parents attempt, the negation of what is normally a life-long project. While the death of one's parents is the occasion for much grief, a shock that remains with men for all their lives, it is nonetheless expectable and part of the way of things. And though in the past and even to some extent in the present the hold of infants on life is often precarious, there are few events in a man's life that are as wrenching as the death of a beloved child. It is thus that we are to understand the grief and sense of loss that led Bololim (Robinok's father) to attempt to murder a woman who was giving birth in a *dungam* within

days after his only daughter had died. And though neighbours stayed his hand, his grief remained with him, made more piercing when he carried the thatch for a new house that his daughter would otherwise have carried for him. Very shortly afterward--after some parting words to Robinok, his eldest son--Bololim disappeared into the bush and was only found again when a dream revealed that he had hanged himself in a little-used *dungam*, the place of birth and the source of children.

Such occurrences are made more poignant by their rarity, posing crises which most men ponder but which thankfully do not touch them. If such loss always remains a possibility, the possibility acquires gravity because of the close affection that normally obtains between children and their parents. When Dakasim travelled to Vanimo to visit his sister, married to a coastal policeman, he was soon followed by his impish daughter Itmop, who discovered that the government would fly her to the coast if she required urgent medical attention. After some experimentation, she managed to lodge several pebbles in her ears, presented herself at the station hospital, and was flown to Vanimo. The pebbles extracted, she soon found her way--though speaking no Pidgin--to her aunt's house, where she was able to join her father. Far from being reproached for her play, she gladdened Dakasim's heart. A daughter who would go to such lengths is a prize indeed! Such children are treasured, and Itmop's attachement to her father is mirrored by that of others. Thus, Beksep voluntarily withdrew from the government school as a boy not because of parental disapproval or because it was difficult to pay the school fees. He left school because his elder brother, who has now taken the name of John, went away to high school and then got a job working for the administration as a clerk. Beksep, being the only remaining son, committed himself to village life so that he would be able to look after his parents in their old age. Now a father himself, Beksep is universally liked and admired, the more so because he provides for most Telefolmin the exemplar of the devotion that people hope

will flow from a history of parental care and concern. Here he even manages to turn the new literacy to account, for he has more than once enticed John home to visit his parents by resort to urgent letters announcing non-existent or exaggerated family crises. Béksep's conduct and the experiences of others have been suggestive to many younger Telefol fathers and mothers, who desire that their children profit from schooling and yet wish to avoid the alienation of their children that often comes with education and its opportunities.

Dakasim speaks for many when he says that he will send his son Saalat to school only long enough for the boy to learn how to read and write, for this allows him to write letters and to remain in touch with friends and relatives who have left Telefolmin for the towns. But once this aim is achieved, so Dakasim says, this will mark the end of Saalat's schooldays, for unlike some he will be educated but remain a gardener, villager, and son.

It is when men's thoughts turn to their children that the Telefol imperative to labour and industry acquires much of its moral force and impetus, for men may not be content merely to meet the immediate needs of subsistence, but must also see to it that each of their children has the nucleus of planting stock for their own gardens and established rights to land on which to make them. In the same way, a man's history of cultivation, the clearings by which his toil has established claims, become futile without children to claim them--without children it will all be for nought, to be consigned once again to forest, unused until some future and unknown gardener comes again to make his own mark upon the bush. Children thus establish a twofold continuity for men's lives, each enriching the meaning of the activities of day-to-day life: work becomes a supremely moral and social occupation, with children providing an immediate bridge between men's relations with the natural world and the world of people, and it is through children that a man's work is salvaged from oblivion on his death.

vi. Men and Women

As with many other peoples of Papua New Guinea, Telefolmin find relations between the sexes problematic and polarized, the focus of a deep, elaborate, and multi-faceted ambivalence (cf. Buchbinder and Brown 1976; Mead 1953; Meggitt 1964). Men and women are radically distinguished in thought and daily life, and if their relations do not constitute a battle of the sexes, it is nonetheless true that they are felt to be in their very natures opposed. For men the ambivalence about their relations with women is marked by the awareness that women are essential to life and life's projects, while at the same time there is the tendency to devalue the place of women as responsible and genuinely significant actors in the proper scheme of things. At times it seems as though wistful thoughts of a society without women exert a powerful appeal: daydreams beckon of a life without nagging or squabbles, a life with no jealousies, no adultery, no problems of wayward marriages or difficult bridewealth transactions. Yet the very difficulties that women pose point to the brute and irreducible fact of their indispensability and contrality.

"Verandah-post in the bush,  
verandah-post at home...."

--Telefol aphorism

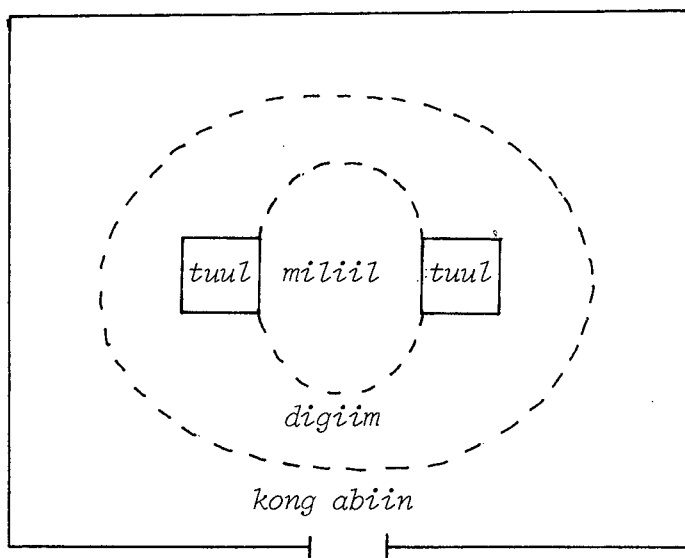
With these words--*sep bilsak, am bilsak*--Telefol men seek to capture and phrase the relation between the sexes. Women are to men as the verandah-post of a garden house in the bush is to that of a house in the village. One is peripheral and to some extent asocial, beyond society; the other is central, of the village, and in the thick of things. And just as the verandah of a bush house looks out only on the forest and the family gardens, men portray women as insular and parochial in their interests, narrowly devoted to the demands of domesticity. By contrast, the men claim a concern with collective affairs to be their own proper sphere. Here the sexual polarity is cast in terms of the dialectic between household and village, one that is ideally complementary but

often tense and antagonistic. As it is with the relation between household and village, so it is with the relation between women and men.

If we look at the floorplan of a Telefol dwelling-house (*unangam*), we will find a reiteration of the same set of relations:

FIGURE 1

*Unangam* Floorplan



*Tuul* = hearth  
*Miliil* = men's floor  
*Digiim* = women and children's floor  
*Kong Abiin* = pigs' floor

Most dwelling houses are occupied by two nuclear families, one to each hearth, and it is at these hearths that women will cook for themselves, their husband, and children. The men, however, sit between the two hearths. Here, then, we see women divided by the interests of the hearth while men are joined together, and it is worth noting that it is to the men's floor that visitors from other households (or even other villages) come to sit, chat, and eat.<sup>4</sup>

The association of life in the bush with household productivity has its roots in the form of Telefol agriculture, which requires that people invest time and labour in their forest gardens. These gardens are generally at some remove from the village, and it is in this context that men's association with women and children is most intense. In this fact we find that the linkage of women with the bush is not only a metaphorical encoding of domestic insularity--it also hints at the reality that the bush is where couples indulge in sexual relations, where the relation of husband and wife is not immediately juxtaposed with the competing claims of sociability between men. In all of this men are liable to see a too assiduous devotion to gardening--especially if it involves the neglect of friendly participation in the life of the village--as an indication of a man's uxoriousness. The problem, for Telefol men, is that as husband and father they must attend to the needs of their families, but this must not outweigh their obligation as men to take part in the affairs of the community. Where these opposed pulls and tugs of obligation come into conflict men are likely to blame women, arguing that prolonged absences in the bush are the result of men's vulnerability to their wives' blandishments and charms. In the process men realize that if a man doesn't share the company of his fellows he is most assuredly in the company of his wife, and it is in this manner that women are viewed as something less than fully social beings in the manner of men. It is perhaps for this reason that older men decry the now common use of blankets. In the old days, they say, men almost always preferred to sleep with other men in the men's house (*yolam*), where the press of other bodies assured a warm night's sleep. Today most seem to prefer to remain in their dwelling houses with their wives curled up together in their blankets. Whether or not blankets themselves have anything to do with such preferences, this view indicates clearly enough the threat women are seen to pose to relations between men.



Though Telefolmin rarely dispute about things such as pigs' raids into gardens, serious trouble always marks disagreements concerning women. If there is intermarriage (contrary to the ideal of village endogamy) between two villages, it is always a difficult matter to set the accounts straight, and it is virtually assured that one (or both) of the villages concerned will feel smoldering resentment at the loss of women to outsiders. In the past such issues could provide the basis for brawls and fights sparked by the elopement of women, and in the present these kinds of grudges are foremost among those thought to lead to attacks by *biit* sorcery. And while Telefolmin are remarkably peaceful in their dealings with fellow villagers, the discovery of adultery will lead to violence even between those who are close neighbours and kin. There is, then, yet another sense in which women pose a threat to society, if only because men are so ready to fight over them. Given all of this, it is not surprising that men complain about women as disruptive influences on village life. Discord is often laid at the door of women, and men say that if it weren't for women the village would be the truly peaceful place it is supposed to be.

In fact, the peace of Telefol villages is only rarely jeopardized by adultery. Though doubtlessly adultery is more frequent than public knowledge recognizes, men take great care to avoid the inevitable train of troubles that flow from it. There is, however, one form of strife that is so common that it seems to form part of the backdrop of village life and occasions little comment: marital squabbles. Shouting matches and outright fights between husbands and wives in Telefolmin are commonplace, and while men will quite literally go out of their way to avoid discord with other men, quarrels between spouses are run-of-the-mill. It is not quite right to understand this as wife-beating, if for no other reason than that Telefol women are not commonly at a disadvantage and wield firewood with telling effect, often giving as good as

they get. Collectively and characteristically, men account for such tussles with reference to the weakness of women's thoughts, which is exhibited in the relative lack of restraint manifested by women: women are notorious for flying into rages and spontaneously venting their spleen, in contrast to the more characteristic reserve that men display.

Though men are often advised to pay no heed to women's words, many seem to become ensnared in domestic arguments (their own, never anybody else's) with something resembling enthusiasm. In the case of new marriages this can sometimes result in estrangement, but the aftermath is more often the disappearance of the quarreling couple into the bush for several days to tend their gardens. It is too facile to suggest that such fights are a sham for the sake of appearances, nor will it suffice to say that men channel aggression stemming from other relations into the conjugal sphere. Although there is an element of truth in both these suppositions, my impression is that the quarrels are genuine and constitute authentic expressions of what is going on between husband and wife.

"Our wives are like our mothers...."

--Beksep

Relations between men and women in Telefolmin fit only uneasily into available stereotypes. The relative prominence of quarreling between spouses lends credence to the idea that marital relations in Telefolmin are a battle of the sexes, one that can take substantially physical form. But against this we must weigh the fact that couples seem quite ready to make up and carry on together--at least to outside appearances. Here the marriage of Kunilok and his wife Sagalfuiten can serve as a caution against too simplistic a view. Of all the couples whose shouts and squabbles pierce through the evening quiet in Derolengam, these two are the most notorious. Indeed, things are so raucous between the two that Kunilok's kinsmen and friends become both angry and

ashamed--this has on at least one occasion led them to seize pigs Sagalfuiten has been looking after. A number of Kunilok's kinsmen took these pigs into the fenced yard of the men's spirit house (the *yolabiip*), where they slaughtered and cooked them; because the pigs were in the confines of the men's sphere of the village, no women or children could consume them. This was an extreme measure, meant to express both disgust at the couple's behaviour and to dramatize their shame at such carryings-on. And though this had the temporary effect of shaming both Kunilok and his wife into a quieter mode of domestic life, their relationship continued to be a stormy one. Kunilok's relatives have from time to time suggested that he and Sagalfuiten part, and this is reinforced by the fact that the two are childless. Despite this, neither of them has shown any inclination to break their relationship--Kunilok has actively resisted all such promptings. It seems clear that despite frequent and unseemly quarreling the two of them are quite happy to remain together. When not fighting, they appear to be genuinely fond of each other, and it should be added that Kunilok's exemplary industry keeps him in the bush often (more often than many would like), and in the bush he is in the company of his wife and whatever children they have taken under their wing.

Telefol culture reiterates the sexual dichotomy over and over again, like most other New Guinea cultures, and this takes the form of an ideological polarization of the sexes. The men's cult complex forms the cosmological and ritual focus of the village, and this is a male preserve from which women are rigidly and categorically excluded. A complex series of tabus governing contact between the sexes prevails, and one of the fundamental axes of a pervasive system of food tabus is the differentiation between male and female. At a very basic level men and women are conceived as different kinds of beings. But among other things, this means that the relation between the sexes--especially in marriage--is marked off as a distinct area of experience.

If relations between men are expected to be characterized by amity and the avoidance of discord, no such expectation applies to the relationship between husband and wife. When Telefol men say that their wives are like their mothers, they are affirming a bond between them which ideally is not contingent in the same way that all other relations are, and the delicacy and circumspection of other relations is absent here. It is only within the scope of this relationship that men are fully engaged as individuals and selves in direct relation to another, and this is possible precisely because husbands and wives must not get along in order to get on. When marital relations work well, they seem to work extremely well, attested by odd glimpses of couples in unguarded moments, as when a husband and wife play tag, chasing each other through the bush. When marital relations fail--particularly unexpectedly--the result can be disastrous, and this seems to be the chief cause of suicide for both men and women, a distressing commentary on the centrality of marriage (see Jorgensen 1978).<sup>5</sup>

Though it would be easy to mistake the public devaluation of women and their role for evidence of male supremacy, we find here--as in so much of Telefol culture--the obvious is misleading and founded upon something quite different, the conviction men hold that women, difficult as they may be, are the source of all that is worthwhile in life.

## CHAPTER 3

## ORDER AND ENTROPY IN THE TELEFOL WORLD

I. Introduction

In this chapter I will outline some of the basic contours of order in the Telefol world as both sociology and cosmology. But in addition, I want to suggest some of the ways in which Telefolmin themselves think about the notion of order itself. Anthropologists are understandably concerned with presenting ordered accounts of others' lives since they must, after all, compress and clarify and reduce the results of their field experiences (and answers to questions) in the form of a text. It might in fact be the case that, for particular peoples, life can be read as a book. But this is an assumption we ought to be wary about. As we shall see in the next chapter, texts themselves are not so easy to read. In any event, New Guineans in general have achieved an ethnographic reputation for structural "looseness" which ought to alert us to the possibility that order itself may be conceived in very different terms from the elegantly symmetrical schemes of Australian aborigines (cf. Stanner 1965, Tonkinson 1974), the hermetically sealed social and cosmological system of Indian castes (Dumont 1966), or the seemingly watch-like intricacy and balance of Balinese culture and society (Bateson 1972, Geertz 1966b).<sup>1</sup> In these societies it seems that order is taken as given, all-encompassing, and atemporal. Speaking of the "totalizing" conception of order embodied in the Dreaming of the Australians, Stanner says:

The Dreaming determines not only what life *is* but also *what it can be*. Life, so to speak, is a one-possibility thing, and what this is, is the 'meaning' of The Dreaming. The tales are also a collation of *what is validly known* about such ordained permanencies. The blacks cite The Dreaming as a charter of absolute validity in answer to all questions of *why* and *how* (1965:161).

A critical property of such an order is its ability to transcend time. A particularly apt illustration of how this works for Australians may be had from Tonkinson's account of the people at Jigalong:

The Aborigines do not question the alien origin of most of the objects they now use. In fact, they take the technological achievements of Western culture very much for granted. This attitude is at least partly the result of their firm conviction that the ancestral beings, as great magicians, possessed and utilized much of this technology long before the whites acquired it. In the case of several secret-sacred objects in the possession of some native doctors, it is obvious to an outside observer that these objects are of Western manufacture, yet the Aborigines emphatically deny this.... When these objects were first revealed to me, amid great secrecy, the men stressed that they had been left behind by the ancestral beings for use by the Aborigines and are definitely not "whitefella" things.... The men were clearly aware that the objects looked manufactured, but their belief in the magical powers of the Dreamtime beings is so strong that they never doubted the truth of the accompanying validation (1974:113).

This is the perfect archetype for the triumph of structure over history (see, e.g., Levi-Strauss 1966; Leach 1970:112f), and the received order of the Dreaming is able to gobble apparent innovations and incorporate them into its framework: there is no question here of a challenge to the truths embodied in the Dreaming, nor even of a forcible transformation of such truths. Rather, there is a sense of a place for everything, a place which is not so much determined by the past as by the cultural insistence that the order of the Dreaming is a total order, one that encompasses past, present, and future in its scope. Because the Dreaming transcends time, anything happening within time is pre-empted in the Dreaming. Thus, Australian conceptions of order are imbued with a permanency that does not so much defy time as master it. In such a context it is not surprising that the chief problems in matters of conduct turn upon issues of conformity with the overall plan (see Tonkinson 1974:70), a plan which seems to have been worked out to the smallest detail. Here we see an overall view of man and the cosmos combined with a sense of

completeness and closure, and it is the magnificence of this cultural edifice that has attracted so much anthropological attention.<sup>2</sup>

Though we shall see that Telefol cosmology has in some respects the power of the Dreamtime among the Australians, Telefolmin are recognizably Melanesian in orientation and ethos, and this means, among other things, that order of the kind found among Australians, Indians, or Balinese is simply not to be found. Rather than being taken for granted as an inherent attribute of the cosmos, Melanesian order has always seemed problematic and in question--and not only for ethnographers. Errington has gone into this problem at length in his account of Karavaran society, and he introduces his ethnography with the following words:

Social order in the Karavaran view is achieved only with great effort. Order is not inherent in human life; its presence cannot be assumed. Much of Karavaran social life, especially ritual, is the effort to create and maintain order and to prevent themselves from slipping back into a state of anarchy. They see their social life as a continual effort to tame themselves and others, to channel their desires and energies into orderly paths. Such a view of society rests on their beliefs about man and the nature of order (1974:19).

Schieffelin's ethnographic account of the Kaluli of the Mount Bosavi area has much the same flavour. Looking at matters from the perspective of man's address to the world, rather than its overall shape, he notes:

Kaluli act in a situation as if they were 'up against something', like one feels alive by actively asserting himself against everything. The result is that everything is done as if it were part of an eternal indian wrestling match, where the joy of it is in the struggle not (so much) the win... (1976:120).

Though it may have taken a while for the anthropological community to come to grips with it, it is nonetheless evident that the relation between man, society, and cosmos in New Guinea has never been a simple matter of articulating with a coherent overall plan--as can be seen by reference to the works of ethnographers such as Williams (see Schwimmer 1977), Bateson (1958), van Baal (1966), Pouwer (1966a, 1966b), Burridge (1969), Wagner (1972, 1979),

and Barth (1975), Fundamentally, the question of order in Melanesia *has always been a question*, and one to which man must construct a reply. Replies can take many shapes, but always have the character of a postulation in the context of a situation that seems to call man and his projects in question. The burden of this chapter is to outline man's situation, in preliminary terms, as Telefolmin see it. Since this is at some level inevitably bound up with a statement of what order and its context is, I begin with an examination of Telefol social structure with an eye for those features that may be seen to be problematic from either a theoretical or a Telefol view, or both. From there I move to a consideration of the broad outlines of the Telefol cosmos as they bear on the fate which awaits men. This perforce leads to a look at how Telefolmin see time in relation to the order postulated by Telefol culture. It will be seen that certain recurrent themes are evident in both organizational and cosmological realms, themes which bear upon notions of loss, dissipation, decay, and disorganization. These I summarize under the rubric of "entropy". Finally, I will examine the striking prominence of tabus and prohibitions in Telefol culture in the light of these issues.

## ii. Telefol Social Structure--*Tenum Mit*

It is common knowledge in the region of the Sepik headwaters that the Telefolmin and all the neighbouring "Min" peoples are the children of one woman, the Great One, the Ancestress, the Old Lady, Afek.<sup>3</sup> They are *Afekman*, and their common ancestry can be asserted by saying that they all are *tenum mit maagop*, 'one *tenum mit*'. But in fact--though the details are less commonly known, for they are secret (*anem*)--the origins of most Telefolmin are more complicated than that. It is true that Afek herself came and founded the ancestral village of Telefolip, and it is also true that all Telefolmin come ultimately from that village. But in addition, people are more particularly identified with reference to the names of their own *tenum mit*, their 'man



source/base/stock'. There are perhaps nine or so *tenu mii*t names in currency among Telefolmin (some of which are represented among the neighbouring Falamin and Fegolmin as well), but in fact these can all be virtually subsumed under one of four major *tenu mii*t: Bogelmin, Kayaalikmin, Kubrenmin, and Atemkayaakmin.<sup>4</sup>

The Bogelmin are Afek's true and direct descendants, and were, along with the Kayaalikmin, the first Telefolmin. When Afek was at Telefolip, she was accompanied by a male dog (*kayaam*), who is the ancestor of the Kayaalikmin. Kayaalikmin are named, however, after *nuk kayaal*, a bandicoot, and this is done to hint at their origins from a dog while at the same time confusing outsiders with this spurious reference. Like the Kayaalikmin, the Kubrenmin are also descended from a male dog, but the Kubrenmin ancestor was a wild, rather than domestic dog (*dunkiil* vs. *kayaam*). This dog, in company with other like beings, was one of the *Uwuutigin Kasel*, 'wild' folk from the mist-shrouded mountain at the Om (Strickland) headwaters called Uwuutigin. After Afek had built Telefolip they came down out of the mountains, some traveling underground along the course of the Ok Ifi, others emerging from the cave called Waptem. The underground route was chosen because many of them were frightened of the reception they might receive at Telefolip, and some were so wary that they chose to remain at various places along the route. These places are dangerous and sacred spots (*anemtem*), visible as muddy pools or standing stones along the course of the Ifi, and are to be avoided by the unwary--but they are also powerful sites for the performance of certain rituals associated with warfare and hunting (*un at*), as many Falamin learned to their cost. The wild dog himself taught (according to some, at least) Telefolmin the art of fire making by the saw method, which he demonstrated by removing his tail and vigorously drawing it back and forth over tinder held in a cleft stick (incidentally transforming himself into a human in the process). In contrast to the Kayaalikmin and Kubrenmin, the Atemkayaakmin arose not from a dog or a

wild animal, but instead from a woman. This was no ordinary woman, however, but an *aanangen*, or female bush spirit (though some insist that she was in fact a *kundunang*, a wild amazon of the bush). The Atemkayaakmin originated when a Telefolip man went into the low-lying country in Nongkaman with his wife, where she was to collect frogs while he gathered pandanus nuts. He returned to their makeshift camp after some time and--unknowingly--sat down to eat (and later copulate) with an *aanangen* who had assumed the form of his wife. He wanted to return to Telefolip, but this woman kept insisting that they stay longer in the bush since she was having phenomenal success in finding frogs, particularly the *atem* variety. When they finally did return together to Telefolop, he was astonished to see his real wife there waiting for him. This woman, the Atemkayaak (*atem* [frog] owner), is the ancestress of the Atemkayaakmin, who became numerous. Among other things, she introduced sorcery to the Telefolmin, and Atemkayaakmin are still particularly adept in its use. These are the four major *tenum miit* that were present at Telefolip while Afek lived, and each of these *tenum miit* formed the founding nuclei of the first four villages to emerge as people branched off from Telefolip: Kayaalikmin (now comprising the two linked villages of Derolengam and Ankevip); Kubrenmin; Biiltevip (Bogelmin); Falamtigin (Atemkayaakmin). These villages form the dense core of old Telefol settlement in Ifitaman.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to their distinct myths of origin, each of these major *tenum miit* has its own particular ritual competence, a sphere in which it excels in accord with its origins and fundamental nature. Thus, Bogelmin have an acknowledged primacy in rites performed for the benefit of taro gardens since they are Afek's direct descendants--Afek is the source of taro (*iman miit*, *iman magam*). The Kayaalikmin, for reasons that are less clear, are said to be particularly good at rearing domestic pigs (*kong*). Kubrenmin have, by virtue of their association with *dunkiil*, talent and a privileged stock of sacred lore (*weng amem*) affecting success in hunting and warfare. Because of

their descent from an *aanangen*, the Atemkayaakmin excel at *biit* sorcery, though this tends to adversely affect their performance in warfare.

All of this implies a systematic division of ritual labour bound up with the four *tenum miit*, and we can summarize and schematize this in the following table:

TABLE I

Tenum Miit Origins and Ritual Competences

<u>Bogelmin</u>	<u>Kayaalikmin</u>
1. Descended from woman (Afek)	1. Descended from domestic dog ( <i>kayaam</i> )
2. Originated at Telefolip	2. Originated at Telefolip
3. Competence: taro gardening	3. Competence: domestic pig rearing
4. Gender association: female	4. Gender association: male
<u>Atemkayaakmin</u>	<u>Kubrenmin</u>
1. Descended from <i>aanangen</i>	1. Descended from ( <i>dunkil</i> )
2. Originated in the bush (low/hot)	2. Originated in the bush (high/cold)
3. Competence: <i>biit</i> sorcery	3. Competence: warfare/hunting ('arrow fire rite')
4. Gender association: female	4. Gender association: male

This clearly has the shape of a system of structural oppositions and complementarities, and in the best binary fashion this can be represented in a series of pluses and minuses in the table below. In order to simplify this operation, some slight juggling of attributes is necessary. Thus, descent origins are decomposed into dimensions of wild vs. domestic, human vs. dog, and female vs. male. Likewise, ritual competences are grouped under the Telefol categories of *iman* vs. *un* (= Taro vs. Arrow) which dichotomize ritual into spheres of nurturing and killing. Much more will be said of these contrasts below. For now, let us simply tabulate complementarities:

TABLE II

Binary Matrix of *Tenun Mit* Attributes

	<u>Bogelmin</u>	<u>Kayaalikmin</u>	<u>Atemkayaakmin</u>	<u>Kubrenmin</u>
1. Human	(+)	(-)	(+)	(-)
2. Female	(+)	(-)	(+)	(-)
3. Domestic	(+)	(+)	(-)	(-)
4. Telefolip	(+)	(+)	(-)	(-)
5. Taro [ <i>iman</i> ]	(+)	(+)	(-)	(-)
	[taro gardening]	[pig rearing]	[sorcery]	[war/hunt]

What does such a display tell us? To begin with, it is apparent that there is a comprehensive and ordered set of contrasts underlying the system. If we focus on the logical relation of various *tenun mit* to each other, it is clear, for instance, that the Bogelmin and Kubrenmin are in some sense polar opposites of each other, while the Kayaalikmin and Atemkayaakmin are both ambiguously situated while offering mirror images of one another. To anticipate matters taken up later, we can also see the outlines of a conceptual scheme of activities in the same fashion, such that: (a) gardening and hunting are antithetical to one another; (b) pig rearing and sorcery are in some sense alike while standing in a mutually inverted relation to one another. Shifting our attention to the attributes themselves, we may note several things. Firstly, we can see that while there are male dogs and female humans, the potentially possible complements (female dogs, male humans) are absent--here it seems that (without stretching things too far) humanity and femininity are in some way linked, while animality (caninity?) and masculinity are associated. Turning to the other attributes, it seems clear that the domestic/wild contrast, Telefolip/bush, and Taro/Arrow (*iman/un*) sets are all mutually redundant, forming a consistent set.

This is enough to demonstrate that we are not dealing with a haphazard or fortuitous collection of *tenum miit* or their attributes, but with an orderly and coherent system. The various details and relations outlined above will for the most part remain as loose ends for the time being, the overall point having been made. At the same time, it might be interesting to pursue some aspects of an apparent underlying dualism in the interests of drawing attention to ethnographic analogues from other parts of New Guinea.

Given the four *tenum miit*, each distinct from the other, but each with a determinate relation to all the others, it is logically (or mathematically) only necessary to discriminate between them on the basis of two binary dimensions, or a sort of "dual dualism". From Table II it is clear that attributes (1) and (2) form a single set, and that attributes (3), (4), and (5) form a single set. The first set turns basically upon whether the ancestral figure in question was some kind of woman or a male dog. This immediately evokes the notion of *kundunang* and their *dunkiil* husbands. The second set can be phrased in a number of different ways. For now I will take the Taro/Arrow division (*iman/un*) as primary since it will be convenient for the point I wish to make and is at the same time part of a consciously articulated and formalized dual division of Telefol society, that between *iman miit* (Taro base/kind) and *un miit* (Arrow base/kind). I shall have much more to say about this division in the discussion of the men's cult. For the time being, suffice it to say that all Telefol men belong to either *iman miit* or *un miit*, but not both, and that those activities associated with gardening, pig-rearing, and so on fall into the *iman miit* division, while *un miit* encompasses everything associated with hunting or warfare. Resorting to yet a third table, the four *tenum miit* can once more be arranged in terms of this twofold dualism:

TABLE III

Dualistic Schema of *Tenun Mit*<sup>6</sup>

	<u>Descended from Woman</u>	<u>Descended from Dog</u>
<u><i>Iman Mit</i></u> [Taro]	Bogelmin	Kayaalikmin
<u><i>Un Mit</i></u> [Arrow]	Atemkayaakmin	Kubrenmin

Though for reasons that will be explained further on it is incorrect to understand the *iman mit* and *un mit* division as a moiety system in the classical sense, it nonetheless accomplishes an exhaustive and dual partitioning of all men in Telefol society, with particular reference to ritual and participation in the men's cult. In this regard, the division is analogous to similar dualistic forms elsewhere in New Guinea, particularly in some of the lowland societies of the middle and lower Sepik region. For example, the Abalam divide their society into exhaustive dual divisions known as *ara*, and Kaberry specifically notes that this division is "for purposes of initiation and the ceremonial exchange of pigs and yams" (1940-41:239). Similarly, initiation into the men's cult among the neighbouring Iatmul is accomplished in terms of a dual division (but one that is quite independent of a coexisting moiety system regulating marriage) (Rubel and Rosman 1978:46-50). Further examples of dual divisions specifically associated with men's ritual may be found among the Arapesh (Mead 1947, Tuzin 1976), the Banaro (Thurnwald 1916), the Asmat (Eyde 1970), Marind (van Baal 1966), and the Bimin-Kuskusmin (Poole 1976). One particularly striking characteristic of many of the Sepik societies is that such divisions almost invariably exist alongside a distinct true moiety division regulating marriage (cf. Bateson 1958, Kaberry 1940-41, Mead 1947, Tuzin 1976, Rubel and Rosman 1978).

The fourfold *tenun mit* division, with its two dual sets, is intriguing and brings to mind structural features of many Sepik societies

where cross-cutting moiety systems--one regulating men's ritual and exchange activities, the other regulating marriage and affinity--are common. Examples of such forms in one variant or another are to be found among the Arapesh, Abelam, Iatmul, and Banaro (cf. Rubel and Rosman 1978). It would be satisfying within the aesthetic of social structural analysis if the Telefol division between *tenum mit* deriving from women, on the one hand, and dogs, on the other, were to correspond with a moiety system regulating marriage. Inconveniently, however, there is no such division in Telefol society, nor do Telefolmin talk as though there might be. Telefol marriage, as will be explained below, is basically structured according to three criteria: (a) all relatives within the first cousin range are prohibited partners; (b) the preferred form of marriage is by sister exchange; (c) there is a marked preference (both in theory and practice) for village endogamy. But in the context of marriage *tenum mit* identities are entirely irrelevant. And though sister exchange is in accord with the pattern for moiety-based systems (or any other system of restricted exchange), it can exist without the formal dual structure embodied in such systems. That dualistic tendencies are evidenced in Telefol social organization can be seen by the fact that there is a visible boundary within the village of Telefolip, separating it into upper (Telefolip proper) and lower (Bogelmin) halves. But though there are several marriage links uniting these halves, there are as many that do not, and in any event there is no significant pattern linking Bogelmin to any particular *tenum mit* in Telefolip proper (and there are, of course, many Bogelmin-Bogelmin marriages within the village). At the same time, Telefolip is (like other Telefol villages) composed of two facing rows of houses, the southwestern being called the Taro Side (*iman ilo*) and the northeastern being referred to as the Arrow Side (*un ilo*). But again, this has nothing to do with marriage or affinity.<sup>7</sup>

To take another suggestive case, the village of Kayaalikmin is in fact a double village made up of two linked villages with a tradition of previously

inhabiting one settlement. These are Ankevip and Derolengam, and there is a high degree of intermarriage between them--they are clearly each other's preferred partners *outside of themselves*.<sup>8</sup> But for both of these 'sub-villages', there is an even higher rate of marriage internally, i.e., most Ankevip men are married to Ankevip women, and most Derolengam men are married to Derolengam women. Thus, although the division of *tenu mit* is reminiscent of double-moiety arrangements of the Sepik region (where one set of moieties regulates marriage), and although sister exchange is perfectly consistent with such a system, and although there is some evidence of symmetrical dual alliance, and although there is other evidence of dualistic forms in both mythology and concrete social arrangements, none of this combined is sufficient to crystallize in an authentic moiety arrangement. All of this is reminiscent of Schwimmer's analysis of the structure of Orokaiva society, where he found that although temporary moiety-like arrangements came into being over time, they passed out of being almost as rapidly: the structural tendencies were certainly congenial to dual organization, but (for reasons which I will not discuss here) failed to precipitate a definite and permanent set of concrete social arrangements (1973:213f).

To summarize so far: we have seen how there is a definite coherence and order in the ensemble of attributes for the four *tenu mit* in Telefol society, and that this coherence is indeed of the form of a system (rather than a piecemeal collocation of categories) with a determinate structure. At least a major portion of this structure--the relation between *iman mit* and *un mit*--is articulated in the form of a comprehensive division of ritual labour which at the same time presents a logical articulation of the relations between various kinds of enterprise. This is given manifest and concrete form in the ritual division of all Telefol men into either Taro Side or Arrow Side. This sort of arrangement is strikingly similar to the dual organization of men's cults among other New Guinea cultures (particularly those of the middle



and lower Sepik). These latter are generally accompanied by a second dual division regulating marriage, which cross-cuts the first. The fourfold arrangement of *tenum mit* in Telefolmin suggests the presence of such a system as well, but despite evidence of several different dualistic tendencies in Telefol social organization, no such ordered arrangement is to be found. Thus it appears that while the ideological scheme of an overall division of labour and allocation of attributes between *tenum mit* in Telefolmin is relatively tidy and clear-cut, matters stand quite differently in the practical world of social relations. Rather than speculate on "incompletely expressed structural tendencies" or the possibility of mythic or ritual "relics" of an earlier phase of Telefol social structure, I would simply stress that the origin accounts of the various *tenum mit* postulate an order whose reality is most immediate at the level of ritual and weakest at the level of what is conventionally taken as social structure, i.e., the specification of social groupings and their interrelations in terms of kinship, marriage, or alliance. In this sense, the image or representation of the structure of Telefol society in terms of *tenum mit* may be taken as an *assertion* of order, rather than as mere *description*. In an important sense this model *than argues on the basis of the "past" about how Telefol society might have been*. This point can be amplified by a reconsideration of the ideological content and implications of the *tenum mit* origin tales.

It will be remembered that at the outset of this discussion I mentioned that all Telefolmin may be spoken of as *Afekman* or *tenum mit maagop* ('one *tenum mit*') because they all originate with and descend from Afek, the Ancestress. In its barest form this is simply an assertion of the unity of all Telefolmin. Further, it implies that this has always been so since the beginning of things. This sense of unity based on descent from Afek has practical implications in Telefol life. In the past, this was one of the bases for collective action transcending local loyalties and identities. Thus,

enemies of one Telefol village were *ipso facto* enemies of the Telefolmin as a whole. Further, one of the bases of participation by all Telefol men in the cult centred on the village of Telefolip was their common origin in this village and common descent from the woman who built it and the cult house (*the* Telefolip) after which the Telefolmin are named. More recently, it was the consciousness of common descent from Afek that served as one of the rallying points in 1975 and 1976 for agitation on behalf of the formation of a separate Telefolmin district and seat in Parliament--both of which resulted in success.

At the same time, the existence of different *tenum mit* names with separate origin narratives admits that there are different kinds of Telefolmin: first, the Bogelmin descending from Afek proper, along with the Kayaalikmin who were also present at Telefolip in the beginning, but originating from her dog. Note how this then manages to assert that there were different kinds of people at Telefolip *from the very beginning* while at the same time denying the possibility of another distinct and unrelated being present and contemporaneous with Afek, whose primacy and singularity thus remain unchallenged. This permits the recognition of diversity (which, by the way is a logical necessity at some point along the way for all accounts of a people's origins--see Leach 1969:10-11) while evading the implication that Afek was *not* the first human.<sup>9</sup> In a twofold sense this logical process is repeated in the case of the Kubrenmin and Atemkayaakmin. Here, to begin with, the existence of others outside of Telefolip is admitted, but this is only an ambiguous and begrudging admission, since the ancestors of both *tenum mit* are not fully transformed into humans until *after* their arrival at Telefolip: the Kubrenmin *dunkiil*-ancestor (not only a dog, but a wild one at that!) becomes a man after he removes his tail in the process of introducing fire-making to the Telefolip people (perhaps also contributing to their culturalization in the process?); the Atemkayaak, the *aanangen*, assumes the *form* of a true woman, but in fact is not really one until she becomes the

woman she impersonated, i.e., the wife of the Telefolip man she seduced (who becomes the father of her descendents, the Atemkayaakmin). Significantly, the founders of the "bush" *tenuu miit* become true people (and true Telefolmin) only after their entry to Telefolip, and with them they bring new skills appropriate for dealing with the "outside", whether in terms of animals of the forest or enemies in other villages (the *un at* war rite for *sepwaasi* and *biit* for *anwaasi*). Thus they both augment Telefolip and implicate it in a wider world.

If we step back a bit, then, the set of *tenuu miit* tales assert that Afek was the first human, and that Telefolmin are descended from her while saying also that Telefolip began as an internally heterogeneous settlement that was expanded by the accretion of outsiders who became Telefolmin when they settled in Telefolip. Telefolmin are thus both diverse and unitary at the same time. This proposition is strengthened by other considerations. First, men say, even if the "bush" *tenuu miit* originated outside Telefolip, they clearly intermarried with the original Telefolmin, and thus their descendants are perforce descendants of Telefolmin in the narrowest possible sense. Secondly, it is possible to reconcile diversity with the assertion of common ancestry with reference to Telefol kinship ideology. Men sometimes say that "Afek looked after all these people, they were her children". In Telefol, the word *man* (or the plural suffix *-min*) may be translated not only as 'child', but also as 'descendant'. No differentiation is made between descendants in agnatic or uterine lines, all cognates of junior generations falling under the umbrella term *man*. Further, it is common in the Telefol idiom of nurturing for one to refer to anyone whom one has fed or supported--particularly if they are juniors--as one's 'children' (*man*). Because of this, then, there need be no necessary contradiction between the acknowledgement of diverse origins for Telefolmin, on the one hand, and the assertion that all Telefolmin are the children and descendants of Afek, on the other hand.

It's now time, after this rather lengthy discussion of *tenum miit* origins and the ideological scheme of Telefol society as a whole, to move on to a more detailed consideration of *tenum miit* as the basic segmentary units of Telefol society. We may begin by noting that the Healeys define *tenum miit* in their dictionary as "clan" (1977:161).<sup>10</sup> This accords in a number of ways with Telefol usage. People speak of *tenum miit* in ways that suggest they are corporate descent groups, e.g., "the Kayaalikmin did this, or the Kubrenmin did that", etc. But as we shall see, *tenum miit* are in fact neither corporate, nor are they groups in the strict sense of the term. And though the weight of social structural analysis predisposes us to see society as a system of segments, such an analysis of the place of *tenum miit* in Telefol society is largely illusory, for the reality of *tenum miit* themselves is largely illusory. In order to make this clear, let me recount some anecdotes stemming from my early attempts to understand *tenum miit*.

I began my fieldwork in Telefolmin in Derolengam, a village that is said (along with neighbouring Ankevip) to be "Kayaalikmin". In ordinary usage, people could refer to those of Derolengam simply as the Derolengam people (*Derolengam kasel*) or as Kayaalikmin. In the first instance it became clear that the referent was in fact to members of the same village (*abiip*), i.e., a local referent. In the second instance questioning soon showed that there was the implication of common descent linking the villagers. When I asked if all the people of Derolengam were of the same *tenum miit*, the ready reply was that they were all *tenum miit maagop* ('one *tenum miit*'). So far, so good: there appeared to be an isomorphism between notions of groupings based on village membership and groupings based on descent, a good fit between locality and descent. But then things got more complicated.

I overheard a conversation one afternoon in which several villagers known to me were referred to as Kubrenmin. I asked about this, and people explained that they were Kubrenmin because they were the descendants of a

Kubrenmin woman who had married into the village over three generations ago. Still being unfamiliar with *tenum mit*, I at first thought that this was simply a means of distinguishing sub-groupings within *tenum mit*--which was partly correct--and reckoned then that these Kubrenmin constituted something analogous to a subclan of Kayaalikmin--which was incorrect. A few more days of questioning revealed that in addition to the Kubrenmin, there were also Atemkayaakmin and a few Bogelmin (as well as Kayaalikmin) in Derolengam. What was particularly puzzling was that people rejected the suggestion that the Atemkayaakmin or Bogelmin or Kubrenmin were subsidiary groupings of the Kayaalikmin. There was Kayaalikmin *tenum mit*, and, in a like manner, Kubrenmin, Bogelmin, and Atemkayaakmin *tenum mit*, all of coordinate status: it was firmly denied that one *tenum mit* could encompass another. The confusion continued when I asked several different men again if all the Derolengam people belonged to the same *tenum mit*, and the reply was once more that all the Derolengam people were all Kayaalikmin.

A brief journey I took with Dakasim proved instructive. Dakasim was one of those who had been identified as one of the Kubrenmin living in Derolengam, and he had told me that he was *both* Kubrenmin *and* Kayaalikmin, and he cited genealogical information to back up this claim in the face of my scepticism. The two of us walked out to Ulapmin in the west, where I wished to gather some comparative information on other points. On the way back, we stopped at the garden house of a friend and relative of Dakasim's. This man treated us with cordial hospitality, sharing some recently gathered *yet* (wild fig) fruit with us. As we talked, he complained that some Bogelmin had been making gardens nearby, and their poorly tended pigs were causing damage to some of our host's cultivations. Dakasim expressed the appropriate anger and sympathy at this, commenting that some of those Bogelmin ought to have one of their pigs shot as a lesson, and added that "we Atemkayaakmin" (*Atemkayaakmin nogol*) would stick together if they caused any trouble. As it turns out, no

pigs were shot and things remained fairly quiet (not unusual in Telefolmin). But what was more significant was Dakasim's claim--to another Telefolmin, not to a questioning outsider--that he was Atemkayaakmin. I at first understood this to be a polite fiction in order to affirm solidarity with the man who had been so hospitable to us along the track. As far as Dakasim's motivations were concerned, this was true--but no fiction was involved, for as Dakasim explained to me when pressed, he was authentically Atemkayaakmin and supported this (once again) with reference to an ancestor in his genealogy.

Finally, I remember another incident which demonstrated how flexible the notion of *tenum mit* "membership" can be. One man, a notorious sponger from the village of Sepkayaalikmin, had come to visit in Derolengam and was dropping broad hints that he wanted to eat some fruit pandanus (*em*), a local delicacy. In theory, people of the same *tenum mit* ought to be diffusely helpful and supportive of one another, and this includes the extension of hospitality. The man was a Kayaalikmin, and of course the people of Derolengam are all Kayaalikmin. At the time of the man's visit I knew that Beksep had some ripe pandanus fruit in his house--but he failed to offer it, or even to acknowledge that he had it. I later asked him about his refusal to offer this to the visitor, reminding him of what I had been told of relations between people of the same *tenum mit*. Beksep replied, of course, that this man was well known as one who likes to eat others' food but seemed never ready to reciprocate. But he added that while it was true that this man was a Kayaalikmin, Beksep himself was "really" Atemkayaakmin anyway. Under such circumstances it is clear that the idea of membership as normally applied to descent groups does not apply in the case of *tenum mit*. Such identities are open to a wide range of manipulation according to individual inclination under particular circumstances. And although the notion of shared descent embodied in *tenum mit* implies both solidarity and obligation, such solidarity

and obligation is no more binding than the notion of *tenum miit* membership itself.

If, in a fundamental sense, *tenum miit* are not descent groups, what are they? There are various tacks we can take in order to supply an answer. We can start by looking at a number of the criteria usually involved in the notion of descent groups and their definition. One of the first things the analyst looks for is the specification of exogamy. In terms of kinship and descent this is critical, for it ensures and specifies discreteness and allows descent groups so defined to function as units of exchange with regard to marriage (cf. Levi-Strauss 1969). Here, as I have already mentioned, we find nothing--*tenum miit* do nothing whatsoever to regulate marriage, alliance, or affinity. They are agamous, and there is no particular preference one way or another for endogamy or exogamy phrased in terms of *tenum miit*.<sup>11</sup> Another feature--one which I have not specified so far--is the particular mode of descent reckoning. Although matters are muddled by the fact that men say children prefer to follow their father's *tenum miit*--implying that a definite option of membership is exercised, as among some of the ambilineal systems of Polynesia (Firth 1957)--it is the case that one may legitimately be of several *tenum miit* simultaneously through links reckoned cognatically at any genealogical level. *Tenum miit* names are passed on through both parents and most men list themselves as belonging to three--or even four--*tenum miit*. As shown above, *tenum miit* are not discrete, but have overlapping boundaries. And though most men tend to list their father's *tenum miit* name first, this could in fact be a father's maternally-derived name as easily as a paternally-derived one. There is, in fact, what appears to be an agnatic bias present here, but this is not a simple matter and is certainly not the basis for distinguishing between degrees or qualities of "membership". Instead, the matter seems more closely tied to the male-female dichotomy and the secrecy with which all aspects of men's cult affairs are shrouded. There is a great

deal of variation in the detail and depth of genealogical recollection in Telefolmin. Most men are able to recall the names of grandparents. But this is not always the case, and some men were at a complete loss when asked for these names, while others could in fact cite genealogies of five to six generations in depth. (Interestingly, this seems largely to be a matter of personal inclination--some particularly good genealogists have extensive knowledge of such things primarily because they made a "hobby" of gathering and remembering pedigrees. Although the names of *yolam* spirits figure in genealogies, it is not necessary to know how a particular name fits in to an overall genealogical scheme.) Women and children, however, are consistently the poorest genealogists of all and few could recall the names of grandparents (let alone their siblings) on either maternal or paternal sides. Partly this seems to be because there is in fact little reason for them to be concerned about such things. But this is also partly because certain names of deceased villagers (particularly those long dead) are *amem*, secret/sacred, because their spirits (*usong*) are housed in the *yolam*, the men's spirit house. Thus, women and children are specifically excluded from instruction in genealogical lore, and this means (among other things) that there is an effective truncation of maternal genealogies unless men are particularly close to their mother's brothers. Women pass on little detailed or complex genealogical knowledge simply because they have so little knowledge to transmit. As a result, a man will in general be more familiar with the details of his father's side of his pedigree, including various *tenum mit* identities. Hence the apparent agnatic bias. At the same time, a man is still no less part of his mother's *tenum mit*, of which he will certainly be cognizant.<sup>12</sup>

One other question to consider is whether there is some non-descent criterion that might serve to restrict [effective] descent group membership and thus eliminate the organizational difficulties posed by overlapping boundaries (see Goodenough 1955). The most obvious such factor is land



tenure. Here it is tempting to offer the possibility of "core" and "fringe" membership on the basis of exploitation of a collective tract of land, something equivalent to the notion of a joint estate. But here we simply encounter the same difficulties over again, for although named tracts of land are sometimes associated with *tenum mit* as a shorthand manner of speaking, the fact is that land holdings are so complexly interdigitated and dispersed at the same time that no coherent pattern emerges. Further, informants will speedily correct any suggestion that land is collectively held: what counts is a continuous history of cultivation or pioneering, and in either case issues turn upon small garden-sized plots normally cultivated by nuclear or small extended family units. Further, it should be noted that rights to such plots can devolve through gift as well as fully bilateral inheritance, serving to fragment any initial bloc-like pattern that might emerge.<sup>13</sup>

In the end, the chief difficulty in dealing with *tenum mit* as a descent groups is that multiple membership, overlapping boundaries, the lack of any clear-cut functions (including exogamy!) makes the idea of *tenum mit* as groups so ambiguous and fuzzy as to be organizationally irrelevant. And yet... Telefolmin talk often enough about *tenum mit* as if they actually did constitute groups. How can this be?

Perhaps the answer--if indeed there is one--is to be found with recourse to the semantics of the category *tenum mit*. We can begin by taking each word in turn. *Tenum* is the Telefol word for 'man', and (as in a number of other languages) also means 'man' in the broader sense of 'humanity' or 'people'. This much is straightforward. *Mit*, on the other hand, is a much more complex term. In its most literal possible meaning it denotes a 'stalk' or 'shoot', as in a banana stalk taken into a garden for planting. Indeed, this is precisely the idiom in which the term was first conscientiously explained to me. Further, it can also mean 'base' or 'source', just as a small banana stalk is the base (and basis) of the future banana tree and the

ultimate source of its fruit. And further still, it is also the source of subsequent banana stalks to be planted in subsequent gardens. Pursuing the vegetative analogy, *mit* also means 'variety' or 'kind'--just as a particular banana stalk will produce bananas of one variety and no other (as opposed to other stalks producing other bananas). A *suum kalom* stalk will produce *suum kalom* bananas in perpetuity, and none other; *suum umkan* stalks will produce *suum umkan* bananas in perpetuity, and none other. Finally, *mit* embodies yet a further meaning which summarizes these other meanings: it is potency and efficacy of a particular kind, the basis and source of a particular efficacy. Recalling the dual ritual divisions of *un mit* and *iman mit*, this means not that the men in each division are descended from either arrows (*un*) or taro (*iman*), but that this is their 'kind' and this is their 'efficacy'--an *un mit kayaak* ('arrow base/kind man') and an *iman mit kayaak* ('taro base/kind man') are men of two different kinds, who have a particular ritual efficacy according to each of these two kinds.

Returning to *tenum mit* as such, the phrase has usages which can suggest a different understanding of the concept. If I ask a man what his *tenum mit* is (*kabmi tenum mit intaben a?*), he may answer with one of the names already mentioned. But he may also answer by reciting one of the origin narratives, and these tales themselves are his *tenum mit*: they are, in words, his source or origin (*mit*). Further, the same question may be answered by a short recitation of a man's genealogy, and a genealogy in Telefol is rendered as *tenum mit* (or *tenum magam*). Occasionally people of one *tenum mit* may be described as of 'one blood' (*isak maagop*), but often *mit maagop* suffices. Significantly, this can be rendered in three distinct ways in Pidgin: as *wanlain* ('one line/group/category'), as *wanpela as* ('one basis/origin/cause'), or as *wanpela stori* ('one story/narrative'). That is, what fundamentally unites people of the same *tenum mit* is a narrative they share concerning their origins.

Human beings differ fundamentally from plants in that they reproduce sexually, not vegetatively. And though people talk about *tenum mit* in a vegetative idiom (such that they can be planted or transplanted in different locales or 'ground' [*bagan*], they can grow in numbers after their kind), sexual reproduction inevitably means that there will be some 'mixing' (*kwegamin*) of different kinds, and--significantly--such mixing carries two organizational implications: cooperation, and confusion (cf. Healey and Healey 1977:118).

To conclude: *tenum mit* offer the appearance or illusion of descent groupings in Telefol society, but the term itself is more profitably understood as denoting descent *categories* rather than actual *groupings*. *Tenum mit* have overlapping boundaries and multiple membership consistent with a fully cognatic mode of kinship and descent reckoning, and they thus approximate the anthropological notion of "stocks" (Strathern 1977:504). *Tenum mit* have few of the usual attributes of corporateness apart from the possession of a common name and narrative of origin. Organizationally they have little immediate relevance, although on an ideological plane the ensemble of *tenum mit* narratives and ascribed ritual competences portray Telefol society as divided systematically in terms of a comprehensive scheme of complementarities. From a sociological perspective, then, the relevance of *tenum mit* is primarily symbolic, for *tenum mit* narratives assert that Telefol society is comprehensibly ordered as a whole with distinct but coherently integrated parts.

### iii. Telefol Social Structure--the Village

One of the first things that struck Karius and Champion when they crossed the Fly-Sepik divide was the size of villages in the Telefolmin region (Champion 1966). In an area of sparse and scattered population they came upon well laid-out groups of houses arranged on an orderly plan. Even today it is

difficult for the traveler in the Mountain Ok region not to be impressed by Telefol villages, and for neighbouring peoples as well, Telefolmin is indeed the metropolis.

But first impressions can be simultaneously revealing and misleading. Soon after Australian administration was established in Telefolmin another sort of picture began to emerge. Administration patrol reports repeatedly bemoan the frustrations of trying to census villages which appear to consist of a handful of old men and a number of houses with boarded-up doors. Others (e.g., schoolteachers, medical officers, missionaries) have gone so far as to characterize the Telefolmin as "semi-nomads". The villages are there clearly enough, but the villagers themselves often prove to be elusive.

In fact, Telefol settlement cannot be adequately described as *either* nucleated *or* dispersed, but is both simultaneously. In this section I will attempt to show how it is that Teléfolmin maintain nucleated villages and at the same time live for much of their lives in houses scattered throughout the surrounding countryside.

The village is the most visible element of Telefol social structure and is the only truly corporate unit of the society. As noted above, Telefol villages, or *abiip* ('village'; 'clearing') are conceived as being permanent, and this is a significant and meaningful point in Telefolmin, for if gardens or families come and go with the passage of time, villages always remain. And if *tenuu miit* comprise social categories whose reality is intangible, villages are visible realities of Telefol society. Though village sites in fact do shift a bit, perhaps a matter of a few hundred yards or so from time to time, they are nonetheless thought of as fixed in space and--because of their enduring presence--stable over time. Indeed the prototypical village, Telefolip (a contraction of *Telefolabiip*, the "Telefol village"), has remained precisely fixed since it was founded by Afek, as indeed are the original house-sites: the village and its component houses (including both

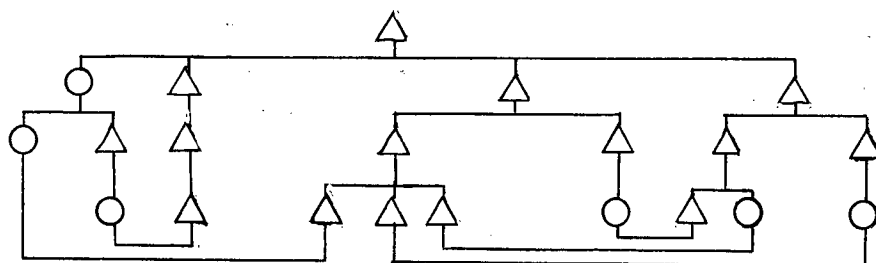
dwelling houses and the various men's cult houses) must all be rebuilt on exactly the same spots. That this is so is attested by the presence of mounds of up to a meter or more beneath the houses, created by local erosion over time. Villages are the most prominent and lasting indications of man's presence in the world. Further, to the extent that collective undertakings were made (particularly in warfare and ritual), the village was the unit of reference.

Village membership is generally defined by filiation from one or both parents, though individuals otherwise related may be village members as well. Though most usefully viewed as a local unit, the general assertion that all village members are of one *tenum miit* tends to formalize the general fact that most villagers are cognates of one kind or another. An important feature is village endogamy, which produces a very dense and reticulating network of cognatic and/or affinal links between co-villagers. For example, the following portion of a genealogy from Derolengam demonstrates the extent to which such endogamy reduplicates and renews cognatic links within the village:

FIGURE 2

Endogamy and Cognation

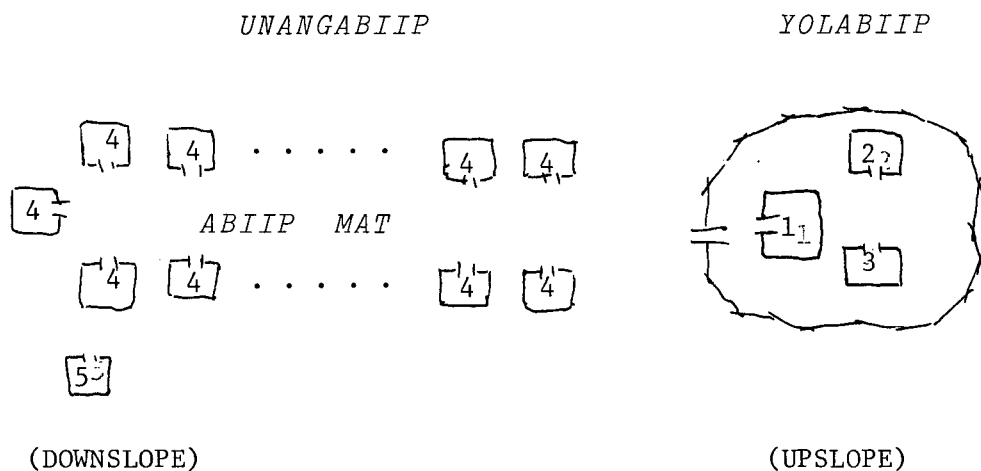
[Example from Derolengam]



As a concrete entity, the village exemplifies a number of structural dimensions of Telefol society. Telefolmin have a definite idea of what a proper village looks like, and the ideal image is diagrammed below:

FIGURE 3

Idealized Telefol Village Plan



- Key: 1. *yolam* (amogeen)  
 2. *kabeelam*  
 3. *katibam*  
 4. *unangam*  
 5. *dungam* (am katib)

The village, or *abiip*, is divided into two sectors, the *yolabiip* and the *unangabiip* ('womens' village'). The *yolabiip* containing the three *yolam* (generic for men's houses) is surrounded by a red tanket (*Cordyline* sp.) fence and is sacred and forbidden to uninitiated males and women of all ages. Within the *yolabiip* the *kabeelam* and *katibam* serve as clubhouses and occasional dormitories for young initiates and senior men respectively. The *yolam* proper is the dominant structure of the *yolabiip* and of the village as a whole. Here the bones of important residents of the village are kept, and

their spirits (*usong*) keep watch over the village in the same way as a mother looks after her children. In a wealth of symbolic ways this house is the crucial defining feature of a true village (*abiip afeen*) as opposed to an ephemeral clustering of houses. The arrangement of the village in terms of different sectors and different kinds of houses--the *yolabiip* complex for male initiates of various stages; the *unangam* for domestic units, and the *dungam* for women and newborn infants--constitute some of the fundamental divisions of the society, which are based on age, sex, and ritual status. All men begin life in the *dungam*, and with initiation enter into the *yolam* where, if they are fortunate, their spirits (*usong*) will take up permanent residence after their death.

When the houses of a village--or, more significantly, its *yolam*--are rebuilt, certain actions are performed which give us some insight into what Telefolmin would like their villages to be. On such occasions--particularly if the rebuilding of a *yolam* is involved--men will gather the eggs of the *kwaaleng* (or *kwaagen*), a bush fowl that sweeps the forest floor of leaves in order to make heaps to incubate its eggs. These eggs are broken into holes in the earth just before the doorway of each house, and by so doing men hope that the village will remain clean and tidy. Further, the eggs of the *kwaaleng* are said to have a 'heaviness' (*ilum*) deemed favourable to the growth of pigs and children. Next, men kill a small rat, *inggat*, part of which is buried at the fence surrounding the *yolabiip*, and part of which is buried before the doorway of the facing house at the opposite end of the village. This is because one finds ten or a dozen *inggat* or so in a small nest, and it is hoped that men will crowd together in the village just as these rats gather in their nests. Finally, the droppings of the *ibin*, a bandicoot-like animal, are put together with pig droppings and ashes, and all of these things are buried in the bush. The *ibin* hides its droppings, and men hope that when they have performed this act they will ensure that these things--excrement and

ashes--will always stay far from the village, which will remain clean and unsoiled. By such means Telefolmin seek to make sure that their villages will be clear spaces where many men gather and where children and pigs prosper.

Ideologically, the village receives great emphasis in Telefolmin, and in addition to the positive acts described above, there are certain prohibitions whose force derives from the aura of values associated with the village. Thus, women must avoid the plaza (*abiip mat*) during their menses lest it become sodden, muddy, and generally unpleasant. Further, Telefolmin must avoid shedding each other's blood--particularly within the confines of the village or within its houses--and failure to do so results in *amwaasi iiban*, a polluting contamination affecting all villagers and likened to rot.

In Telefol thought one's village is a place of safety, sociability and well-being. It is here that food is shared back and forth between friends, neighbours, and kin, and here one is beyond the reach of *biit* sorcerers, enemies, and whatever malign presences there may be in the bush. This is where one dances and feasts, the site of celebrations and gatherings. Clearly the village is something more than a mere settlement to Telefolmin: it is "home" with much the range of connotations we give the term.

But if the village is something more than just a settlement, it is also something less, for Telefolmin spend a great deal of their time away from home. There are no Telefolmin who do not have a village as their home and domicile, but people do not in fact "live" in their villages in our sense of the term. At any one time at least 30% of the population is likely to be spending the night in houses located in garden areas. Since gardening is organized on a household rather than village basis, the location of gardens and patterns of movement vary from household to household without any overall coordination.<sup>14</sup> Absences from villages are of varying duration, lasting from a day or two all the way up to several weeks or, in exceptional cases, months. Though it is not unusual for families to spend a few days away from the



village, longer absences are not felt to be good and may draw negative comment from other villagers. When one of my neighbours returned with his family after spending a couple of weeks in the bush, he was immediately reproached by his younger brother for being away so long: who could have known if anything (i.e., *biit* sorcery) had happened to him?

In order to understand the movement of people from village to bush and back again it is necessary to review some aspects of the Telefol agricultural system. At the outset it should be noted that Telefolmin are keen and energetic gardeners. There is no marked seasonal rhythm, and the cycle of clearing, planting, weeding, and harvesting continues unbroken through the years. Depending on the number of people in a household, each family will normally maintain between eight and a dozen gardens in as many different locations. Given the system of bush fallowing, there is a great deal of shifting from one area to another as old gardens stop producing and new ones become established.

A striking feature of the agricultural system is the extent to which gardens are dispersed, and this in part accounts for the corresponding scatter of people in family groups in the bush. Village to garden distances vary greatly, ranging from a distance of twenty minutes' walk to a remove of eight hours or so. In the case of more distant gardens it is clearly impractical for people to spend a number of hours walking, do some garden work, and attempt to return again in the same day. Taking up temporary residence in bush houses thus seems sensible in terms of minimizing the amount of time lost in simply walking from one place to another, and most distant gardens have such houses at which a family may stay overnight. The overall picture of Telefol settlement is thus one of a mobile population of gardeners whose villages serve as centrally-located "base camps" (cf. Burridge 1969:40, Barth 1975:43-4, Gell 1975:11, Oosterwal 1961).

The question arises as to why there is such an apparent scatter of bush gardens, and why the distances between villages and gardens are so great. Two sets of factors seem immediately significant, namely, the system of land tenure and the way in which variations in the environment are exploited.

Rights to land are inherited bilaterally, with a division of holdings between siblings. One important feature is that women as well as men retain full rights in garden land. This results in a fragmented pattern of land holding so that no two households will have the same set of rights (or pattern of activity) with regard to specific tracts of land. After marriage, even full siblings will be gardening in different areas because their households will exploit their spouse's land as well. There is little in the way of consolidation or reduction of holdings since effective claims depend upon fairly continuous exercise of rights, and most people feel an imperative to affirm their rights by working as many parcels of land as they can manage. In short, virtually everybody in Telefolmin has a little land in a lot of places. Again, even in the case of full siblings there is little overall coordination since they may choose to work adjoining tracts at different times, according to the exigencies of household requirements. Thus it is the exception rather than the rule for a number of households to find themselves gardening in the same areas at the same time. Each household has its own idiosyncratic constellation of gardens and claims which is the end product of generations of fragmentation and re-amalgamation as people marry, have children, and die.

This dispersion of holdings is accentuated by certain ecological factors. The Telefol environment shows relatively great variations in altitude, and this is exploited in a number of ways. Several broad ecological zones are named and distinguished according to elevation, which corresponds to a declining temperature gradient. Each zone offers particular advantages and disadvantages vis-a-vis the others. In general, taro grows more quickly in the lower and hotter *diip* zone (maturing in six to eight months), but is also

more vulnerable to blight and rot. In the cooler upper *tolim* zone taro can take as long as two years to mature, but may be left indefinitely in the ground without rotting. The intermediate *dagaan* zone offers a compromise between these two extremes. In addition to these considerations, each zone is also more or less hospitable to a range of subsidiary crops. Thus oil pandanus (*em*) does well in low country but poorly in high country, while nut pandanus (*dumin*) is well suited for high country but not low country. It is therefore advantageous for men to maintain gardens throughout the range of zones from 3500 to 6500 feet above sea level. Further, this spreading out of cultivations can also act as a sort of "insurance policy" against localized hazards since this means men will not "put all their eggs in one basket".

The system of land tenure and the exploitation of a variety of different altitudinal zones thus entails a certain amount of dispersion of holdings and would thus seem to account for the distribution of people in the bush while also accounting for the intermittent nature of village residence.

Yet some puzzles remain. A consideration of changes in the patterns of gardening through time reveals some curious circumstances. Prior to the last third of the nineteenth century it appears that the current population of Telefolmin was concentrated exclusively in Ifitaman, rather than being divided between Ifitaman and Eliptaman as is now the case. Telefolmin gained Eliptaman after exterminating the Iligimin, and the Eliptaman population now exceeds that of Ifitaman. Genealogies from both areas show clearly how, following the annihilation of the Iligimin, Telefol villages sent substantial numbers of immigrants to colonize the new territory. This indicates a major reduction of population density in the home valley of Ifitaman. Further, there was another decline of population in the 1940's as the result of an influenza epidemic. Though it is impossible to gauge the precise scale of deaths at this time, informants agree that great numbers of people (particularly the very young and the very old) died. Census records from about 1954 onwards

show the Telefolmin population to be virtually stable with a negligible increase over a period of twenty years. What makes all this curious is that, for the Ifitaman population at any rate, there has been an *extension* of the range of gardening during the past two generations. Bush areas that were previously only used for hunting and collecting are now dotted with garden clearings. Informants deny that land shortage is the motivation for clearing new tracts of bush, and given the demographic indications, this must be so. The point is accentuated by the presence of tracts lying relatively near the villages that appear to be primary forest but are in fact old gardening areas that have been uncultivated for over a generation (also noted by Gilliard 1954). In short, while people are making gardens farther and farther away, this cannot be in response to a shortage of land lying nearer at hand.

The net effect of the pioneering extension of gardening has been to increase the average distances between villages and gardens. It is difficult to pin down the reasons for this, but it is clear that this process is not dictated by ecological necessity. Some obvious factors affecting this expansion include the introduction of steel tools, which made clearing primary forest a much simpler task than in the old days; the ascendancy of Telefolmin over the neighbouring Falamin in warfare, which made outlying tracts much less risky. Pacification since 1949 has made distant bush areas much safer, and this certainly removed an obstacle to gardening far from the village. But all of this still fails to explain why people appear to deliberately locate their gardens at what seem to be impractical and inconvenient distances from their "homes".

Let us return again to the ideology of village life. The question becomes: if villages are so highly valued, why don't people take some care to see to it that they can live in them continuously? Why all this walking back and forth, why all these nights spent in isolated houses in the bush?

One clue to this is that not all garden houses are far away from the villages. One of the things that puzzled me as I became familiar with the land around Derolengam was the presence of a number of houses situated in gardens that were within easy walking distance of the village. I eventually found more than a dozen of these, all within a forty minute radius of the settlement. Many of these turned out to be built by men who for various reasons (e.g., wage employment on the mission or government stations) were not engaged in gardening in the outlying bush areas, but this wasn't always the case. All of this seemed to make no sense, since it appeared obviously easier to walk back to the village after a day's gardening than to go to the trouble of constructing a house. Whenever I questioned people about these houses, the answers were vague and unsatisfying.

One day I accompanied Dakasim to one such house that he had recently built. After a long discussion of how pleasant it was to be in the bush and hear the sounds of birds, and so on, he finally enlightened me. Life in the village is both very public and very demanding, where privacy is non-existent and sociability enjoined. Within the village, great value is placed on visiting back and forth, and this is accompanied by informal food sharing and hospitality. This is enjoyable, but it is also burdensome. If, for instance, one has a delicacy such as pandanus or perhaps a marsupial one has killed in the forest, etiquette requires that a portion be offered to anyone who drops in for a chat. This can result in warm, sociable feelings, but can also produce resentment as the shares become more numerous and the host's portion dwindles. The reason Dakasim built this particular garden house was that he wanted to be able to eat pandanus with his family in peace. He in fact had a well-practiced (and standardized) ploy to do this, taught to him by his father. In order to evade inopportune visits he would retire to this garden house where he would begin clearing underbush on the margins of this garden and then set it ablaze. This, he explained, was a smokescreen which would

serve to camouflage the smoke coming from the fire he built to heat the stones with which the pandanus would be cooked. Other villagers, even passersby on nearby tracks, would conclude that he was merely expanding his cultivation and would probably find it convenient to continue on their way without dropping in to visit. Such subterfuge is common, and occasionally even has a game-like quality to it. I was originally acquainted with such tactics by Telefol friends, who made it clear that I would have to learn these things if I were to cope with village life--especially, as some pointed out, since I had no garden houses of my own to which I could retire. (They were of course correct.)

This example may seem trivial or frivolous, but I think not. Such subversion of publicly held values is a finely performed art among Telefolmin. Men talk--publicly, at any rate--in glowing and effusive terms about the Telefol virtues of hospitality, how it is that the good man (*tenu tamal*) is a man with no possessions because he is forever giving them away to friends, how he is open to the needs of others and has a 'soft heart' (*bet bubul*). But there is an extent to which having a soft heart in Telefolmin is, as with us, equivalent to being soft-headed. And while the overt appearance of amity is carefully nurtured along, most men that I knew well complained privately--and bitterly--that they were continually sharing with and giving to others, but seemed to receive little in return (compare Barth 1975:26, 38-9).

This is a point which is both so crucial to an understanding of Telefol society and at the same time so thoroughly masked that I will spend some time adducing examples in the interests of documentation.

When Derolengam was struck by periodic disaster in the form of a tobacco shortage--nothing makes a Telefol man so glum as lack of smoke--Welagim (a special friend) stopped by my house very late one evening to give me a small bundle of the precious leaves. This tobacco was given only on his insistence that I carefully conceal it from wandering eyes when others came

to visit. He was concerned not only that friendly visits might demolish my own reserves, but also that others might enquire as to my source of supply. This could be embarrassing and costly since it was known that I had no gardens of my own, and simple deduction convinced Welagim that this would lead to a round of visits to his house with unfortunate results.

Kunilok was a frequent and welcome visitor to my house, and I would occasionally give him a tin of fish as a gift and token of thanks for his help. Whenever this happened, he would first carefully strip the label from the tin and toss it into the fire in the hearth. Then he would tuck the denuded and anonymous tin into the folds of his ragged shirt, concealing it with arms crossed over his chest. Thus rendered invisible, the tin was able to successfully negotiate the perilous passage from my door to his, where, once safely inside, he would sit down with his wife to use the fish as a garnish for the normal fare of taro and greens. Here it is important to note that Kunilok is not known as a selfish man, and in fact enjoys deservedly a reputation for contributing liberally to others in feasts or in evening visits.

From time to time I had occasion to accompany men into the bush to hunt, especially if I provided cartridges for one of the two shotguns in the village. Almost invariably the return home from a successful hunt was routed past the garden of one of the party. Here we would pause to harvest some taro to fill part of our netbags, which were lined with banana leaves (as netbags often are).<sup>15</sup> Special care would be taken to stash the possums or birds that were taken so that any casual onlooker would see nothing more interesting than an afternoon's garden work in the bag. Once back in the village I was cautioned to eat quickly or to plead illness (a sure-fire ruse) if anyone approached my house for a visit. Again, this was partly so that I could eat my food--in itself a gift--in peace, and also to evade the possibility that our success would be detected by villagers generally.

In fairness to the Telefolmin, I must point out that such carryings-on are not a simple matter of selfishness and are the consequences of the virtual impossibility of directly denying anything to fellow villagers. Here men are in a dilemma of sorts because they must continually give to ensure amity, but at the same time there are few means short of the termination of relationships (or violence, which leads to the same thing) to translate the apparent good will of others into the satisfaction of one's own needs. While publicly avowing the virtues of generosity among co-villagers, and while being seen to do so, men privately feel victimized by their neighbours who, in the words of one man, "come together like ants whenever I have something good to eat".

One of the main ways that people deal with such problems is to resort to concealment and deception to evade the possibilities of uncomfortable situations, and as we shall see below, this strategy is also employed in conflicts that would otherwise result in disputes. Concealed consumption of valued foods allows one to have one's cake (or possum) and eat it too, and is the natural result of the publicly emphasized values of amicability and sensitivity to others' needs. This was encapsulated in the comments of one of the younger men who had been to a town on the coast. There he saw restaurants and lunch bars, and was scandalized. How did these people avoid shame, he asked. They ate all sorts of good food openly, in the plain sight of everyone. What would they do if a friend came and asked them for some of their meal? The problem for him was not simply that some enjoyed good meals while others ate nothing at all, but rather that this was done *publicly*. For him this was doubly bad, for the diners were also risking having to share their meals even if they were able in the process to avoid shame or embarrassment. Clearly, such people lacked common sense as Telefolmin formulate it.



To return to the problem of where people spend their time, Telefolmin often explain lengthy sojourns in the bush by saying that the eating is better there. Primarily this refers to the various kinds of small game (e.g., marsupials, lizards, snakes, frogs, and birds) that may be had just beyond one's doorstep. What is interesting about this is that, for the most part, similar game may also be found closer to home, albeit perhaps not quite as readily. But in the bush there is no question of having to share this with fellow villagers, and household consumption in the bush is untrammelled by the demands of village hospitality and sociability. Absences from the village tend to insulate the household from some of the pressures of village life. That this is so was tacitly acknowledged in an impromptu harangue by old Atiksep to his fellow villagers. He was complaining in particular about how some of the younger men conducted themselves in the village, especially their tendency to devote an unseemly amount of time and attention to their immediate families (especially their wives) at the expense of more general sociability. Here is what he had to say:

"You young ones spend all your time with your wives, but our way is that this is for the bush--in the village you should be sociable and talk and visit with your friends. When you finish eating, you must visit, not fasten the door and stay in your house with your wife. You fasten the door and eat while others run around outside like dogs. This is no good. You can't just eat and copulate with you wives--save time and energy for other things!"

Here it is worth noting that women and sexuality are held culpable for the deterioration of village life, a point to which I will devote some attention later. For the present it is enough to remark that sociability and domestic interests seem to be at odds. The point is nicely made by a remark made to Wesani by his mother. She told him, "you always have lots of friends in your house". This was generally true (Wesani is now the Member of Parliament for Telefolmin), but was not meant as a compliment on Wesani's popularity. Instead, old Konungen was complaining that Wesani was neglecting her and his

wife and children. When Telefolmin say, then, that the eating in the bush is better than in the village, we must understand this in the light of these problems.

The theme of avoiding uncomfortable situations by retiring to the bush is evidenced in more dramatic ways. I spent some time trying to find information on disputes. This proved to be frustrating because, unexpectedly, Telefolmin seem to dispute only rarely. Things happen, of course, that would in most societies lead to trouble and some sort of attempt to resolve it. But while I heard of such events, disputes about them or attempts at redress seemed to be rare. At the same time I was struck by the general sense of amity and harmony within the village. But as my familiarity with the undercurrents of village life grew, I found that there were grievances and resentments enough, but that they almost never rose to the surface.

Telefol society has a paucity of devices for dealing with conflicts between co-villagers. Partly this must be related to the fact that leadership and exchange relations along the lines of the "big man" system so familiar for Melanesia is so poorly developed as to be non-existent for all intents and purposes. There is no one with the moral authority to impose settlements, nor is there a well-developed system of compensation for various offences. The dense fabric of cognation between villagers and the absence of clear kinship groupings which would prescribe a priority of loyalties makes it difficult for individuals to solicit support in any dispute with another villager. Instead, since everyone is related to both principals where such grievances arise, there is a marked tendency for third parties to avoid committing any support one way or another. In circumstances such as these, it is often futile for individuals to risk an open breach. In the few cases where I witnessed an outburst between neighbours, there was no attempt made by others to intervene, and everyone went about their business as though nothing had happened. Such instances are not common, and the individual who tries to

carry grievances into the public arena runs the risk of making a fool of himself. It is more common for those who have grievances with each other to simply avoid each other. And this is most easily done by retiring to one's gardens until either a resolution has been achieved or tempers cool. A few cases will serve to illustrate:

Just before Independence Day in 1975, the villagers of Derolengam gathered together to see what they would do for the celebrations. Wesani, who had more experience with government and the outside world than anybody else, decided to tell people what kinds of activities ought to be going on for such an event. So he talked about women's basketball, and suggested that men begin practicing to form a village soccer team. While this was going on, people sat round in little clusters chatting to each other. Some of the younger men pantomimed a weight-lifting muscle man, and Robinok nearly staggered into a knot of gleeful spectators under his imaginary weight. Yeni and Onasep were having a mock fight after Yeni jokingly refused to give Onasep his cigarette. In the midst of all this, Detukmoosep rose to his feet, cleared his throat and began to tell people that Timogen's pig ate his garden. Timogen was inside her house, and without bothering to come outside shouted back that only eight taro were eaten, and in any event, her pig wasn't the only one that caused the damage. Bufalok then stood up and said that Tiki's wife's pig had eaten one of Wesani's gardens in Ninipbil, but that Tiki's wife had denied this and gave Wesani nothing back. Tiki's wife stood up to say that she had been thinking about this, and might replace at least some of the lost taro stalks. By this time Wesani was upset that his talk about Independence Day had been interrupted, and said that these things were these people's own affair and had nothing to do with anyone else. Having said this, he turned on his heel and left while others continued to talk about other things. All the while Detukmoosep was standing in the centre of the clearing and trying in shouts and mumbles to get others to hear his case. He was completely ignored. Dakasim stood up to shout to others that people are always crying about pigs and taro stalks, pigs and taro stalks, and that *he* was not concerned about such things--a pig of his caused trouble and so he shot it, right in the middle of his own house! Then Aamisep said something else about cleaning up the village and finding a soccer ball. But by this time, people were already wandering away in twos and threes to set off for their gardens. Dakasim continued shouting, to nobody in particular, that he was tired of complaints about pigs anyway, and would beat the next person to bring pig trouble up. In the end, Detukmoosep was left standing in the clearing alone and in silence.

In this, as in other attempts to resolve grievances in public, the net result for the aggrieved party is nothing but frustration, an experience most Telefolmin can recall from childhood. If a child is demanding or troublesome, a father can simply walk off into the forbidden confines of the *yolam*, while a mother may simply pick up her netbag and bush knife and head for the garden--leaving an enraged, sullen, and impotent child in their wake. There is little to be gained by public disputing or public appeals for support, if for no other reason than that the public disappears into the bush with numerous pressing tasks.

Pigs and their depredations are the source of many complaints. One case involving Dakasim shows a far more typical response than Detukmoosep's:

Dakasim went out to Ninipbil (about four hours' walk away) to inspect a taro garden he had planted some months previously. When he got there he found much of the garden destroyed, obviously the work of a pig. After checking on the activities of fellow villagers, he concluded that Kunilok's pigs must have been responsible. Kunilok had been working a garden only about a half hour's walk away, and it was known that he had taken his pigs with him. Dakasim did not confront Kunilok with this, but mentioned his suspicions to Beksep, who is Kunilok's nephew (= 'child' in Telefol) and Dakasim's cousin's husband. Beksep later told me that Kunilok's pigs had indeed done the damage, and that Kunilok intended to give Dakasim a share of one of the pigs when it was killed. Dakasim was cynical about all this, suspecting that it would be a long time before Kunilok killed one of these pigs, while in the meantime Dakasim's taro was still ruined. Dakasim mentioned the possibility of taking the matter before the administration court, but never pursued this. In the meantime, Kunilok found it convenient to begin clearing new gardens in Dugunbil, where Dakasim claimed no land. Thus, Kunilok remained absent from the village for two weeks or so. By the time he returned, Dakasim had become philosophical about his loss: no doubt one of his own pigs would eventually ravage a garden belonging to Kunilok, and then they would be even. In the meantime, there was no point in trying to do much about it. A few months later, one of Dakasim's pigs did get into a garden belonging to Kunilok, who made no complaint.

Yet another case involving Dakasim and two of his brothers serves to underscore the fact that Telefolmin like to put some distance between themselves and troubles.

This case involves Dakasim and two of his brothers. Wesani, the youngest of the three, was at the time a pastor for the Baptist mission. Bufalok, the elder, is prominent in the activities of the men's cult. Wesani began quarrelling with some old men in the *yolam*, ostensibly about participation in church services. The old men sat silently, but Bufalok upbraided Wesani for his abusive behaviour, at the same time reminding Wesani of a debt he still owed Bufalok after much time. Dakasim then intervened, saying that Bufalok was always speaking harshly to his brother Wesani--if they wanted to fight, Dakasim suggested, they should go outside and fight so that others might be left in peace. There were no further words at this time, and each retired to his own house for the night. The next day Bufalok set off for some gardens half a day's walk away, where he remained for six weeks. Dakasim decided to clear some new gardens in Balamtigin, three hours' walk in the opposite direction, where he remained for about ten days. Wesani went to the mission and got permission to carry on evangelical work for two weeks among the Dulanmin, a neighbouring tribal group. By the time the three of them had again taken up residence in the village, there was no further discussion of the matter and they got on--to all appearances--amicably.

In these, as in many other cases, there is no true resolution of the difficulties involved. In fact, it is hard to imagine how this might happen, for there are few means of doing so. Instead, one or more of the principals seems to "opt out" of village life until such time as it is possible to carry on with some semblance of good feeling. Where this is impossible, one of the parties may elect to leave the village altogether:

Maakis, the village councillor, was caught in adultery with the wife of Alumeyok, his cross-cousin. When Maakis realized he'd been discovered, he ran off to live with Peter, his wife's sister's husband from another village and a fellow councillor. Alumeyok was enraged, and demanded that Maakis return to face him in a stick-fight, the only traditional means of settling the matter. Maakis was physically smaller, and claimed to fear for his life. Most villagers thought this a bit overdramatic on his part and suggested that the real reason for his refusal to return to the village was shame (*fitom*). In the meantime, most of the villagers themselves found the situation uncomfortable, since Alumeyok kept soliciting people for support even though people were related to both Alumeyok and Maakis at the same time. For a few weeks the village was virtually deserted while grass grew in the plaza. Eventually a cash compensation was arranged by the intervention of the Assistant District Commissioner, and at this point most villagers were relieved to consider the matter closed. Alumeyok, however, was still angry with Maakis, though he

promised not to resort to violence if Maakis were to return to the village. When I left the field six months later, Maakis had still not returned, but had declared his intention to permanently live apart. Derolengam was thus left in the peculiar position of being represented by a councillor who was no longer a member of the village.

It is clear that there are many factors, both ecological and organizational, which favour the dispersion of the population in shifting homesteads in the bush. In fact, it sometimes seems a wonder that Telefol villages, whose reality is at least partly illusory, exist at all. How is it that all these dispersive tendencies don't result in total disintegration?

Certain advantages of village life are immediately apparent. Foremost among these is the security villages offered against attack by enemies in the days of warfare. This was a paramount concern in the old days, and it seems clear that the organizational framework afforded by village life was one of the means by which Telefolmin held their own (and often prevailed) against their enemies. Even now, after the cessation of warfare, villages offer security from sorcery attacks. Old men liken people who stay away too long from the village to cassowaries. Rootless, such people wander through the bush, like cassowaries. And like cassowaries, they may fall victim to hunters (*biit* sorcerers).

There is a more positive sense in which village life is beneficial to Telefolmin. Though I defer a detailed discussion of the *yolam* for a later chapter, it is worth noting some pertinent aspects here. First and foremost is that the *yolam* is the anchoring point for the village, the Telefol *sine qua non* of village definition. In the old days, villages sometimes were torn apart by quarrels (most often over women) and this occasionally resulted in the secession of some of its members. Often these people would establish a hamlet around some gardens in the bush. But what seems to have happened is that eventually things were patched up and people returned, or else they joined with an already extant village. Sometimes, however, such encampments

would be the nucleus of a new village, a true *abiip*. In these cases, the establishment of a real village was signalled--and in the Telefol view, empowered--by the building of its own *yolam*. The *yolam* is the repository of sacred relics (*men: amem*) necessary for the performance of rites that underwrite well-being for the village as a community, and it is also the home of the spirits of former residents (*usong*) who, among other things, watch over the village and its people. A village without a *yolam* makes no sense, and a *yolam* without people makes little sense either (though some, including the Opkeemin to the southwest, apparently do this). The *usong* are men--particularly old men, in fact--and like all men (in the Telefol view), they dislike being lonely and neglected and abandoned. Though they are not particularly happy about the presence of women and children, to whom they are dangerous and from whom they must be segregated, they both enjoy and require the company of other men. Youths become men in the long and complex series of initiations (*ban*) which introduce them to the *yolam* and its company and admit them into participation in manhood. Thus, villages need *yolam*, *yolam* need men, and men need each other and the *yolam* to be who they are.

Apart from the series of *ban* that require the assembled male community for their performance, there are a number of observances that require individuals to be present in the village. For example, mortuary customs require the assembly of all villagers after the death of one of their number, and the members of the village are, among other things prohibited from entering gardens for a certain number of days, while the making of garden fires is prohibited for an even longer period of time. Likewise, the father and mother of a newborn infant are also prohibited from going to the bush until after a specified period of time. Though births and deaths are relatively infrequent, menstrual regulations require that a woman return to the village menstrual and birth hut (*dungam*) during her period, and it is also felt that her husband should not attempt to hunt or clear gardens during this time.

This means, in effect, that each household containing women of reproductive age must return to the village at least once a month. Though a full discussion of such regulations is reserved for a later section of this chapter, they form a set of tabus which serve to regulate conduct, and one of the most elaborate sets of tabus in Telefol society governs the consumption of foods of various kinds. As we shall see later, a number of foods are restricted not only in terms of who may eat them, but where they may be eaten, and many of these may only be eaten in the village.

It is now time to summarize what our discussion of the village shows so far. To begin with, we can note that the village is the only truly corporate element of Telefol society, and to the extent that the society can be conceived as made up of segments, these segments are villages. The village in Telefolmin is endowed with a number of ideologically significant features, including permanence, security, and the presence of a *yolam* for initiated men and a *dungam* for women of childbearing age. Further, the village is the scene of Telefol sociality, most evident in the plaza or clearing towards which all houses face. This is the *abiip mat*, the village 'stomach' or 'middle', and it is here that domestic pigs are slaughtered and distributed at periodic feasts, and it is also here that people decorate themselves and dance by firelight. Finally, the members of a village are all said to be of one *tenum mit*, an assertion that implies a unity in terms of origins and suggests that in some way or another all villagers are kinsmen. And though, as we have already seen, *tenum mit* identities are more profitably understood as ideological categories than true groupings, the fact is that virtually all villagers are cognates of one another and can demonstrate such relationships with recourse to genealogy if pressed. This, in turn, is largely a reflection of the practice of village endogamy which both renews and replicates a complex web of cognation within the village.



Having noted all these things, however, it is also necessary to point out that Telefol villages face a number of difficulties that seemingly call their structural integrity into question. The most obvious evidence of this is the fact that the component households of the village are almost never in continuous residence in the village. Instead, most people spend considerable amounts of time living in isolated bush houses located near far-flung gardens. From the point of view of an overall settlement pattern, then, this reflects a "two-tiered" pattern of settlement, one permanent and nucleated (the village), the other shifting and dispersed. While this is to a certain extent consistent with the local regime of shifting cultivation in a varied and differentiated physical environment, such considerations will not suffice to explain the existence of such a pattern. In addition, we must consider a system of land tenure that serves to fragment holdings and militate against the formation of coherent collective patterns of land exploitation. And while it is tempting to postulate land shortage as a factor to explain the Telefol tendency to expand the range of cultivation (and hence, the distance from village to garden), a cursory inspection of the demographic and agrarian history of Telefolmin shows that land is, if anything, abundant rather than scarce (at least over the last several decades of Telefol history).

Shifting our attention from ecological to organizational and structural features, the picture becomes clearer. The two tiers evident in settlement pattern correspond to two tiers of Telefol social structure: the household, on the one hand, and the village, on the other. One aspect of great importance to our understanding of Telefol society--and a potentially important theoretical point as well--is that while the relation of household to village is basically one of incorporation, such that the village subsumes various households within its scope, this incorporation seems to be problematic. Instead of the general sort of "merging" or "nesting" relation generally expected between higher and lower order units in a segmentary model,

the relation between household and village in Telefol society displays a dialectical character, and--at least from the standpoint of food distribution and consumption--may be seen as a relation fraught with tension and contradiction. Thus, for instance, men are in the position of being expected to provide open-handed generosity to visitors from other households (such visitors invariably being other men), while at the same time they are obliged to look after the interests of their own household. Here we find the outlines of a deep ambivalence manifested in a diverse range of domains of Telefol culture. For now it will suffice to draw together some of the strands of this situation in terms of a brief statement of opposed dimensions:<sup>16</sup>

Village		Bush (Garden)
Centre		Periphery
Sociality		Domesticity
Collectivity	versus	Individuality
Publicity		Privacy
Constraint		Autonomy
Men		Women and Children

Though I will elaborate on some of these oppositions in the next two sections, another look at some of the more visible aspects of the Telefol village plan will serve to underscore some of the salient features of the scheme.

We may start with a consideration of the location of the women's menstrual and birth house, the *dungam*. As noted, the *dungam* stands beyond and outside the oval of inward-facing dwelling houses (*unangam*), and is in fact on the very margins of the bush and no longer, strictly speaking, within the *abiip* itself, which means both 'village' and 'clearing'. Telefolmin are normally scrupulous about keeping the clearing itself free of grasses and stray seedlings, but the *dungam* is almost invariably surrounded by grass. Its position is clearly marginal (or liminal) between bush and village, a point of some significance since it is the place of birth and point of entry for all children into Telefol society. But from the point of view of the *abiip* itself, the *dungam* is already located in the bush (*sep*) and people will

indicate this in everyday speech. Though the reasons for this particular location need not detain us here, we can see that it effects in a particularly concrete form the association of femininity (especially with regard to child-bearing capacities) with the bush and the periphery. This aspect is further reinforced by an architectural peculiarity of *dungam*, since they alone of all the houses have only a single hearth--all Telefol dwelling houses and cult houses have twin hearths. That this is a central notion for Telefolmin can be observed not only by an inspection of houses, but also by watching young girls "play house": each sets up a little clay hearth in which they cook imaginary or real food, so that it may be exchanged, and in each case the girls pair off and arrange such play hearths in twos. But the single hearth in the *dungam* is explained--perhaps in too facile a manner--by saying simply that a woman goes to the *dungam* alone, not in the company of others. Interestingly, the only other house form in Telefolmin that has only a single hearth is the bush house (*sebam*) that individual families make near their forest gardens, and this is explained by saying that only one hearth is needed since only one family will use the house.

In the case of the *dungam* we can see in such details the concrete expression of some of the dimensions outlined above in the linkage of femininity (and the most extreme state of childhood, infancy) with a spatially peripheral location (said to be *sep*, the 'bush') and the most extreme form of isolation and privacy, since the *dungam* is the only Telefol house form that is regularly and normatively occupied by a single individual at a time.

When we shift our attention to the ordering and arrangement of dwelling houses (*unangam*) *per se*, we find similar notions reiterated and amplified. (Here it may aid the reader to refer to the diagram of the *unangam* floor plan, (Fig. 1 above!)) At the outset we can recall that the dwelling house is marked by a concentric floorplan in which the adult men (normally two) of each component household occupy the centre (*miliil*, 'central/male

floor area') between the twin hearths, while the next concentric zone outside is the area immediately beyond the hearths, the women's floor (*digim*), which they share with children and domestic pigs at the outermost edges. This concentric scheme thus implies a gradient of social beings moving from the centre to the periphery: men → women → children → domestic pigs. Though I will do no more than note this for now, this gradient suggests a quasi-hierarchical arrangement along a dimension of declining sociality.

Parenthetically, we might note that such a scheme of arrangement seems to be widespread in New Guinea, recognizable variants of which are to be found among the Ok-speaking Sibil peoples (Pouwer 1964, 1966b; Brongersma and Venema 1962: Plate 4, pp. 88f), the Umeda of the Waina-Sowanda area (Gell 1975), and the Kaluli and Etoro of the Mount Bosavi region (Schieffelin 1976:33, Kelly 1976: 38). Further, the Telefol arrangement also encodes the themes of collectivity/sociality and individuality/domesticity since the men (though they are of different households) sit and eat together, while the women (and their charges, the pigs and children) are apart and conduct their own tasks of cooking and feeding separately.

The same ideas are in evidence from a brief examination of the village as a whole. Dwelling houses, it will be recalled, are termed *unangam*, 'women houses', and the portion of the village set apart for dwellings is known as the *unangabiip*, the 'women's village'. This stands in opposition to the men's sector, the *yolabiip*, which is bounded and contained within a red cordyline fence (*tobaadaam*). Here we may simply note that the *unangam* of the village in fact tend to surround the *yolabiip*. More evidently, the dwelling houses are both numerous and separate, are first and foremost domestic structures belonging only to the occupants, while the houses within the *yolabiip* belong to the (male) community as a whole, and cannot be said to belong to any individual. Men are quite conscious of this, and in fact explain one architectural peculiarity of the *yolam* in such terms. Though most

of the basics of *yolam* and *unangam* construction are virtually identical, there is one difference that cannot be accounted for in terms of practicalities, but must instead be understood in terms of the ideological relation between the two. The exterior walls of *unangam* are called *am utuu*, and consist of lashed split timbers. By contrast, the walls of all *yolam* are made of a continuous row of unsplit timbers which are in fact houseposts (*am kun*, 'house bone/strength'). Part of this refers to the notion that the *yolam* is seen as the repository and source of the collective strength of the village. But with reference to the contrast between the *yolam* and the *unangam*, men point out that the *yolam* is whole (*aligum*, 'complete, all') while the *unangam* are many and separate, or divided (*tagang*).

To return to our overall understanding of the village in Telefou social structure, we now see that it is founded on the contradiction between the rather insular and narrow interests of households and the broader interests of community as a whole. This is evident at the level of the experiences of everyday life, especially in terms of food sharing and hospitality. But it is also clear that this relation of opposition goes beyond the unformulated stuff of experience and is embodied and encoded in the ideologically ordered and concretely manifest arrangement of living spaces within the village. Further, the household tier is identified ideologically (and practically) with the bush, and all of these are linked in some way with women. In organizational terms, then, we have a tension between the autonomy of the household and the collectivity of the village, and this is restated on an axis aligning men with community interests. Here the sexual dichotomy, which is always heavily marked in New Guinea, becomes a sort of structural fulcrum upon which the organizational tension between centricity and dispersion, integration and fission turns. (And, as is also common throughout New Guinea, the women are--publicly at least--tied to the negatively weighted side of things).

To return to the consideration of disputes--or rather, their striking absence--the Telefol village seems to offer a placid aspect, free of wrangling and discord, but this is in fact a carefully nurtured illusion, accomplished through what is in effect sleight of hand. This juggling act requires a certain amount of social dexterity, and Telefolmin are in fact consummately tactful and circumspect in their dealings with fellow villagers. The chief mechanism by which disputes remain invisible is, as in the Chinese proverb, through forbearance, forbearance, and more forbearance as people resort to silence, extended absences, and general avoidance in order to distance themselves from sources of grievance and unpleasant or shameful scenes. Here, then, we see that village harmony is achieved not through the forcing or resolution of issues, but instead through concealment. And while on one level this may serve to strengthen the village in so far as it banishes and exorcises open conflict from the village arena, it does so at the expense of fostering and augmenting the very process of dispersion and scattering which threatens the village from other quarters. Thus it is possible to see that Telefol society is forever caught between dispersion and aggregation, and that paradoxically, the village is itself the source of its greatest difficulties. Village solidarity is then to a certain extent mythical, and given this, it is perhaps appropriate that so much of its definition hinges upon the world of men's ritual and their exclusive preserve, secret myths. The truth of the matter is that Telefolmin cannot live in villages, yet they can't live without them.

#### iv. Organizational Aspects of Entropy

The previous two sections have shown certain features of Telefol social structure to be problematic. At the plane of ideology, for instance, *tenum mit* offer the appearance of a splendidly comprehensive and systematic societal division of labour--certainly enough to warm the cockles of any

structuralist's heart. At the same time, however, this scheme turns out to be deceptive and illusory on the organizational level because the *tenum miit* overlap and merge into one another so that it is impossible to distinguish one from another except at the level of narrative. As social groups they simply do not exist (see Wagner 1974). With reference to the village we find a clearly demarcable social group, but again certain problems arise, for despite a heavily concentric orientation (cf. Pouwer 1966a), there is a strong dispersive and centrifugal tendency in the actual pattern of Telefol settlement. On the one hand we begin with an image of distinct entities (*tenum miit*) that appear to collapse into one another, and on the other we have a solidary and unitary entity (the *abiip*) which seems on a daily basis to be on the verge of fragmentation, disorganization, and evanescence. And though Telefol society seems in fact to have been fairly stable--perhaps even remarkably so in the general run of New Guinea societies--there is nonetheless the sense that things are in a jumble and could become even more so. This sense is part of what I have in mind when I use the word "entropy".

In this section I will show how, in organizational realms, we can see entropy and attempts to deal with it in Telefol life. Here I would like to illustrate the problem in a consideration of reciprocity--particularly in terms of women and marriage arrangements--in Telefol society.

Marriage in Telefolmin is seen expressly in terms of reciprocities. Discussions of marriage are almost always phrased in terms of the giving or receiving of women, and many of the details of marriage arrangements focus upon the ways in which the bestowal of a woman (cf. Craig 1969) is to be reciprocated. Ideally, a woman given in marriage represents a loss to her near kin (*isak atok*, 'blood part') that can only truly be made good by the receipt of a woman in return. Such marriages are termed *unang abu*, 'woman exchange/reciprocation'. *Abu* also has the meaning of 'bearing' or 'reproducing', as in the sense of 'bearing fruit' or 'coming to fruition' (the

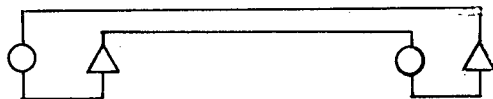
idiom refers most specifically to fruiting trees—see Healey and Healey 1977:4). This conveys the sense of satisfying completion when such an exchange is successfully concluded, and we can also see from this view how reciprocities can be seen in terms of the same metaphor; something given is like the act of seeding, as it were, a relationship that only bears fruit when what is given has been returned. Telefolmin extend this metaphor in a standard rebuke offered young men who seem to be seeking wives where they have no claims based on previous marriages: "go and follow your own *tol* fruit (*kalapmi tol aboldiim uyo feen unala*)". The *tol* is a reddish fruit which splits and drops its seed when ripe, and a young man interested in marrying would be well advised to chase up the seeds of his own *tol* fruit, that is, to seek a woman from people to whom he has given one.

This scheme corresponds in formal terms with sister exchange or what Levi-Strauss has termed direct or restricted exchange (1969). One of the properties of such a system is that (ideally, at any rate) wife givers and wife takers are symmetrically related and are in a state of formal equivalence vis-a-vis each other, since each receives from the other what they have given. Here we may note that Telefolmin, in common with other New Guinea peoples, place great value on moral equivalence (Burridge 1969, Read 1955), and this is particularly marked in reciprocities of all kinds. In addition to symmetry, such forms of marriage are also characterized by an implicit dualism; in theoretical terms the system requires only two parties to the exchange (giver/receiver and receiver/giver). This carries with it not only the implication of balance but also of closure, for unlike systems of indirect or generalized exchange (where any two parties may be either wife taker or wife giver vis-a-vis each other, but not both) the entire transaction can be completed without recourse to a third party to supply the replacement for a woman given in marriage. These features can be illustrated simply in the following diagram:



FIGURE 4

## "Sister" Exchange



Here we might draw attention to some other general features of such systems as outlined by Levi-Strauss. The closure of a cycle of exchange is accomplished directly, and this entails a minimum of risk that the loss of a woman will fail to be made good. At the same time, this low risk requires a minimum of trust between the parties to the transaction. The debt incurred in receiving a woman is promptly and directly repaid. We may suppose that such an arrangement is advantageous to the parties to such marriage exchanges, but at the same time it has certain inherent limitations in terms of the structure of society as a whole, for this convenient security comes at the cost of renouncing the prospect of a widely ramifying chain of affinal alliances. If the spirit of the incest tabu is to deprive families of full self-sufficiency (in terms of marriage) by forcing them to look beyond themselves for reproduction, then sister exchange is minimal and begrudging compliance with this imperative since families only need look outside themselves in a very narrow sense. The general aim is for immediate restoration of the imbalance created by the loss of a woman along the shortest possible "circuit". Such systems, then, are marked by a high degree of relative closure, being almost involuted in character, and are (incidentally) at home with the spirit of endogamy that characterizes Telefol villages.

Unlike a number of otherwise similar systems, Telefol marriage requires that bridewealth (*unang kun*, 'woman payment/bone') be paid in addition to the reciprocation of a woman. Such payments are relatively small

by the standards of most New Guinea highlands societies (see Glasen and Meggitt 1969). The core of such payments is obligatorily made up of strings of small cowries (*bonang*, 'small cowries' or *bonang amit*, 'small cowries permanent'), which are usually in lengths of about a cubit or so. Though nowadays *bonang* are assigned a conventional value of between two and six dollars (depending on length), it is in fact exceedingly rare for Telefolmin to sell them for cash, and a theoretically equivalent sum of cash can in no circumstances substitute for *bonang* in bridewealth. Though there is a fair range of variation, most bridewealth payments include at least five or six *bonang*. In addition to this, other articles are added to the payment. Generally, in order of preference, they are: traditional stone adzes (*fubi* or *mook*), nowadays replaced by steel axes purchased from the tradestore; bows (*unuuk*) of black palm and arrows (*un*); bark netbags (*men*); and, again nowadays, cash. (Such items are generally referred to as *mufekfek*, 'things', while only *bonang*, cash, and occasionally *fubi* and *unuuk* are classed as *tisol*, 'valuables'). Ideally the total number of items in the payment should come to twenty-seven (*deng* or *kakkat*), the base of the Telefol counting system, signifying completion.

A point that must be emphasized here is that the payment of bride-wealth does not eliminate the obligation of the groom's kin to provide a woman in exchange for the bride. Telefolmin are quite explicit about this. There is no appropriate return for a woman given in marriage other than the reciprocation of another woman, just as there is no appropriate compensation for a death other than a reciprocal killing. Bridewealth then is not to be understood as compensation for the bride *per se* (though Telefolmin adopt conventional usage in Pidgin and describe the process as akin to 'purchase', i.e., *baim meri*). Instead, it is viewed as an attempt to mollify and pacify the bride's kin in the face of their anger at her loss and is seen as essential for the establishment of good relations between affines, who adopt the

appropriate kin terms (and name tabus) when bridewealth is paid. And while it is not unusual but common for a woman's kin to display anger over her marriage, especially if any of the circumstances are (as is sometimes the case) irregular, all harsh words must forever cease when bridewealth is paid and accepted.

Bridewealth payments do not exhaust the transactions at marriage, but rather lead to subsequent ones, for the bridewealth itself must be balanced by a return payment from the family of the bride to that of the groom. This payment takes the form of pigs killed and presented to the groom and his kin by the bride's family in proportion to size of the bridewealth. This is gauged particularly in terms of the number of *bonang* handed over, at the rate (ideally) of one domestic pig per *bonang*, which is the conventional equivalence of *bonang* and pigs generally.<sup>17</sup> This pork is given so that the groom may in his turn compensate those who contributed to the bridewealth payment on his behalf, and is also in some sense felt to be a sort of substitute for potential rights or claims they might make over the bride, a means of forestalling such claims and holding them in abeyance. Men explain this by saying simply that one may not cut up, divide, or share a vagina in the same way that one may share out a pig.

These exchanges complete the major transactions involved in marriage, and the union is sealed in a moral sense when the husband accepts and eats a cooked taro handed to him by his wife in the presence of others. There are, however, further claims arising out of the marriage, as we shall see.

So far I have referred rather obliquely to the kin, families, or people of the bride and groom. This vagueness is deliberate, for apart from the immediate parents and siblings of the bride and groom it is extremely difficult to specify with any clarity or precision who will take part in the

transaction, especially in the assembly of bridewealth items and their consequent distribution. Here Telefolmin themselves are vague. *Tenum mit* identities are, as we have seen, rather ambiguous and nebulous; in regard to the organization of marriage exchanges, the same holds true. There is no obligation (in terms of contributing to exchanges) or right (in terms of receiving) pertaining to *tenum mit*.

Telefolmin count close cognates as *isak atok* ('blood part'), and this term can be understood to indicate a person's near bilateral kindred. One's parents, children, siblings, and first cousins are invariably counted as *isak atok*, and as such are all prohibited marriage partners. But beyond the range of parents' siblings (and their descendants), it becomes difficult to determine just where one's *isak atok* leave off--like kindreds in most societies, *isak atok* are egocentrically defined and their outer limits tend to fade and fuzz out according to the vagaries of memory and the closeness (in other terms) of relations. In any event, although marriage is definitely prohibited between *isak atok* within first cousin range, there is no specific obligation to participate in marriage exchanges phrased in terms of *isak atok*. A man's father is expected to contribute substantially to his son's bride-wealth payments, and his brothers ought to. But even here it turns out that not all brothers do so (even if able), and though fathers invariably contribute something, they are not necessarily the largest contributors. Thus although close relatives generally do participate in assembling bridewealth, not all close kin do so, nor are all who do so close kin. What counts more in the Telefol view is personal inclination and the ability to contribute, and this is phrased more often in terms of relations between friends (*dup*) than kin. Friendship, in its turn, stems from many things--and certainly close proximity is one of them--but whatever its source it is mainly understood in terms of a history of mutual helpfulness. More than anything else, this is a matter of reciprocity itself, of giving, receiving, and giving again.

Though we have some difficulty in specifying participation in bride-wealth transactions on the basis of kinship, there is nonetheless one definite sort of prior claim a man may have to the assistance of others. If a man has already assisted another in the assembly of bridewealth, he may claim the latter's aid when he is assembling bridewealth for himself, his brother, or his son. This is so even if the man making such a claim (the erstwhile contributor) had been given pork as his share of the return payment. In turn, when such assistance is given, it must in time be repaid in kind, in addition to a more immediate compensation of pork from the return payment from the bride's family. Thus we can see that there is a chain or network of reciprocal obligation extending over time in regard to bridewealth contributions.

In addition to these obligations, there are other, more specific ones arising out of bridewealth transactions. When one of the daughters of a marriage is herself married, those who contributed to her mother's bridewealth are entitled to demand a return from her bridewealth. Finally, a man who made a really substantial contribution--say, four or five *bonang*--may make another sort of claim. Since he is in a sense responsible for the existence of the children of a union, he may demand that a daughter be married to one of his sons, especially if he forgoes more direct return in the form of *bonang* on some future occasion. (This is, of course subject to incest regulations, which effectively prohibit a man from making such claims in regard to his brother's daughters.)

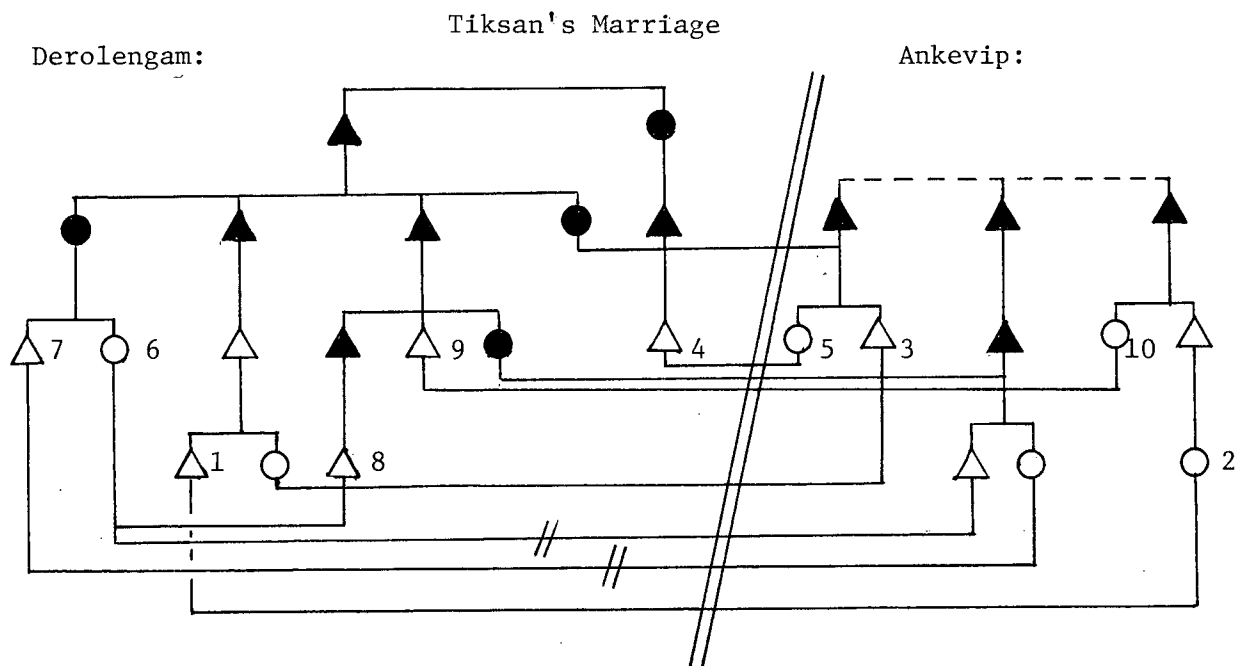
We can see that marriage in Telefolmin rapidly becomes a complex matter with a proliferation of claims that are rooted in reciprocities rather than the fixed duties of kin. Such complexity is in fact greater than I have indicated since we must keep in mind that all of the transactions outlined are ideally duplicated in the event that sister exchange takes place. Things are further complicated by other factors. In general, there are potentially more claimants for rights in any particular woman than can be satisfied by any

particular course of action, and it thus seems inevitable that there will be disappointments. There are a number of difficulties involved in the reckoning of debts in women, not the least of which is the fact that demography is never so generous as to guarantee that there will be precisely the correct number of men and women in each family for true sister exchange to be practicable. This being the case, most men reckon that they may count their first cousins as "sisters" for such purposes. But the bilateral reckoning of *isak atok* means that (given the egocentric and overlapping nature of these networks) men who are not particularly closely related may nonetheless regard the same woman as a factor in their own plans. They may each assert, for example, that one particular woman should be counted as a credit in their favour when they try to negotiate reciprocities with others. Such problems can be particularly acute in the case of intervillage marriages, and may be exacerbated by the fact that women may precipitate marriages through elopement in complete disregard for the plans of others. The upshot of all of this is that though people attempt to keep things straight, tangles are extremely difficult to avoid. A couple of examples will illustrate some of the problems.

Tiksan's wife Somelok is an Ankevip woman who took the lead in their marriage by simply running to his house one day and insisting that she wanted to marry him. Tiksan in fact liked her and was attracted to her, and so he agreed to the idea, although his family was dubious--and with good reason. Before the day was out, her kin from Ankevip showed up in front of Tiksan's house, armed and angry. They demanded her return and heaped abuse on Tiksan and his family. But Tiksan armed himself and faced them from his veranda, and soon a number of other Derolengam men (each bearing arms) gathered and came to Tiksan's support. Although there was much shouting, the situation was pretty much a standoff, and the Ankevip men went home without the woman. But it was clear that there would be further talk about this. In order to

understand subsequent events, it will be necessary to refer to the following genealogy:

FIGURE 5



When the following day came, Ankevip people once more confronted Tiksan. But this time they were more restrained in their manner and were unarmed. Again other Derolengam people gathered to lend Tiksan support. In a short time it became clear that the Ankevip people either wanted Somelok returned (they said she had been promised to an Ankevip man), or else Derolengam would have to send another woman as a replacement. At this, the Derolengam people became angry, saying they were always giving women to Ankevip in marriage and that it was Ankevip--not Derolengam--that never reciprocated women. Tiksan pointed out that his sister was already married to an Ankevip man (Felepnok), but that no woman had yet been sent to Derolengam

to square things (Felepnok himself was absent). To this the Ankevip people answered that Tiksan's sister had herself been sent in return for Felepnok's sister Sologen, who had been married to Alumeyok of Derolengam. Here there was some confusion, for others said that Sologen was sent as a return for Tiksan's sister. In any event, the Ankevip people insisted that Felepnok's wife and Sologen were together part of an exchange and could not be counted in the discussions of Somelok. Matters became further tangled when Robinok and Tegemsep took this opportunity to take the Ankevip people to task for permitting Welagim's Ankevip wife to return to Ankevip, where she took up with another man. This in turn led to counter recriminations, since Dubomen, Welagim's sister, had left her husband in Ankevip and had been actively encouraged in her pursuit of Dakasim, whom she married. Dakasim answered that Dubomen had come to him of her own choice, and in any event only years after Welagim's wife returned to Ankevip. At the same time he pointed out that Felepnok's wife ought to have been reckoned as a debt outstanding in Derolengam's favour, since Felepnok's mother was a Derolengam woman and Sologen's marriage to Alumeyok was a matter of a daughter being sent as a belated replacement for her mother. When some Ankevip people raised the question of Olmamsep's wife, Okmanip, who was also from Ankevip, Olmamsep quickly pointed out that his sister had been sent to Ankevip, where she bore people for them, including Welagim's wife and Dubomen's husband.

The discussion continued in this vein for quite some time and ended, not surprisingly, without any real consensus. Over subsequent days Somelok remained in Tiksan's house (though they did not have intercourse) under the care of Nifinim, Tiksan's father. From time to time relatives from Ankevip would come, either to ask her to return, or just to visit. In the meantime, Tiksan insisted that it was only fair that Somelok be married to a Derolengam man, since he still claimed that his sister's marriage to an Ankevip man had not been reciprocated. Some of the Ankevip people were prepared to accept



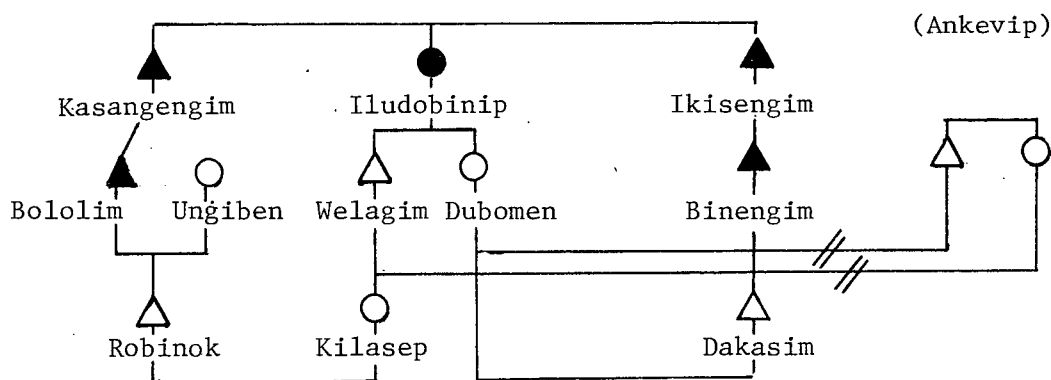
this, though Somelok's father pointed out with some justice that first his sister and then his daughter were married to Derolengam but that he himself had seen no return from this. In the meantime, Nifinim and others assembled bridewealth goods on Tiksan's behalf, and eventually Somelok's father accepted this, returning pork in due time.

In the end, Tiksan and Somelok settled down together and Tiksan's relations with his Ankevip affines are now good. Tiksan regards his marriage as an exchange marriage (*unang abu*), though he is aware that others may in future attempt to make claims on another woman to be sent to Ankevip. His own view of this is that it might be possible that a daughter of his (should he have one) could be sent to Ankevip, but he adds that since women nowadays are very strong-headed and since the government endorses the principle of women's right to choose their own husbands (*laik bilong meri*), it would be premature to make such plans.

We can gain some further insight into both the negative side of reciprocity and the fragility of hopes founded on it by a look at another case involving one of those already mentioned, Welagim. Once again, matters will be easier to follow with the aid of a genealogy displaying cognatic and affinal relations between the principals:

FIGURE 6

Welagim's Marital Experience



Welagim has been without a wife for quite some time, a fact that he often thinks about. When discussing his previous marriage to an Ankevip woman (by whom he had two children, both remaining with him in Derolengam), he became quiet and withdrawn, not his usual self. They had been married for some years, and at first he claimed to me that she had become promiscuous and that he had sent her back to Ankevip in disgust. But later he said simply that she had an affair with an Ankevip man and ran off to him, leaving Welagim and the children behind in Derolengam. He said also, with some bitterness, that although he had tried to get her back, he received little support, either from his Ankevip affines or from his friends in Derolengam. Although he prides himself on the fact that he successfully provided for his two children on his own, he also talks about what hard work this was without anyone to help him. Welagim is often among those men--particularly senior men--who disparage what they see as the uxoriousness of younger men in the village who spend (too) much of their time in company with their wives. But I also saw, in quiet and sometimes sad talks with him, that he was lonely. Both of his children are now grown, his son Tegemsep a married man with children and a wife of his own, and his daughter Kilasep is married to Robinok. Although Welagim sometimes has Tegemsep's company, and though Fumeen (his mother's brother's daughter, *nek*, she is Bololim's sister) and her husband come to stay in his house, he is for the most part on his own. It is for this reason (and because of the failure of others to reciprocate in the past) that Welagim no longer keeps pigs--without a woman to share the load (women in fact predominate in pig rearing) the job becomes difficult for a man, and more so for one as old as Welagim.

Despite all of this, Welagim has made various attempts to deal with his situation, or at least to keep it from deteriorating further. His original marriage to an Ankevip woman was part of a sister exchange, his younger sister Dubomen being sent as a return to his wife's brother. After

his failure at retrieving his wife from Ankevip, at least one opportunity to even things up presented itself, and he took it. When Dubomen's husband and Dakasim were on a labour contract in Rabaul, Welagim attempted to persuade Dubomen to leave Ankevip. With his carefully-laid groundwork, Dubomen moved to Derolengam, where she stayed with Welagim or with Dakasim's mother. When Dakasim and her husband returned from their plantation work, she announced that she intended to marry Dakasim. After a brief confrontation with her husband's relatives (Welagim's erstwhile affines), Dakasim payed a token compensation in *bonang* and--backed by the support of others from Derolengam who belatedly took notice of the departure of Welagim's wife--he managed to maintain the arrangement. This is something that Welagim reckons--quietly, at any rate--to be a coup in retaliation for the shabby treatment he received.

When Kilasep was a young girl Welagim saw to it that she, along with her brother Tegemsep, went to the government primary school. There Kilasep became enamoured of a young man from the village of Kubrenmin in Eliptaman. As soon as she felt herself old enough to marry, she eloped with this youth, and the two of them went to Eliptaman where they led a fugitive existence for some time in the bush. Welagim was both enraged and hurt by the loss of his daughter, and refused all attempts to negotiate sanction for the match. Instead, he complained loudly to the men of Derolengam about this loss to the Kubrenmin, especially since there was no woman offered in return. A party was mustered, including young Robinok, and they went over the range to Kubrenmin, where they confronted the youth's friends and relatives--if the accounts are to be believed, they were near to committing bloodshed. They made a second visit in strength, and this time they caught the young couple in the village, where they forcibly seized Kilasep and brought her back to Derolengam. Shortly thereafter, Welagim gave Kilasep to Robinok, who had been forceful in securing her return, and who was in any event close to Welagim in both kinship and sentiment. Thus Welagim ensured that his daughter would remain near him.

One evening Welagim came to me when nobody else was around and, somewhat shyly, asked me if I could help him with something. He wanted to know if I could get him some "oil" (*wel*) that was "for women". After much puzzling, it became clear that he was referring to after-shave lotion. He and others who had some experience with Europeans noted that European men would often anoint their faces with a sweet smelling oil--especially if they were going to see a woman. Like many others, Welagim drew the plausible and not wholly mistaken conclusion that this was somehow efficacious in attracting a woman's attention and affections. He wanted to know if I had any of this, or if not, if I could get any for him. I suggested that he try to procure more traditional means to the same end, but he objected that he could only get this from a woman or perhaps a young man and that they would not be likely to give it to him and in any event it would be very embarrassing. After much protest and many explanations, I was finally persuaded to borrow some from one of the European patrol officers; after even more numerous disclaimers, I gave him some.

Welagim had designs on a woman, and in fact wished very much to be married. But he faced problems that virtually all Telefol men in similar circumstances face. While it is nearly assured that young men will find wives one way or another, it is a very different matter for older men, and it is often hard for men abandoned by their wives or for widowers to remarry unless luck is on their side. Telefol women in the past--and many in the present--are often married to particular men as the men see fit. But this is no guarantee that such marriages will last, and while single girls face pressures to marry men chosen for them, it is very different in the case of divorcees or widows. Such women are not obliged to remarry at all, let alone to follow others' wishes in the matter. If they have children--particularly children old enough to look after themselves and to help with the work of gardening--

such unattached women can take care of things pretty well on their own and operate more or less independently of husbands.

One such woman was Ungiben. Ungiben was Bololim's widow, and had managed for some years without a husband. Though there had been a few attempts to encourage her to remarry, she resisted all such attempts and had her own way. With Robinok, her son, to clear gardens for her she had no need of another man, particularly one who might seek to impose his will on her.

Welagim was interested in Ungiben, and hoped that she might marry him. He found encouragement in a few different ways. For one thing, he had contributed to the bridewealth Bololim had given for Ungiben, and this is sometimes reckoned to imply a potential claim in the remarriage of a widow. Taking a different line of reasoning entirely, Welagim noted now he had given his daughter to her son, reckoning that this might be a sort of debt that could be redeemed if Ungiben remarried him. Here he was operating not in the realm of codified obligations and rights, but in the hopes that a general sort of fairness might prevail (Welagim having given women to others but not having really gotten one himself). Perhaps as much to the point as any of these considerations was the fact that he sometimes spent time with Robinok and Kilasep--and therefore Ungiben as well--in gardening. On such occasions he felt that he liked Ungiben and that she might also perhaps like him: she sometimes smiled when he was around.

Welagim's hopes, however, were not to be, and were completely dashed in a dramatic way not long after our initial conversation about Ungiben. Welagim had gone along to work with Robinok and Kilasep and Ungiben in a garden they were making, and he had decided that he might plant a little of his taro there along with theirs. He said nothing of this to the others, and this proved to be a grave mistake, since the land they were working was Ungiben's land. He planted a small strip along the border of the main

clearing. A few days later, Ungiben and Kilasep went together to the garden. When Ungiben saw this taro, she knew immediately that it was Welagim's and became furious at what she saw to be an infringement on her rights. She flew into a rage and summarily uprooted all of Welagim's taro and threw it about the garden. At this, Kilasep became angry on her father's behalf and belaboured Ungiben with a piece of wood. (Such behaviour is extreme and is expressly forbidden between affines.) Kilasep then left her mother-in-law and ran back to the village to tell her father what had taken place. Kilasep refused to speak to Ungiben for several days, and the latter followed suit while Robinok attempted to reconcile the two. At one point Kilasep threatened to leave Robinok and return to her father's house if they continued to garden with his mother.

Eventually the two women made up and peace was restored to Robinok's household. But Welagim became resigned to the fact that he had no chance with Ungiben, unhappily.

Cases such as Tiksan's and Welagim's are not unusual, and serve to show that while the basic principles of Telefol marriage are relatively simple, the real world often gets very complicated when men try to bring things to a satisfying conclusion, especially if women are involved. Women often have their own ideas of what they want, and the niceties of reciprocal arrangements are not always part of their reckoning. Further, we can see how the muddled nature of conflicting claims and counter claims makes even a conscientious application of the principles a difficult task. And although reciprocity and equivalence are ideals of Telefol culture, espoused or acknowledged by all, their reality in social life often seems tenuous to the outsider. Rather, they seem in some cases to be post-hoc means of constructing an intelligible rationale for events whose courses have been made up of miscellaneous contingencies. To the extent that such notions actually shape events, it seems fair to say that this is accomplished in a rhetorical fashion--each

party persuades itself and attempts to persuade others of the suitability of a situation in these terms.

From the point of view of the men, one of the chief obstacles to the realization of their plans is the near-proverbial indifference of women to their intentions, and this is often characterized as a sort of feminine waywardness. There is a certain amount of confirmation for this view since women in fact tend to take the initiative in sexual matters, regardless of what men say, and men seize upon this as one more means of portraying themselves as sensible and socially responsible beings who must contend with the vagaries of unruly and sometimes fickle women. But underneath this caricature of male and female temperaments there lies a deeper and more telling stumbling block. As may already be apparent, Telefolmin consider reciprocity most immediately from the perspective of loss, and one of their chief concerns is to make losses good. Thus men see giving as depletion and receiving as reclamation, and giving is likewise seen as taking place under some form of duress or as a means of forestalling and neutralizing claims. In the context of marriage conceived as a network of reciprocities, this means that at any one time most men are likely to view the balance sheet of debts and credits in terms of losses that can be converted into claims or claims that others may attempt to make against them. It is in this sense that a woman given in marriage can be likened to a lien placed upon the recipients. And although we may suppose (more out of faith than anything else) that there is a balance in the long run, at any one time the situation is in fact seen as one of imbalance, with scores outstanding that remain unredeemed. That this is so can be seen from a review of the circumstances surrounding Tiksan's marriage: even though both sides asserted a number of different marriages to be reciprocal exchanges (*abu*), there was little consensus as to whether Somelok's marriage to Tiksan settled old debts or created new ones. And though the match was in the end sanctioned, each side entertained different versions of what the score was.

If we turn to a consideration of village endogamy, we can see many of these concerns in evidence. People offer a number of reasons why they prefer women to marry within their own village. One of these is that a woman who marries a fellow villager is not lost to her family in the same sense that she would be if she were to marry outside: even though she will work and live within a new household, it is still possible for her to visit her parents and siblings and to assist them from time to time. This is especially marked if her parents are old, since a daughter will be able to provide taro for them even after they are unable to pursue their usual routine of gardening. People also say that it is far more likely that a woman will be reciprocated if she is given to a man within her village since fellow villagers are far more likely to be sensitive to such claims--those from other villages are not so likely to be trustworthy. Endogamy is suitable, then, because it offers some security against the loss of a woman while underwriting the prospects for recovering another woman in return.

In addition to these reasons, Telefolmin account for village endogamy in terms of a concern for collective strength. Telefolmin wish their villages to be large and to grow, and though this is often couched in the idiom of warfare, village size is equated with strength in a much more diffuse sense and is valued in itself. Thus many men account for endogamy by saying that their villages will grow larger and stronger and prosper if they keep their women within the village instead of allowing them to marry into other villages. Such assertions are in their eyes confirmed by the observation that villages that successfully practice endogamy tend to be large, while those that fail to do so are small and relatively weak. Thus men equate endogamy with success, pointing out that the children of endogamous marriages are not lost but remain to augment village ranks.



There does seem to be a relationship between village size and endogamy, although it seems more likely that large villages are for demographic and other reasons more successful in pursuing endogamous policies than smaller villages. For example, Ubtemtigin village in Eliptaman is a relatively small village which has a population of seventy or so, and is adjacent to several other villages of larger size.<sup>18</sup> From the standpoint of marriage, things are difficult for Ubtemtigin men since the village is short of women, and all of this is exacerbated by the fact that a number of the otherwise marriageable women in the village fall within the range of relationship prohibited by the incest tabu. Thus Ubtemtigin has more or less been forced into exogamous arrangements with neighbouring villages. These marriages were supposedly arranged as exchanges, but things have not gone as planned for Ubtemtigin. One village in particular, Abunkaman (population 165), showed no signs of actually reciprocating. The villagers of Ubtemtigin attempted to prod Abunkaman to make good the debt, but with little success. The alternative usually available in such cases is to stage an angry confrontation, with the implicit but well-understood threat of violence. But here Ubtemtigin was at a clear disadvantage, since this would pit it against a village more than twice its size. In the end, some angry Ubtemtigin men abducted two young Abunkaman women, arguing that they were merely claiming their due. The two women were neither harmed nor molested, and it was hoped that their kin might be persuaded to acquiesce in the face of this show of determination. In the end even this failed, as charges were laid against the abductors who were given short gaol terms for unlawful abduction. The basic problem for Ubtemtigin remains unsolved: it is too small to successfully practice endogamous marriage and is likewise too small to ensure that exogamous marriages will result in reciprocal exchanges of women,

A similar situation may be seen in the case of Biiltevip (Ifitaman). Biiltevip numbers approximately 60 persons or so, and men from Biiltevip have

had some difficulty acquiring wives. Many of the factors are demographic, since there is (as with Ubtemtigin) a local imbalance in the sex ratio such that women are relatively scarce. And, as with Ubtemtigin, many otherwise marriageable women are excluded because of incest regulations. The situation (as of 1975) was further aggravated by the fact that four young women ran off to marry men in other villages, and Biiltevip was not strong enough to force their return. In one case, not only was no woman forthcoming in return, but the groom's party only offered a very small bridewealth to the wife's brothers, confident, no doubt, that her family would be unable to muster enough support to demand more. In the case of one young man, Yaiyok, the situation was dismal. He is the youngest brother of the woman in question, and he had the misfortune to be away in the bush when his sister's bridewealth was paid, and his elder brothers simply excluded him from the distribution since there was so little to go around. He eventually persuaded an Ulapmin woman (whose face was badly scarred in a house fire) to run off to him and managed after much difficulty to assemble a bridewealth for her. At that, Yaiyok is fortunate since he has in fact succeeded in marrying. But life in Biiltevip is pervaded by the effects of such difficulties. Adultery within the village is rife, and the absence of some husbands on labour contracts makes matters worse. In 1975 one married woman hanged herself when her husband's return from contract labour forced the termination of a liaison she had had with one of the single men of the village. Though such things happen in other villages as well, many commented that such trouble was inevitable in a village where so many young men were forced to remain bachelors. In another case a youth hanged himself because his attempt to seduce the wife of an elder brother had been found out. In addition, the sudden death of a married woman led to further demoralization. Convinced that Biiltevip was on the verge of extinction, one man solicited the services of a *biit* sorcerer to retaliate against the village he suspected had caused the death. But here he failed, and was gaoled for his pains. By the

end of the year people talked of Biiltevip as though it were doomed as a viable village, and many Biiltevip people talked about the possibility of moving to join relatives in other settlements.<sup>19</sup>

In cases such as these we can see that village size and strength go together with village endogamy. But here it is important to note that the preference for endogamy applies first and foremost when one's own women are being considered--they should marry at home. At the same time, most men are enthusiastic about the prospects of marrying women from other villages if this can be accomplished without the corresponding loss of a woman of one's own. (Here it might be helpful to recall that Telefölmín often abducted enemy women in warfare and preferred to marry them rather than kill them--such women were an easy gain, and came, so to speak, with "no strings attached".) The larger the village, the easier it is to keep one's women within the village and to hold on to women from other villages. Endogamy, then, is the luxury of large villages, and they are spared the necessity of relying upon outsiders (and their good faith) to acquire wives. To the extent that successful endogamy can be equated with village strength, we can understand such strength in terms of autonomy and self-sufficiency.

If we return to the general question of Telefölmín reciprocity and its relation to what I call entropy, we can draw out some of the implications of the Telefölmín marriage system more clearly in terms of its underlying structure. We may start by simply noting that the ban on marriage with siblings and first cousins (i.e., close *isak atok*) deprives such small networks of close kin of self-sufficiency in terms of marriage. Kindreds are thus incomplete in so far as it is impossible for a man to transform a sister directly into a wife, and such kindreds cannot be self-contained. From another point of view, this introduces an initial disequilibrium or deficiency into cognatic relations, making the achievement of stasis impossible--to gain wives, men must lose

their sisters. Seen from the point of view of reciprocity, it is decreed that there can be no gain without a corresponding loss, and the sufficiency of the kindred is contingent upon relations with others.

All of these things are well-known and straightforward implications of the incest tabu, and Telefolmin are as aware of them as kinship theorists are. But the alternative possibility--that of incestuous unions and total self-sufficiency--is considered in tales told by Telefolmin. Interestingly, these tales are part of the general stock of stories told around evening fires, and are attributed to the now-extinct Iligimin, who had attempted a sort of collective matricide by burning the Telefolip, an act which led to their extermination. In the first tale, incest is achieved and leads at once to disastrous results:

There were once two *tenuu kaselal* (FBC), one a man, and the other a woman. They had gone to the source of the Ok Kwep to build a bush house near some gardens. As they were completing the house and laying down sheets of wild pandanus bark (*dol*) flooring, the man suggested to his cousin that the two of them have intercourse. She was obliging and agreed, laying herself down in the middle of the freshly cut sheet of bark and spreading her legs. When her cousin lay down on top of her, the bark began to curl at the edges until it rolled up tight with both of them inside. Then it rolled downhill carrying them with it until it fell into the river, where they were both drowned.

Here, off in the bush and away from society, a man and woman commit incest and suffer a graphically appropriate fate: bound to each other and enclosed in one 'skin' (tree bark and skin in Telefol both being rendered as *kaal*), they are not only cut off from the world, but become one aimless rolling object coming to rest at the bottom of the river. This last feature is particularly significant since in Telefol thought one's 'spirit' (and also rationality, *sinik*) is extinguished by water--the two are thus deprived even of becoming ghosts (*bagel* or *momoyok*) and simply become non-existent except as rotting flesh. Here self-sufficiency carried to the extreme of incest results not in

life or productivity (the normal outcome of intercourse), but in the negation of existence.

The second tale, also attributed to the Iligimin, gives an account of a failed attempt at incest:

A man and his younger sister (*neeng*) were completing a house. After he had finished laying down the wild pandanus bark flooring, he complained to his sister that he had built a nice house but that he had no woman to have intercourse with. She heard him and said, "you needn't worry--we two can have intercourse". She spread her legs, but as he prepared to enter her a piece of bark from the floor became lodged in his penis, and his pain was so great that they were unable to have intercourse. Time passed, but the piece of bark remained lodged in the mouth of his penis, and his pain grew while his penis became swollen to huge proportions. It became so bad that he was unable to walk and had to remain sitting inside the house while his sister went about her gardening. She looked after him and brought him food, but his condition did not improve and eventually his penis became so heavy that he let it hang down through an opening in the floor. A little boy was wandering around, playing with his toy bow and arrows. He came up and saw the penis hanging down, now surrounded by flies and other insects. He sharpened his arrow and then took aim. His arrow struck home, and all the pus burst forth and spilled over the boy who ran away while the man howled in pain. When the man removed the arrow from his penis, the piece of bark was removed as well, and the swelling ended. The boy bathed and returned to the house where he was joined by the man's sister, who felt sorry for him. Later the man married his sister to the boy and killed a pig for him because his face had been ruined by the pus.

Here incest is only attempted but not committed, and the attempt leads not to death, but instead to pain. More significant than pain, however, is the blockage and immobility--stasis--that results. The man's penis swells to huge proportions, but the organ is itself useless and becomes an encumbrance--stopped up and festering, it only serves to prevent the man from doing anything at all. He is closed off into himself and imprisoned by his own attempt to make his sister his wife as surely as if he were bound and tied within his own house. It takes the intervention of another--ironically, a young boy, without a man's equipment--to release him from his self-inflicted bondage to his

penis. Significantly, this release is only accomplished at the cost of pain (a figurative castration for unsuccessful incest) as the boy's arrow frees the man from the accumulated pus. The denouement of the tale brings the message home: the sister does become a wife, but not of her brother; complete self-sufficiency only leads to the imprisonment of immobility, and this can only be put right by parting with one's own. Life only comes at a cost.

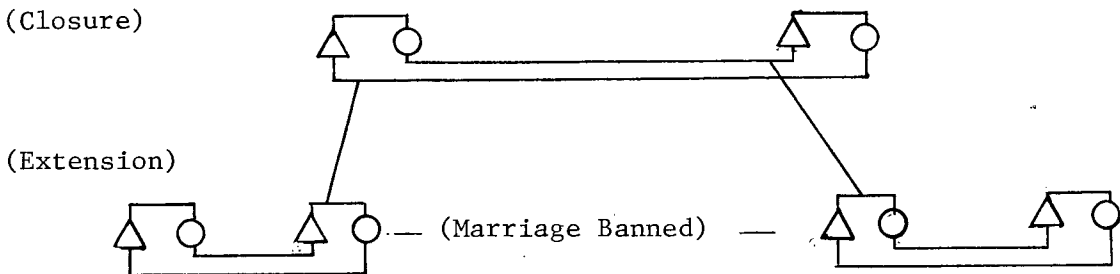
These tales show, of course, what was already clear: the alternative to the complicated and risky business of men trying to exchange women with each other is no alternative at all, and there is in the end no way for men to be entirely self-sufficient. Loss (in this case, of one's own women) is one of life's unavoidable conditions--one may (and must) attempt to recover one's losses, but one can never evade the necessity to incur losses in the first place. Thus the aim of autonomy must be tempered by the necessity of entering into relations with others if static infertility is to be avoided.

Such conclusions are not very different from what one might expect for any society. The character of Telefol marriage, however, can be seen as an attempt to come to grips with these implications in a striking sort of way. If we consider incest regulations once more, we note not only that siblings are prohibited as partners, but first cousins are also forbidden mates. This means, among other things, that a marriage uniting two kindreds or families in one generation is an effective bar to a similar marriage in the succeeding generation. As a result, it is even impossible to restrict the range of relations (through exchange of women) to a singular alter, the minimum of one other group required. An initial act of exchange cannot suffice, nor can reliance on only one other partner suffice. In effect, the problem--or the risk--of exchanging sisters for wives must be confronted anew each generation. Here we might note parenthetically that the prohibition on first cousins works to prevent the complete closure of what Levi-Strauss has called restricted

exchange, and thus the otherwise dualistic tendencies of Telefol marriage--particularly in view of the emphasis on replacement of one woman by another through sister exchange--are not permitted to crystallize into a moiety-like arrangement. Two exchanging groups alone will never suffice. Put another way, this means that the arrangements in one generation cannot be duplicated in the next so that even the successful completion of a sister exchange between two parties (sibling groups, families, kindreds) cannot form a closed circuit of perpetual connubium. Thus there can never be a permanent establishment of an equilibrium between affinally related parties, since success here serves as only a temporary stabilization--the closed circuit of reciprocities is self-liquidating. The situation may be represented in the following diagram:

FIGURE 7.

Sister Exchange, Reciprocity, and Incest Rules (Model)



If we take a look at Telefol marriage from the point of view of the two poles outlined by Levi-Strauss (1969)--direct/restricted exchange versus indirect/generalized exchange--we can see that both poles are evidenced in tension with one another. On the one hand the general thrust of the Telefol insistence that one woman replace another (through sister exchange or some analogous arrangement) is that a closure is to be effected and that the initial disequilibrium introduced by the incest tabu is to be counteracted

and in a sense arrested. The loss is (ideally) to be made good directly, risk minimized, and sufficiency restored. If we adopt the Telefol view and understand marriage from the perspective of those who lose women who must in some sense be replaced and recovered, we can see sister exchange as the most direct means of effecting restoration. Here, then, entropy figured as loss, scattering, or dispersal (of women) is managed through means of reciprocity. But no sooner is this solution offered than formal and practical difficulties arise. As soon as loss (the realization of dependence which violates autonomy) is recovered the system springs a leak: women must be offered to and (re-)gained from other quarters. The problem can only be resolved in a temporary and incomplete fashion.

There is one other way, however, in which the system of marriage exchanges is prevented from ramifying into a wide and open-ended network, and this is through permitted second-cousin marriage and village endogamy. Endogamy seals off the boundaries of a network of affinal links and turns it in upon itself, in a sense tying up loose ends through involution. Thus the outward-facing and exogamous implications of incest regulations are circumvented: if families and kindreds are deprived of self-sufficiency through incest, self-sufficiency is restored by transposing from the individual or particularistic plane of the family to the collective plane of the village. Families may lose women, but villages do not. Further, the potentially endless spread of cognatic links is itself turned inwards through second-cousin marriage (see Figure 3 above). Though there is no explicit preference for marriage to second-cousins, there are nonetheless a number of factors operating in favour of such unions. Foremost among these is that the parents of the couple--first cousins--will themselves be closely related and (other things being equal) are likely to place some faith in the readiness of each other to uphold obligations of exchange. Here proximity lends some security to the

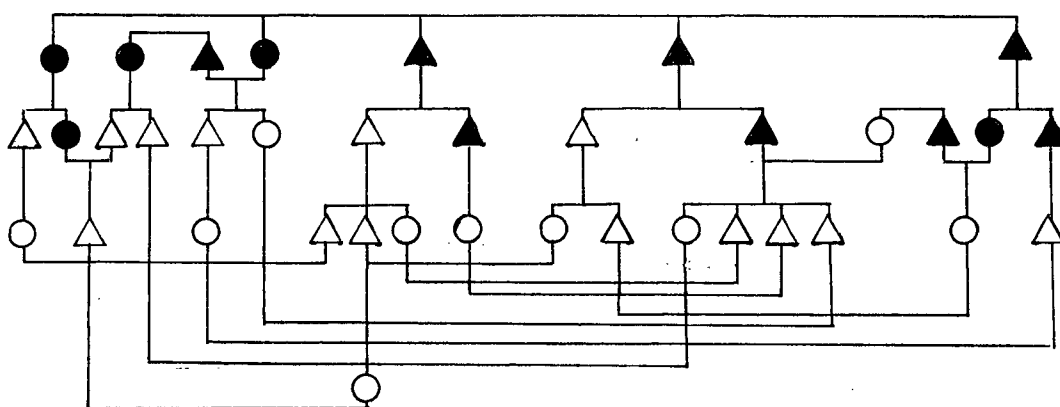


otherwise tricky business of ensuring that exchange arrangements are brought to fruition. In fact such arrangements are common, and in any event most marriages (particularly those conforming to village endogamy) take place between cognatically related parties and this is recognized by Telefolmin when they say, in Pidgin, that they marry their "sisters" (*mipela save maritim susa bilong mipela yet*). Finally, there is an added inducement for such marriages since it will often be possible to represent them in terms of a long-term return or recovery of women given in previous generations. When viewed over time, we can see that affines become transformed into cognates and that cognates are "brought back into the fold" as affines once more when cognatic relations begin to become distant:

FIGURE 8

Cognition and Affinity

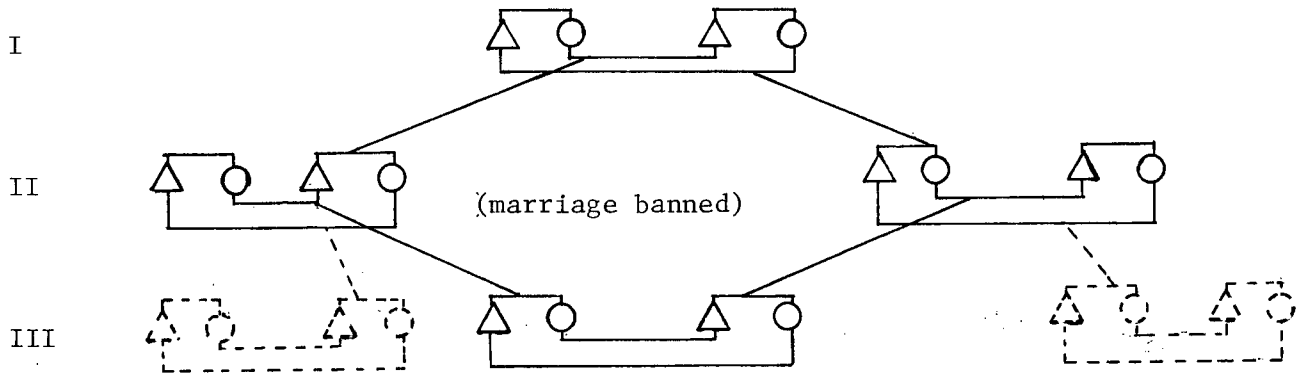
[Example from Derolengam]



From the point of view of the formal structural implications of Telefol marriage it is as though affinal links were continually being formed, followed by the direction of the women of such unions outside the original set of relations, and then drawing them in once more. In purely abstract terms, it is a system of conjunction, disjunction and dispersal, followed by conjunction once more. This can be schematized in the following diagram:

FIGURE 9

## Structure of the Marriage System

Key:

- I = Closure
- II = Extension
- III = Closure

In such a system we can see a dialectic between the poles of concentrated repetitive affinal links (restricted exchange) and a dispersed or radiating network of such links. The system is thus both involuted and ramifying at the same time, and as with so many other New Guinea systems, this structural ambivalence is never entirely resolved (cf. Schwimmer 1973; Rubel and Rosman 1978). And though this may seem a very abstract reckoning of the situation the very same ambivalence is manifest in the general attitude men display about reciprocity, whether in terms of women, goods, or acts. There is always a tension between the risk of extending relationships or embarking on new ones and the security of consolidating what is already in hand while it is yet within grasp.

I began this section by introducing the notion of what I call "entropy". I will now try to demonstrate its relevance in terms of marriage in Telefolmin.

We have seen above how marriage is seen both as a matter of giving and a matter of loss, and one of the chief preoccupations of men is how--

given that one must inevitably lose one's sisters to others--such loss is to be made good. The preferred solution is through substitution, i.e., one's sister is replaced by her husband's sister, who becomes one's wife. Here the main theme is replacement through exchange of fully symmetrical kind, and it is not stretching things too far to suggest that this is the means whereby one's sister is transformed into one's wife. At an ideal level this kind of arrangement is the most direct and immediate restoration of the initial situation. But in practical terms this becomes difficult, partly due to demographic limitations and partly due to the proliferation of overlapping claims and counter-claims regarding women. Things are further complicated by the fact that women often seize the initiative in such matters, pre-empting men's schemes of balanced exchange. In practice, it is difficult to demonstrate to the satisfaction of all parties that balance has been achieved--a problem more familiar from our understanding of the way the balance sheet of feuds is seen (see Heider 1970). To a certain extent the idea of a balanced equivalence remains pretty much notional, and from the point of view of the participants in the system risk of permanent loss (without restoration) becomes a major preoccupation. It is the prospect of such loss that figures as entropy here, for it is clear from the cases of the outnumbered and unfortunate villagers of Ubtemtigin and Biiltevip that such a prospect is a realistic one. There is the underlying danger that there will be a continuing leakage of one's women to outsiders without a reciprocal return, leading ultimately to extinction. Here, of course, we see part of the rationale behind village endogamy. In addition, both the past and the present offer suggestive indications. In the days of warfare it was common practice for raiders to abduct enemy women and take them as wives. This betokens strength and aggression, certainly. But a further implication (and aim) of such practices was that those more powerful grew more numerous at the expense of their weaker adversaries. In the contemporary scene the same problem is evidenced, though in a less forceful

and dramatic way. Since the opening of the government station and the influx of single men from outside the area (most of whom are public servants) there has been a steady flow of young Telefol women to these men as wives. This is the cause of a great deal of anger and anxiety and has on occasion led to violence. Those closely related to such women fear--and in most instances, realistically--that their sisters and daughters will be lost to them forever when their husbands are transferred to another area. At the same time, even those not directly involved with these young women all realize a more important implication: there will be no women coming back to replace them. Station men normally come unaccompanied, and have no sisters to offer in exchange. Local people have little choice but to try to discourage such matches and, if unsuccessful, to extract a very large bridewealth--partly as a punitive measure and partly in lieu of the much more strongly desired recompense in the form of a woman.<sup>20</sup> Some men see in this attrition a threat far more gloomy than numbers could indicate, for they argue that if such a situation keeps up indefinitely, there will soon be no Telefolmin left at all.

The problem can be starkly phrased as a matter of parting with one's women while wishing to retain them, or at least to secure replacements for them. Thus the emphasis on sister exchange and the elaborate calculation of debts and credits stemming from marriage; the preference for village endogamy which seals off marriage networks and turns them inwards; the tendency for second-cousin marriage which draws distant cognates back by transforming them into affines and then again into cognates.

In all of this Telefolmin are trying to come to grips with entropy, with the prospect of the centre failing to hold through attrition, depletion, and dispersion. As we have seen, for men much of this rests on the attempt to wield control over women. Politically it has the effect of balkanization, for there is a gulf between villages which prefer to marry within themselves and regard exogamous links between them as risky failures to pursue this

policy. Accidental or not, there are some affinal and cognatic ties between different villages, but they do not and cannot carry the structural weight of alliances in the Telefol scheme of things. Here, at the plane of social organization, we see one of the fundamental differences between Telefol society and the Highlands societies to the east. Whereas most New Guinea Highlands societies have a structure founded on large localized exogamous groups, Telefolmin are organized into villages which are in most respects self-contained and self-sufficient, turning inward. Here the elaborate and widely ramifying exchange systems, with their massive pig-kills and feasts, are alien; chain-like connections such as the Enga *tee* or "the rope of *moka*" (cf. Brown 1978; Strathern 1971) do not exist; there are no big men whose prestige and power derives from the manipulation of wealth in transactional networks. It is nonetheless true that Telefol villages are linked together in significant ways--the most important of which is ritual, particularly male initiation--but this is not accomplished through the more familiar mechanisms of reciprocal exchange or affinal alliance. Instead, the articulation is through the ancestral village of Telefolip, the seat of the men's cult and the centre of the Telefol world. And though I will defer discussion of the cult and the role of Telefolip for a subsequent section, the structural theme is very much the same, for Telefolip is the centre and the organizational problem is how to draw in men from outlying villages back to the centre again.

Writ large in this fashion, what I have called entropy can be seen as the organizational reflex of some of the centrifugal aspects of Telefol society. At the level of kinship, this is the problem of relinquishing women to others, which men attempt to resolve through sister exchange and endogamy. This is likewise evident if we look at matters from the standpoint of village organization, and we see other aspects of the same problem in the tendency for autonomous households to disperse in the bush. But these are only the organizational--and perhaps to the outsider, the most visible--dimensions of

entropy. In personal terms it represents the plight of Welagim, a man whose wife had run away and whose daughter nearly did so, and who began life as an orphan (his father was killed by Falamin) and ended his life in loneliness (he died of pneumonia in 1979).

Entropy--*biniman*, 'to dissipate, become nothing, to end or be exhausted'--is a problem to Telefolmin in a sense far transcending the peculiarities of their social structure or features of organization. For them it is a potential inherent in the world, one of the basic conditions of existence. To return to the opening section of this chapter, Telefol order is posited in the face of what they recognize as the world's tendency towards loss, contingency, dissolution, and chaos. In their attempts to order society or their lives they carry with them the sense that they are bucking the trend: young girls will run away to strangers if you let them, wives will desert you if they feel neglected or piqued, children will leave if unhappy; weeds grow in an untended garden, and the bush will reclaim its own; grass will overrun the village plaza if there is trouble and people keep away.

#### v. Entropy in Telefol Cosmology

The basic Telefol view of the world and of man's place within it is in essence very simple: man's world is on the wane. The Telefolmin will eventually pass out of existence as a people and the world--their world--will come to a close. The ultimate end can come about in a few different ways. If a woman should give birth to a baby boy who is already wearing a *sel* (or *mafuum*) initiation headdress, the world will be finished (*biniman kelantemu*). Should so many have died that Bagelam, the land of the dead, be full, the end will be at hand. In any event, the Telefol cosmos will come to its inevitable finish after the twenty-seventh rebuilding of the Telefolip, the spirit house (*yolam*) of all Telefolmin.<sup>21</sup> It will likewise come to an end if men fail to rebuild it.

This view of the world contains a statement about the ultimate nature of the fate of man and his projects, but its relevance to Telefolmin is much more immediate than a mere stipulation that in some remote future all things will come to an end. Our own cosmology tells us that eventually the sun and our universe will run down and that there will be a final end to our existence, but this is of little concern in our day to day lives. For us a larger issue is perhaps mortality, but this is a personal issue that seems not to touch society at large--we can in some sense balance these implications with the general Western view of "progress" and the sense that one way or another things will get bigger and better all the time. Further, we have a general assumption that despite historical contingencies "civilization marches on" and that our culture grows through a process of accumulation, a continual summation of individual and collective contributions and innovations. All of this, however, is quite alien to the Telefol sense of the nature of things. For Telefolmin the ultimate fate of man and his world is simply a logical extension of his more immediate condition. Entropy is not a remote end-point beyond history and experience but instead pervades it, and this conception of things is rooted in notions about such fundamental qualities as space and time.

Telefol space orientations, aside from such geographically appropriate distinctions as upslope/downslope, along/across, etc., are marked by a heavily concentric bias, indicated with terms such as near (*mepso*) and far (*samanim*, *saman*). As with English, these terms can also mean 'close' in the sense of 'similar' and 'distant' in the sense of 'dissimilar' or 'different'. These notions are entwined with the Telefol discrimination between village (or clearing, *abiip*) and bush (*sep*), and it is noteworthy that people seem always to speak of *coming* to the village (*abiip telemin*) but of *going* to the bush (*sep unemin*).

We have already seen some of the ideological dimensions of the village/bush contrast (2 (ii) and 3 (iii) above) and this informs the general division of space into centre and periphery. This corresponds generally with the nature/culture polarity developed by Levi-Strauss (1963), and there is an overall sense in which entropy may be said to vary directly with distance from the centre. This is evident in two major ways: the notion of loss, and the notion of uncertainty, opacity, confusion, danger, and inversion.

Loss can be understood as a movement away from the centre, a leakage or attrition that can be seen as dispersion. Thus elopement is spoken of as *tagaa kwep unemin*, a phrase meaning 'to break off and go', which conveys the way in which men view the loss of a woman to outsiders. In the same vein, it is possible to speak of death as a departure, *fegep tam unemin*, 'to be picked off and go' or, significantly, to become lost or hidden/unseen (*magalo tebemin*). Domestic pigs (*kong*) are notorious for running off and becoming feral or turning into garden raiders, and when they do this they are said to have 'gone wild' (*asit unemin*). Finally, when a taro crop is poor, this can be spoken of as 'no taro' (*iman binim*, which also means 'hunger'), but in fact this is seen as the result of the taro having 'run away' (*daginemin*).

Entropy in relation to the outside can also be seen as movement toward and encounter with that which is strange and dangerous. Here we can begin by noting that far away places are called *asittem*. *Asit* is a word whose meanings include 'raw', 'the colour green', 'unfinished', 'half-cooked (including meat)', 'immature', 'antagonistic', 'improper', 'off the track (both literally and figuratively)', 'treacherous', 'opposed', 'incorrect or mistaken', 'odd', 'other or elsewhere', 'foreign', 'distant', and 'alien or strange'.<sup>22</sup> Although this range is represented by a diverse number of words in English, all these meanings share a common premise that that which is far away is different from that which is fully developed and proper (*telel*,



?related to the words *telemin*, 'to come' and *Telefol*, the name Telefolmin apply to themselves). This conceptual linkage is given manifest and concrete shape in the Telefol practice of keeping the village plaza entirely free of weeds and grasses: here we should recall that the word for village and clearing are the same (*abiip*) and that this act serves to distinguish the village from the bush in a literal way--the green (*asit*) is kept out and prevented from encroaching into man's home. We can thus understand how it is that the sight of grass overrunning a village plaza means something far more significant than simple neglect. When this happens, all the people are in the bush and the bush has taken over the village, whose integrity is invaded by all that the word *asit* implies: the periphery threatens to overwhelm the centre and all that it stands for.

The further one moves away from the centre, the stranger and more antagonistic things threaten to become. Thus the bush is the abode of wild animals such as wild pigs (*saaman*) and marsupials (*nuk*) whose relation to man is antagonistic in so far as they prey upon his gardens while man in turn preys upon them in hunting. It is also in the bush that encounters with ghosts (*bagel*) or the bush spirit (Bagan Kayaak) or female bush spirits (*aanangen*) may take place, and in the old days enemy warriors lying in ambush were always a possibility. Today the warriors are gone, but *biit* sorcerers cloaked in invisibility (*tiin baalin*; they are *magalo*, 'hidden') are still around. As one moves from Telefolmin to the land of other peoples, they too become strange or threatening. Some, like the Miyanmin, Falamin, Tifalmin, and Dulanmin were out-and-out enemies (*waasi* or *sepwaasi*). Others, such as the Ulapmin, Atbalmin, or Fegolmin were instead friendly and served as trading partners--but even these possessed alien powers. Atbalmin transform themselves into animals to commit theft or sorcery, while Ulapmin and Fegolmin practice a particularly lethal variety of sorcery in which they cannibalize

their own sons. Here, on its outermost edges--which is to say at the greatest remove from the village--the world becomes a hideous inversion of the proper order of things (cf. Middleton 1954; Schieffelin 1976:94-117). With all these dangers, the outer world of the bush is opaque, a place of hidden and invisible (*magalo*) beings and happenings, and of confusion which is expressed in the phrase *una tela keemin*, 'to go and come, to be mixed up'. In a spatial sense, then, the Telefol world fades out with distance, and one of the major themes of Telefol cosmology is that of maintaining a strong and coherently ordered centre which is threatened by depletion outwards or by encroachment inwards.

When we consider Telefol views of time entropy again becomes manifest as a concern. When men talk about the past, they say that Telefolmin were far more numerous than they are now, and that Telefolmin were also physically larger, but that with each succeeding generation they became fewer and smaller. Men would almost invariably say of their fathers or other deceased relatives that they were tall (*timitiim*) or large (*afaalik* or *kwinkim*, 'huge') men, and that *their* fathers were even more so. Likewise, men say that taro these days takes much longer to grow and is smaller than in the past; that *tetip* (casuarina) trees planted in gardens or near villages are also slower growing and not nearly as tall as before; that in the old days great numbers of pigs were killed in the pig ceremony (*kong ban*) but that nowadays only a very few pigs are ever killed at a time; that the pigs of the past were huge while today's pigs are mere possums (*nuk*) by comparison. It is easy to see in such statements a glorification of the past in comparison with a less satisfactory present, and it is tempting to speculate that this is a recent reaction to the loss of Telefol autonomy in the face of domination by Europeans and, latterly, the Papua New Guinea government. But while this is in general accord with much of what Telefolmin have to say about their recent history, it is a mistake to dismiss such notions so readily, for they are one

of the cornerstones of the Telefol view of the world. While it is true that much of Telefol life since contact has been from their point of view unsatisfactory, this is in fact seen by them as a confirmation and continuation of the course Telefolmin have been on since the beginning of things. For example, when Welagim explained to me that each successive generation of Telefolmin would inevitably become less numerous and physically smaller, I pointed to his son Tegemsep as evidence that this could not be so, since Tegemsep stood a full head taller than his father. Here Welagim beamed and replied that this was so only because he had done exceptionally well in providing food--especially meat--for his children and that though Tegemsep was clearly a large man, he was merely the exception that proved the rule. Others had similar replies to similar evidence that--to my eyes--Telefolmin were in fact becoming bigger all the time.

The notion that the Telefol world is in some sense "running down" is evident not only in abstract discussion or in responses to my queries: people would spontaneously remark about everyday events in these terms. I went with Dakasim to visit some people in Kubrenmin and happened to notice two relatively young men limping around the village. Dakasim's matter of fact reply was that this was because there were fewer old men now than in the past. As a consequence, the infirmities of the old--in this case arthritis and stiff joints--begin to increasingly affect the young. When Olmamsep heard that a friend of his had died, he remarked that this was because he had had too many children, and had fathered them while he was young. As a result he aged prematurely and his bones became "wrinkled". Uunsep went out to hunt marsupials one night, but came back at dawn with only two *nuk kuyacam*. *Kuyacam* are large possums with grey fur, and are only permitted to old men to eat. He explained that if he had any sense he would have returned home immediately after he shot the *kuyacam* for, as everybody knows, if the first *nuk* you find are *kuyacam*, you will find no more game that night. When a number of people

reported a rash of ghosts (*bagel*) near the village after a recent death, I was told that this was normal, for the dead always come boldly near at such times to see if any more of the living will be joining them.

The precise logic by which such statements are constructed will be explored further on. Here it is enough to remark that they all share a common thread, the notion of entropy and the sense that things are on the wane and that a finish approaches; further, that this is an ever-present property of the world at large. If we return to the temporal dimension for a moment, we will see that this is implicit in language. The notion that men in the past were larger and more numerous is embodied in the conjunction of concepts of size, quantity and time in the words *afaalik* and *afek*. *Afaalik* and *afek* are masculine and feminine forms, respectively, meaning 'large' and also 'numerous' (interestingly, the feminine form has a sense of being more intense, here, *afek* being in a sense "bigger" than *afaalik*). In addition to these meanings, however, both words also mean 'old' and 'important'. Finally, *afaalik* is the word for an old or important man; the kinship term for one's great-grandfather; the term for 'ancestor'. The word *afek*, which is also the name of the Ancestress, the woman who built Telefolip and founded the Telefolmin as a people, is the feminine variant. In this way the past is endowed with attributes akin to what we would call "greatness" and the present (and future) are seen as a departure from this towards "nothingness". Here once again the drift of the world towards entropy appears, and we may note in passing that just as *biniman* means 'to dissipate, diminish, become nothing', the verb *afaaligenamin* means 'to grow, become large'. With specific reference to human activity and intentions, *afaalik* can be used to mean 'important', 'special', and 'wise'; *binim* means 'not at all' or 'nothing' or 'never', while the related form *bisop* (both being translated with the Pidgin word *nating*, 'nothing') means 'insignificant', 'futile', 'senseless'. These ideas, then, are far from being a superficial overlay in response to particular

circumstances (e.g., foreign domination), but are instead the premises underlying Telefol concepts of order and the way of the world.

With this as a general introduction we can now go on to have a look at man's fate in the more specific terms of mortality. We can begin with a story, an *utuun sang* well known to men, women, and children alike:

Four brothers lived together in a tract of bush. One day the eldest decided to go out hunting. He went to get all sorts of game--birds, marsupials, everything. As he shot these things, he didn't bring them home, but hanged them up in tree limbs (to be retrieved later) and continued further on. Eventually he heard the cry of a *sing-song* bird and came to a clearing where a log had fallen. The *sing-song* sang out as it alternately perched and hopped on the log. He took a lizard arrow (*yol*), fitted it to his bow, and took aim (he had run out of other arrows). He shot at the bird but missed, and it passed beyond the clearing where it landed with a loud thump--it had struck the wall of a house. From within the house came the gruff and angry voice of an old man saying, "who knows me?--I'm an old man and no good (*mafak*) any longer and am nearly ready to die--who comes and makes noise at my house?". When the young man went to the decrepit old man's house, the latter greeted the young hunter by saying, "oh sorry! My child has come to visit me!". He invited the young hunter in and asked him to sit down and wait for him in the house while he went to get some food for his visitor. The old man went off to his garden and returned with taro and sugar cane for his guest--but the taro was bad and partly rotten while the sugar cane was dry and riddled with insects. The young man ate and when he finished the old man said, "there's a possum (*nuk*) nest not far from here in the top of a wild pandanus tree. The possum sleeps in this tree and I have tried many times to kill it. But I'm an old man, and it always runs away before I can get it. Let the two of us go together and kill him. I'll climb up to the top of the tree, and when he tries to run away you will be waiting at the bottom to kill him". And so the two went off. When they arrived at the wild pandanus, the old man showed the good (*tambal*, good, healthy, fit) man the spot at the base of the tree where the possum would run down and told him to wait there. Then the old man climbed high up into the tree. When he got to the top, he took a huge stone that he had hidden there and dropped it down on the young man below, crushing him. Then he took up his drum and put on his feather decorations and danced and sang up in the treetop before he came down. After he climbed down from the tree he took up the body of the young man which he carried home, butchered, cooked and ate. Back home the three remaining brothers began to worry, some time had passed and their elder brother still had not returned. The eldest of the

remaining brothers decided to set off into the forest to look for him. He went along and followed his brother's trail, marked by marsupials hanging from trees, all of which were now rotten. After some time he came upon the same clearing his brother had seen, and there the *sing-song* sang while hopping along the fallen log. Like his brother before him, he tried to shoot the bird but missed. He was tricked in the same way, for the *sing-song* was really the old man's wife who lured unsuspecting hunters to her husband's house. As before, the young man's arrow struck the old man's house with a loud thump, and the old man called out, "I'm not a good man (i.e., I'm decrepit--but also bad) that you should come and visit me!". But when the young man approached his house, he asked who this young man might be that he came to visit him. The hunter asked if the old man had seen his brother, but the old man lied and said he had seen no one--how would he, since he lived so far away in the forest? Then, greeting the young man as his child, he told him to go and wait in his house while he got some food for him. When he returned he brought bad taro and sugar cane for the young man to eat, and then told the tale of the possum: "I am old and alone, if I had a son or a brother I could get that possum, but...". And so it went as before, and the old man killed and ate the young man. Before long, the third brother began to worry about his two elder brothers, and he followed after them and met the same end. And so only the youngest brother remained, and he sat thinking and worrying about his elder brothers. That night he shot a pig and performed the *un at* ('arrow fire') rite. In their house the brothers had *men amem*, sacred netbags containing the bones (*kun* = 'bones, strength') and spirits (*usong*) of those who lived before. He and they ate the pig, and at dawn the next day he addressed them as *afaalik* and asked which of them wished to accompany him into the forest to look for his brothers. One of these *men amem* rattled in reply, and so he slung him from his head and carried him along into the bush. The two of them went along together, following the trail of the others, and as they went they shot lots of game--so much, in fact, that most of it would rot because there was too much to eat. They came upon the same clearing as the others had seen, and the young man shot at the *sing-song* but hit the old man's house instead. When the old man called out, "who's that?" the young man replied with hot words (*weng atul*), "I come--it is ME and no other!". The young man demanded to know about his brothers, but the old man protested that he had seen no one and was alone. The young man then told him to go and get some food for him to eat, and good food too--if not, he'd go to the old man's garden and take it himself. The old man did as he was told, mumbling to himself that this one was another kind of man entirely (*tenum asit*). He returned to his house where the young man was waiting and the two of them ate, and afterwards the old man told the younger about the possum in the tree. The two of them went. When they got there, the young man looked around and saw blood and entrails lying

about, but said nothing. The old man instructed him as he had the others, and then climbed up into the tree. But instead of waiting where he had been told, the young man gathered together some wood and arranged it in the shape of a man and put his decorations and penis gourd on it, and then concealed himself a little ways off. The old man dropped a huge stone on this fabricated man and began dancing and singing, thinking he had killed the youth. When the old man came down the other was waiting and filled his body with arrows and then beat him until all his bones were broken and threw the body into his house. When he approached, the old man's wife (who had been hiding under the house) came out dancing and singing--she thought her husband was coming, but the young man shot her too and threw her body into the house as well, and then he set the house ablaze. Behind the house was a heap of his brothers' bones, and he gathered these up, put them in a netbag, and carried them home. When he got home he put his brothers' bones inside the house. He shot a pig and gathered lots of food--cucumber (*timilit*), gourds (*oget*), and salt (*yol*)--put it inside the house, and boarded up the door. Then he went off to hunt lizards. When he came back, he heard the sounds of men eating inside the house. He shot a lizard arrow (*yol*) inside the house and heard his brothers running from one side to the other. He opened up the door, went inside, and found his brothers there, alive and well. They stayed and gardened together for some time, but later the youngest brother became angry with the others over food. He scolded them, saying, "before you were only bones and I got food for you". He stayed inside, and his three elder brothers got up and went behind the house. There they had some feathers of the *tiyam* bird, rubbed them on their skins, and then put them on. They had turned into *tiyam* birds themselves and spread their wings and flew up to a nearby branch. The younger brother heard their cry, and when he saw them he told them to come back, that he was only joking about the food. But they didn't answer and instead got up and flew away. There were only a few poor *tiyam* feathers left, and the youngest brother hurriedly put these on and took off, trying to catch up with his brothers to get them to come back. But they just flew on, and he followed after them. This is how *tiyam* birds fly, with three in the front and a fourth trailing behind.

The tale is dense, rich, and complex, and I will only sketch an interpretation here. Plainly, it involves more than a quaint story about how it is that *tiyam* birds fly in their peculiar fashion. It is full of reverberating but puzzling references--dead marsupials hanging from trees and an illusory one that hunts the hunter from a treetop: transformations into birds; the repeated reference to lizard arrows (*yol*) and the mention of salt

(also *yol*), perhaps a hint at a spirit house (*yolam*); noisy rattings of arrows on the old cannibal's house, the rattling of the *men amem* that assists the youth, the smashing of the victims by the falling stone, the smashed dummy, and the breaking of the villain's bones. Like all myth everywhere, this and other Telefol tales show a profusion of such suggestive refrains, and tantalizing as they are, it would take us too far afield to try to unravel them in their fullness. Instead, I'll simply draw attention to some aspects that seem immediately pertinent for present purposes.

Themes of death, decay, regeneration, and loss seem to dominate the story, and all of these are enmeshed in the overall sense of entropy and recovery. Here our first signal as to what may come lies in the fact that the first hunter--and all subsequent ones--continues deep into the bush even after he has found game. He goes further and further away, leaving a wake of dead marsupials dangling from the trees, and from this we may already guess that he will not return home. He comes to a forest clearing, but one that is merely the result of a fallen log. Here a Telefol audience picks up yet another foreshadowing--as should our hero--for one euphemism for a corpse is *at kulu*, 'rotting log'. The *sing-song* dancing up and down on the log implies rejoicing at death, a reading confirmed when we learn that the bird is actually the murderer's wife, who feasts with him on the corpses of his victims. When the hunter, who has been thus far successful, fits a lizard arrow to his bow, we know something is up. The blunt-headed *yol* arrow can be used for birds, especially in a pinch. But it is not the ideal choice, and such arrows and lizard hunting in general are not really appropriate for a grown man, being instead the standard equipment of boys and youths. Thus equipped with a relatively harmless weapon they rove through the bush, ostensibly to perfect their skills and hunt lizards, but often as not to evade the less engaging pasttime of taro gardening. They hunt lizards when there is nothing better to do. Here there seems to be a sign of immaturity, with moral overtones of



poor judgment, and we should recall that as *asit* means 'immature', it also conveys the sense of 'strangeness' and distance of the deep forest far from human habitations. Something is bound to go wrong, and sure enough, it does. The hunter misses the bird (of course) and by this misfire strikes the house of the old man. The old man is at first uncongenial, and his remarks are in fact riddles that reveal that he truly is a bad man (*tenum mafak*). Further, his hospitality is niggardly--he only offers poor fare to his visitor. When he suggests a possum hunt together, the hunter is taken in. Thus the old man kills and eats whom he feeds, and the hunter becomes the prey of a non-existent possum and a false host. Things are clearly wrong, and in the old man's place the world seems to work backwards and inside out. By the time the second brother sets out and follows the trail of now-rotting possums it is clear that he and the next to follow him are also doomed: they will not return.

Having lost all his elder brothers, the last brother is alone--and yet he is not entirely alone, for he has *men anem* and the *usong* that inhabit them with him in the house (this, by the way, suggests that this is no ordinary house, but a *yolam*, a men's spirit house). By now he knows that no ordinary fate has befallen his brothers, and he accordingly prepared and seeks help from the *usong* before setting off. After feeding them properly and sharing a meal with them, one of the *usong* announces its wish to accompany him. Here he is in a sense fighting fire with fire, for *usong* are, like the villain, old men--but old men of considerable power. This power is manifest in the extraordinary success the youth has in hunting en route to his rendezvous with his adversary. He is now hot (*atul-so* or *mamiin-so*), and when challenged by the old man-eater he seizes the initiative by responding boldly (his actual words are *nita teli kwa! nagal ita kwa!*, using the emphatic forms for 'me' and 'I'). Rather than being the passive recipient of the old man's deficient hospitality, he threatens to take what he wants by

force. Certainly not the approved etiquette between guest and host, but then his host is not really a host anyway. Here, once again, is an indication that all of this is going on beyond man's society and his rules, and there is a delightful irony in the cannibal's comment that this young man is *asit*, for the setting of the action is in *asittem*.<sup>23</sup>

What happens next is relatively straightforward: the old fox is outfoxed. While the old man plans to lure his victim to his death by means of a fake possum, the young man uses a phony victim to slay the slayer and turn the tables: counterfeit is countered with counterfeit. Here we should note--for future reference--one other detail of significance. The youth sees blood and entrails (*isak* and *ool*; note that *oolisak*, 'belly blood' means anger). But he says not a word about this, and it is clear that were he to do so his course would be made difficult, or perhaps even impossible. He *sees* (how did the others not see?) *but remains silent*. In the end, he kills the old fellow thrice over, giving measure for measure. Shooting is not enough--he breaks all the bones (see below) and then burns the corpse, along with the corpse of the old woman who was in cahoots with her husband.

In some sense it would be possible for the story to end here, for revenge has been taken. But the young man has a more ambitious aim: he wants to retrieve what has been lost and bring his brothers back.

He gathers up their bones and places them in a netbag and they thus become in a sense *men amem*, much like the one he took to accompany him in the first place. When he returns home, they are installed in the house and treated much like *men amem*: he feeds them pig and cucumbers and salt, things that *usong* like to eat very much. He discreetly boards up the door. But then he seems to take a retrograde step, since he wanders off to hunt lizards. Here again this may serve to alert a Telefol audience to the prospect of further plot complications. His next act seems to confirm this, for when he

hears his brothers in the house he fires a lizard arrow inside. This is a plot symmetry with a difference, for it evokes the previous episode at the old cannibal's house, but here the arrow goes in instead of bouncing off. Whatever the case, it is a strange way to confirm the revitalization of one's dead brothers and by its link with the encounters with the old man seems to betoken another antagonism. Shortly thereafter he *speaks his anger* about food to his brothers (who were themselves once food). He goes further and insults and shames them not only by claiming credit for their lives, but by alluding to them as mere bones. This is very serious talk in Telefolmin, bad talk (*weng mafak*), and reference to a recent death to a relative of the deceased can provoke violent anger; likewise, the suggestion to a man that he is aging or may die (and become worm and maggot fodder) is a grave insult likely to end in violence (it is a standard ground for divorce). How much worse, then, when speaking to the nearest relatives possible about their past death? They leave the house and carry the process of clothing their bones a step further by donning bird feathers. Thus transformed, they prepare to depart. Realizing too late his rashness, the young man implores them to return and disavows his earlier words. But it is already too late. The brothers leave, and given the choice of remaining alone or going with them, he puts on the poor leavings of feathers that remain and follows after them. In the end, they are all lost: as men, they are finished.

There is still much to the tale that remains unexplored. It might be interesting to analyze reciprocities here, teasing out the relations between the various meals, for instance. It would also be interesting to ponder the difference between the elder brothers--who go for meat and become meat--and the last brother--who took bones with him and brought more back. But all these must remain loose ends. Instead, we can merely take the most general sense of the tale to get a graphic portrayal of the meaning of

entropy, becoming nothing. What began as a house with four brothers ends empty, the men having literally flown and become other than men.

In terms of the question of mortality, death is in some sense an abandonment. But the presence of *men amem* and *usong* suggests that this is not the only course, and indeed the youth attempts to recover his dead brothers and bring them back to life by treating them as *men amem*. He failed, it seems, because he spoke of what should have remained unsaid, and this contains the moral implications of lack of restraint and of immaturity. Telefol life surely offers confirmation here, as we have already seen in the case of disputes: an open breach almost always leads to the departure (flight) of one or both parties, and this distancing is especially appropriate when shame (*fitom*) is involved (cf. Wagner 1967:387). We may suppose that the dependence of seniors on juniors has uncomfortable implications, even in less extreme situations. But the youth's failure is perhaps even more complex than this. For one thing, relations between men and *usong* are every bit as contingent as relations between the living, and *usong*, like men, may depart of their own volition. Beyond this, there is a further difficulty which remains implicit and unstated: those who die violent deaths cannot be brought back to the *yolam* as *usong*. Thus the youth's attempts to transcend the consequences of mortality for his brothers were futile, and his rash speech not only shamed and insulted his brothers in the ordinary sense: it revealed them as imposters as well.

This story, upon which I have lavished so much attention, is like most other Telefol narratives in that it can shed light on how Telefolmin comprehend the world. But it is, after all, only a story told round evening fires. Being an *utuam sang*, the events are not necessarily believed to be true. Its value is mainly as entertainment (story telling is a finely developed art in Telefolmin) and perhaps as an oblique form of moral

instruction. Let us turn, then, to Telefol views of mortality that are not seen as fiction.

When Telefolmin die, several different sorts of fate await them depending upon who they are, how they led their life, and how they died. When infants die their bodies are often cast into swamps, and there are no further consequences for them or for the living. As infants, their *sinik*, here translatable as 'spirit', is poorly developed. This is evidenced primarily in their whining natures and their inability to hear (which is also the ability to understand, *tinangkamin*), to talk, and sometimes to see (which is also to know, *utamamin*). Water is inimical to *sinik* and extinguishes or washes it away. In the case of an infant, then, disposal in a swamp or other wet place assures its end. This also means that those who die by drowning or those whose bodies are tossed in water (as was sometimes done with enemy corpses) simply cease to exist. For all other deaths, however, there are three alternative modes of existence for the *sinik*: *bagel*, *momoyok*, and *usong*.

*Bagel* are what we would call ghosts, and this seems to be the fate of most Telefolmin. As a rule *bagel* have nothing to do with the living. They impose no demands, nor can they be of any help: they are simply and irrevocably gone. From time to time Telefolmin encounter *bagel* in the bush, but these remain merely strange and inconsequential experiences. Occasionally *bagel* may be seen nearer to hand, especially if a death has recently occurred. Precisely how this happens, nobody is sure, for *bagel* are supposed to dwell far off to the west in an underground land called simply Bagelam, the Ghost Place or Land of the Dead. When a person dies their *sinik* becomes a *bagel* almost immediately and may sometimes hover near the corpse for some time, frightening anyone nearby. The traditional Telefol means of disposing of the dead is to place the body on an exposure platform (*ilet*) in a garden belonging to the deceased. After the corpse is in place no taro may be harvested from

this garden, and it is the practice to uproot and burn this person's taro, stalk and all. At the same time, any pigs belonging to the deceased are slaughtered and distributed to mourners and payments of *bonang* are made to those outside the immediate family who had any outstanding claims or were simply especially close friends. This is done partly to ease their sorrow and to soothe their anger at the death. In general Telefolmin do not take the loss of death lightly, and while those intimate with the deceased wail inconsolably, others are likely to give vent to their anger at the loss by chopping down banana trees, hacking at the deceased's house with axes, or making angry accusations and recriminations to the effect that had the dead person's family looked after them better they would still be alive. Mourning periods are variable, ranging from a few days to a few weeks, and in the case of spouses, even longer. During this time all villagers must remain in the village, drumming and dancing is prohibited. It is specifically forbidden to plant new gardens or to make garden fires at this time, and if people go to the bush it may only be for the purpose of harvesting taro to bring back to the village for their meals. Sometimes near the end of the mourning period the men will stage a collective wild pig hunt, which is said to get rid of the sorrow. Mourning officially ceases with the slaying of a domestic pig, the *ataanket kong* ('the pig of the flower of the sun') which is marked by the removal of yellow mourning clay (*tol*) and its replacement with festive red ochre (*bagan*). From this point on rejoicing, drumming, and singing are once again possible and the restrictions on villagers are lifted. While others go about their business, spouses of the deceased may remain in their own personal mourning, continue to wear *tol*. Sometimes they wear keepsakes of the deceased around their necks, such as an arrow point (or nowadays a shotgun shell) or a chip of wood from a tree felled in garden making, or, if a woman has died, a taro scraper. In the case of a woman whose husband has died, she will allow her hair to go uncut for six months or more; when she cuts her hair she is

ready to resume normal life and may remarry if she wishes (preferably to a brother or cousin of her husband, but this is a matter of her own choosing).

All of these things pertain to the living, for shortly after the death--sometimes immediately--the *bagel* begins his or her journey to Bagelam. Though some *bagel* are reluctant to leave, by the time the flesh has all rotted away from their bones they too will have gone. Regardless of the *bagel's* home village, the first stage in the journey is to return to Telefolip. The houses of Telefolip are all rebuilt on their original sites from one generation to the next. The most important houses are those of the men's cult complex, including the Telefolip itself, the *amogeen* ('house-mother') of all the Telefolmin. But in Telefolip there is also the first family house (*unangam*) built by Afek herself. Unlike any other house in Telefolmin, this house is strictly inherited by an individual who also--unlike any Telefolmin--has an inherited personal name, Sayimin. She is the most direct descendant of Afek herself, being the eldest daughter of the eldest daughter of the eldest daughter... of Afek (i.e., by matrilineal primogeniture). She is the guardian of this house, one of whose hearth-posts is placed in an oversize hole in the ground below. This is the entry way through which all *bagel* pass from the land of the living and make their way along the underground road (*bagel ilep*) leading to Bagelam.

The dead pass down this road, which roughly follows the course of the Ok Tekin (Sepik) as far as the junction with the Ok Ilam, over which tower the two mountains of Iltigin and Abemtigin ('sacred/tabu/forbidden mountain'). Here there is a fork in the road. One fork heads due west (approximating the course of the Ok Ilam) under Tifalmin country and the Hindenburg range, under Bultem (the central village of the related Opkeemin [Wopkaimin] people), and to Bagelam proper; the other fork follows the course of the Ok Tekin north-west in the direction of Atbalmin country. Over this junction presides a being known as Iltigin Kayaak, with the less well-known name of Bisiilki.

Bisiilki is a huge dog whose name means "the greedy one" (after *bisiil*, dog-like 'greed/haste', especially in eating). Bisiilki is the guardian of the road to Bagelam and Telefolmin have good reason to fear him. Bisiilki has two tasks. One is to see to it that the *bagel* do not return to the land of the living but remain in their underground abode. His second task is to allow those whose lives did not contravene Afek's prohibitions (tabus) to pass peacefully on to Bagelam. But those who violated food tabus, the tabus of the men's cult, or other regulations--in particular the incest tabu and the prohibition on eating one's own pigs (*dubung*--see the following section) meet a different reception from him. These people, whose conduct itself is thought of as greed, are speedily devoured by him and emerge along the bad road from his anus as feces. After this they suffer great pain as they are again devoured by worms and snakes and then proceed to a lake of fire. What happens to them after that nobody knows. Nor is anybody certain of the conditions in Bagelam either, for that matter, for Bisiilki sees to it that there is no communication back and forth, although a few mediums (*usong*) have from time to time caught glimpses behind his back. Bagelam and the *bagel* are opaque, unknown, and hidden (*magalo*), and there is little more one can say about them.

Not all Telefolmin become *bagel*, however. Those who die in violence or bloodshed cannot become *bagel* (or *usong* either, for that matter). Instead, they become *momoyok*. *Momoyok* are known by alternative names as well, the most common of which are *saamin* (literally, 'enemy children/descendants') or *saatan* (a variant from of the same name). It should be noted that this applies not only to the victims of warfare, accidents, or other such mishaps but also includes women who die in childbirth and the victims of sorcery. *Momoyok* do not dwell in Bagelam but have their own abode in caves high up in the mountains to the east of Telefolip, at Ifaaltigin or Ifaalabiip. Unlike *bagel*, *momoyok* impinge on the world of the living. Visually they offer a hideous aspect, for they are red (*isaklut*, 'red, blood-like') and their heads



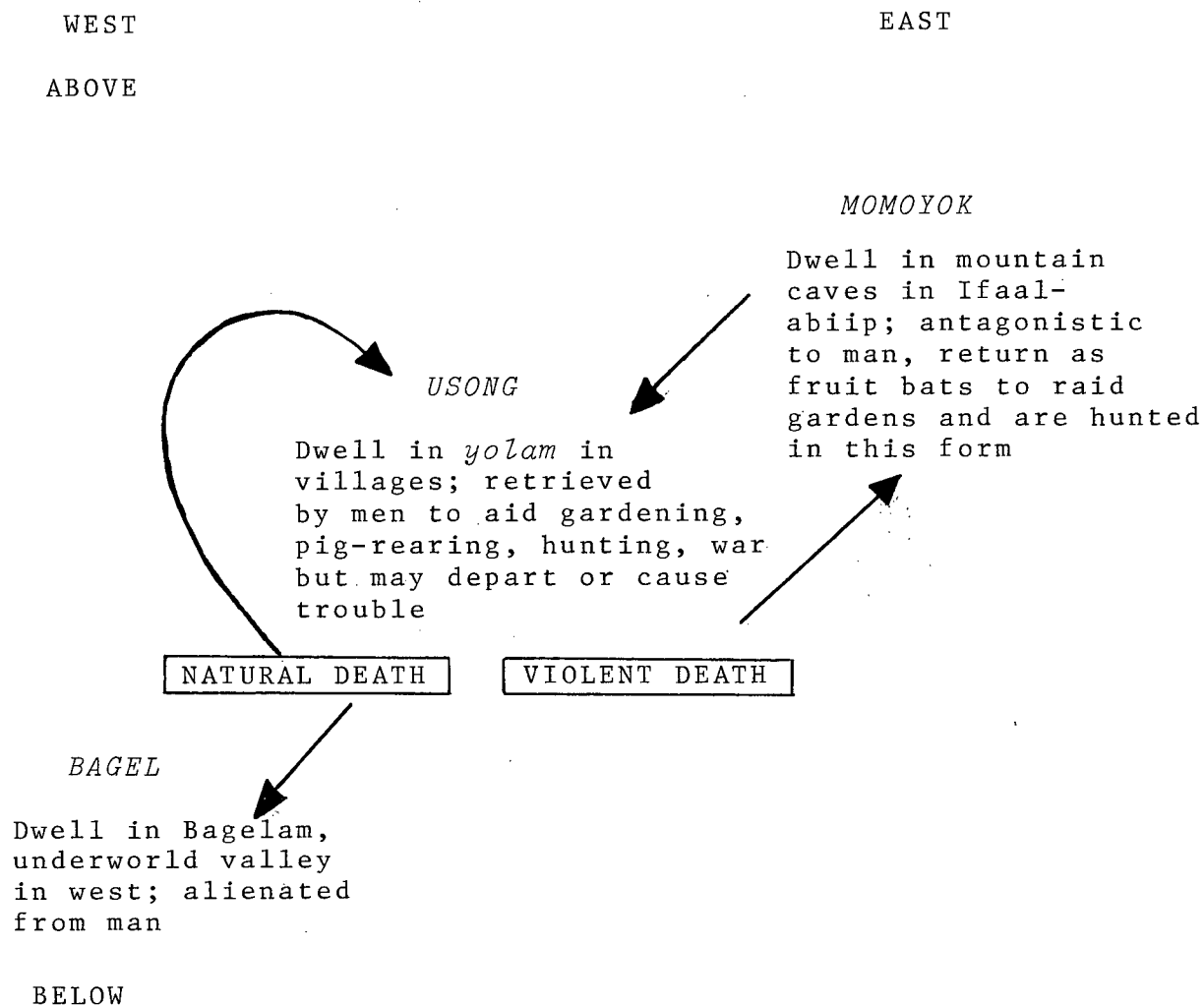
are severed from their torsos. While at their home of Ifaalabiip they may put their heads on from time to time, but they generally remove them before venturing forth and the whistling sound they make when they fly or walk issues from their exposed windpipes. *Momoyok* only go abroad at night, and they may be seen as the *saman*, or fruit bats that raid people's gardens. In general, *momoyok* are not well disposed towards the living, and people explain this by saying that they are angry that their friends, kinsmen, and villagers allowed them to die in the manner they did.

The third category of existence after death is that of *usong*. Like *momoyok*, *usong* figure in Telefol life and are in this regard unlike *bagel* who are of no consequence one way or another for the living. But unlike *momoyok*, *usong* are men who have died a "natural" death of old age, and to this extent they are also somewhat like *bagel*. *Usong* are unique, however, in several very important ways. Whereas *bagel* are lost irrevocably to the community of the living, and whereas *momoyok* are in a hostile relationship to them, *usong* are beneficial (though they are under certain circumstances dangerous to certain people), continue to take part in village life, and are in fact essential to it. We can summarize some of the relations between *bagel*, *momoyok*, and *usong* in Figure 11, on the following page.

How is it that *usong* occupy this special position? To begin with, not just anyone can become an *usong*. In addition to dying a natural or good death, a man must be particularly outstanding or competent to become a potential *usong*. *Usong*, as with living men of flesh and blood, are divided into two categories: *iman miit* ('taro base/kind') and *un miit* ('arrow base/kind'). Here we might note in passing that women cannot become *usong*, nor can youths, if for no other reason than that they are not initiated and are therefore prohibited (in this life or after) from taking up residence in the *yolan*. *Usong* are thus old men who were either outstanding gardeners/pig raisers or excellent hunters/warriors in life. This of course is sensible in

FIGURE 10

## Categories of the Dead



so far as they are brought back into the *yolam* so that they might render assistance to their fellow villagers in these pursuits--a man who was not especially good in either sphere would not really be of much help. Becoming an *usong* and rejoining the village after death is therefore contingent on performance while alive.

When such a man dies, his mortuary rites are handled somewhat differently from those of other men. Sometimes the body is taken out from the village secretly by the men of the appropriate ritual division (Taro or Arrow) under cover of night. He is placed on an exposure platform which men fence with special care to prevent rats and other animals from destroying the

bones which will be the physical locus of the *usong*. As the body is placed on the platform one or more of those present will address the deceased, explaining that they are treating him with suitable preparation and that they wish him to remain with them instead of going off to Bagelam. Depending on the particular man's skill, they will ask his help with gardening or hunting, adding that they will look after him well, keep him company, and feed him so that he will be happy among them--*usong* who are not well taken care of can cause trouble and if angry or dissatisfied may leave for Bagelam on their own so that the netbag containing their bones becomes 'cold' (*diil-so*) and empty of value.

The word *kun* is the word for 'bone' in Telefol, but also means 'hardness' or 'strength' or 'endurance'. Thus when Telefolmin retrieve the bones of an *usong* they are not only maintaining a continuity between past and present, but are drawing upon the strength and power of the past as well. In this sense, then, the retrieval of *usong* is one of the most potent means Telefolmin have to combat entropy, and here it should be recalled that it is their presence in the *yolam* that anchors the persistence of the village as an entity. Taken collectively, the *usong* are the foundation of village strength and permanence in the face of the world's generalized tendency towards decay, flux, and chaos. The recovery of *usong* from death and loss is the means of holding the centre firm and of keeping (*waafunamin*) at least one part of man and his works and rescuing them from time.

A number of men were quite articulate about the importance of *usong*, *men amem*, and the *yolam* in these terms, and one of the most common ways this was explained to me was that Europeans have books and writing while Telefolmin have the *yolam* and all that it stands for; "*men amem* are our books". This is meant in a couple of different senses, for Telefolmin know that we gain knowledge and some control over the world through writing, as

any visitor to the government office would be quickly led to believe. But in addition to this, the *yolam* with its *men amem* and *usong* has much the same cultural significance that libraries and museums have among us: they are the repository of what is valued in the collective heritage. But in Telefolmin, there is a subtle but significant shift of emphasis. Most of men's creations and works--in a physical sense, at any rate--are ephemeral and transitory. But men's bones and their spirits endure in *men amem*, and Telefolmin thus save and preserve the creators rather than their creations (we might almost say that it is their *creativity* that is so painstakingly held and handed on).

Despite the emphasis on permanence and continuity, relations between men and *usong* are still subject to a number of conditions that characterize Telefol life as a whole. In principle, the relation between men and *usong* is a reciprocal one, each rendering various services to the other. But since *usong* are, after all, men, they may behave in much the same way. Sometimes they may simply be irritable and grumpy, as old men sometimes are, and when this happens they may bring sickness to village people, particularly women and children. If they feel neglected or are left out of consideration when especially tasty foods such as pork and eels are eaten, they may retaliate either by leaving for Bagelam or by attacking those responsible. All relations based on reciprocity have a conditional character, since the state of the relation is not so much prescribed as it is the outcome of performance. This means that people will generally put less stock in assurances of goodwill than in the evidence of actions, and once again this is true of men's relations with *usong*. As a consequence, it is not automatically assumed that an *usong*--especially a new one--will in fact prove to be helpful. If a good hunter or warrior has died and men wish to bring him back as an *usong*, they will test out his willingness and efficacy. When he is placed on the exposure platform, one of his arrows will be put in his hand and men will ask him to show them wild pigs. They return the next day.

If the *usong* is willing, his hand will be grasping the arrow and it will be pointing in the direction where wild pigs are to be found. They stage a hunt, and if it is successful, this indicates that the dead man wishes to become an *usong* among them and that he will be of help. In the case of a renowned gardener, his bones will be collected after his flesh has rotted, and they will be buried (along with the appropriate ritual accompaniments) in the centre of a new taro garden. Then the men watch and see: does the taro come up quickly? Is the harvest large? Are there many new stalks for planting? If so, then the man will be a good *usong* for them and they in turn will look after him well. If not, the bones are merely discarded in the bush without further fuss, since they are empty: the *sinik* has already become a *bagel* and gone off to Bagelam.

As always, this reciprocity between men and *usong* is a two-way street. A man who eats pig in the bush and not in the village runs risks since the *usong* will scent the pork on his breath and become jealous that the man tried to hide this from him and avoid sharing it. The *usong* says to himself, "very well--you wanted to eat meat, and so you did--now I will eat meat too!". The result is that the *usong* begins to consume the guilty man's flesh, and if not pacified by the slaying of a pig (*ugem kong*), this will continue until the man dies. If men are absent from the *yolam* and the village for some time, the *usong* becomes hot and angry. He didn't decide to remain in the village merely to hang around in a bag and sit in an empty *yolam* or pass nights in the cold and darkness without the warmth of fire and human company. If the men go off and abandon him, he may well abandon them too. And if he remains with them despite this, they had better look out for his wrath. To avoid sickness, they must cool down the *usong* again by performing a rite in which they give him cucumbers and other cool moisture-laden foods to soothe him, and they must be soft and conciliatory (*bet*) to him with their words.

Sometimes things don't go well between men and the *usong* they look after. Since dealing with the *usong* can be a risky business, not all men deal with them directly, but prefer to leave this to others who are unafraid and know how to go about it properly. This is particularly true in the case of the *usong* associated with warfare and hunting (*un miit kasel*, Arrow-base people), since they are often kept for the very reason that their anger is fierce and unrelenting: they are hard (*kun-so*) and hot (*mamiin-so*), and a man who looks after them must be careful not to cross them, for they can be dangerous. One should be extremely careful about using hot words or carrying grudges against fellow villagers in their presence, for their enthusiasm for the fight is likely to infect those present, igniting tempers until violence flares. Barbara Jones, who was carrying out fieldwork among the neighbouring Fegolmin, told me that the Fegolmin also keep *usong*, and those who look after them refer to themselves as "cowboys" (they have seen Western movies) because of their fearlessness in the face of the risks their task entails. When I repeated this comment to Telefolmin, they understood it perfectly well and nodded their agreement.

It is because the relation between *usong* and men hinges upon reciprocity that the relation sometimes comes to an end. A disgruntled *usong* can leave of his own accord or remain to cause illness. Sometimes *usong* remain but slacken their efforts and drag their heels when men want something from them--they only do things half-heartedly (*atok-atok keemin*). If men are not attentive to such hints, an *usong* may be amenable to seduction away from them. The *yolam* generally serves as a dormitory for visitors from other villages. This is so mainly because of fears that such men may initiate adultery if they sleep in an *unangam* where women are present. But they may also steal *usong* away from their home *yolam*, especially if they are familiar with the name and character of particular *usong* in their host's village. Such men will make several visits to the *yolam*, each time whispering (or even

thinking) soothing words and promises to an *usong* while his proper caretakers are asleep. An *usong* who is unhappy at home will be open to such talk, and may signal his assent to the visitor by rattling his bones. The man will then quietly take the *men amem--usong* and all--and run off with it or pass it to a confederate waiting in the darkness outside. (This, by the way, is another reason why *yolam* should not be left unattended.) If those whose *usong* has been stolen can identify the culprit--not always possible if there are several visitors from different villages, as is sometimes the case when rites are being undertaken--they will of course try to get the *usong* back. But since *usong* are powerful men with a will of their own, it is unwise to attempt to do so by force, especially if he has shown a reluctance (rooted in resentment) to help his erstwhile caretakers. More often people will wait to see if the *usong* makes his new hosts ill (a deterrent to out-and-out kidnapping unless men are willing to kill a great number of pigs to win the *usong's* goodwill). If not, then it is clear that the *usong* is content in his new home and probably wanted to leave anyway. If you don't look after your *usong* properly, they will not look after you and may run off or be lured away by others, just as is the case with one's women, children, and pigs.

The connection between *usong* and men can be broken in other ways. In the days of warfare, a principal strategy was to either sack an enemy *yolam* for its *men amem* (just as women were often kidnapped) or else to raze it to the ground. This was one way of crippling an enemy and--with luck--profiting from this. Fortunately for Telefolmin, only one of their *yolam* was ever destroyed in this way, when the Iligimin burned the Telefolip in an attempt to destroy the Telefolmin as a whole. The Iligimin very nearly succeeded, and Telefol strength was at low ebb immediately after the burning of the Telefolip. But the house was not entirely destroyed, and the most powerful relics escaped intact. After Telefolmin rebuilt the Telefolip their

strength was renewed and the *usong* added their power and fury to the retaliation, which ended the existence of the Iligimin. But though Telefol *yolam* were not burned in war, some (including one in Derolengam) have burned to the ground as the result of accident, and when this happens *men amem* and *usong* are lost. Men of such a village are demoralized until a new stock of *men amem* can be built up, and are described as "nothing men" (*tenum bisop*) or "sick men" (*mafak-so tenum*). They are *kun binim*, 'weak' or 'boneless'.

Like men, *usong* must also continually prove themselves. Sometimes an *usong* "goes rogue" and makes people sick out of sheer spite, or for no reason at all. He will cost men many pigs, and if the people nonetheless die or if the *usong* harms repeatedly out of greed for the smell of pork, then drastic steps must be taken. Men will adopt a different tone towards the *usong*: they may deliberately exclude him when bits of cucumber or pork fat are dropped into the netbags of the others in the *yolam*, and if men speak to him at all, they will no longer wheedle or cajole or attempt to reconcile. Instead, they will scold him with harsh words. If the *usong* persists in his bad ways, they will punish him by taking him in his netbag to some wet and cold place--perhaps under a rotten log--and leave him there so that the discomfort will bring him to his senses. They will tell him that they will only bring him back to his nice and warm *yolam* if he mends his ways. Some time later they will come back to get him. Men are a bit fearful at such times, for you may never be sure if the *usong* will retaliate or not. Nor is it certain that the *usong* is even present with the bones any longer--he may have left for Bagelam, or it is even possible that too much water destroyed him. So for these reasons, he will be tried out once more before being brought back to the village to see if he will help with hunting or gardening. If, after all this, the *usong* persists in making trouble with his villagers, they will tell him that they are finished with him and his bones will be cast



away in the bush in a lonely and miserable spot. This is tantamount to killing him, for he will either depart at once for Bagelam or be extinguished.

Given all of these considerations, we can see that while *usong* look after their village and indeed form its focal point in their house, the *yolam*, this victory over entropy is neither absolute nor necessarily permanent. Instead, it depends on continued effort by both men and *usong*. *Usong* may for a host of reasons absent themselves from men's affairs or even turn their efforts against men. The continued residence of an *usong* in his village turns upon whether men are successful at pleasing him and whether he is successful at pleasing them. As a consequence, only *usong* of demonstrated efficacy (and benevolence) remain in the *yolam*. This means, of course, that the most powerful *usong* are *ipso facto* the oldest. Many of these have a number of deeds that have gained them a reputation among men privy to such things, and some receive new names to commemorate their assistance to their villages. One such is Tenum Aleben ("two men") because when he went with villagers to fight he once killed two enemy warriors on his own (in a Telefol expedition to Nenataman to wipe out the last of the Iligimin): as they tried to flee the Telefolmin, he caused a tree to fall and kill them. Powerful *usong* have names both before and after their death, and *usong* with an unbroken record of extraordinary feats serve--like books--to tie together and collate collective history. Even more to the point from the Telefol view, they *constitute* it. This, however, only applies to those *usong* that have continually proven themselves, and even some of these may be thrown out if they cause trouble--Tetumnok of Derolengam is no longer present in the *yolam* for precisely this reason. If becoming an *usong* seems to offer the prospect of immortality, it can only be had among the living and is, like everything else, contingent.

Entropy, death, and loss can never be defeated but may only be combatted through continued effort. This can be seen if we look at how the issues we've discussed appear in ideas concerning pigs. Pigs are of two radically different kinds, domestic (*kong*) and wild (*saaman*). Here there is a clear contrast between the cultural world and nature, and this is also a contrast between man's order and entropy. Further, the relation between wild and domestic pigs in Telefolmin pertains to our discussion of mortality and its consequences.

Domestic pigs, like humans, domestic dogs (*kayaam*), and all garden crops are endowed with *sinik*. They are part of man's world and the possession of *sinik* means that aside from having what we might call 'soul' or 'spirit' they have consciousness and the faculty of comprehending human speech. Thus it is that men speak not only to people, but to dogs, pigs, and crops, and not aimlessly, for all things with *sinik* can understand and respond. Domestic pigs are fed cooked taro by hand, and stand in a quasi-commensal relation to those who feed them, who are called their parents. Indeed, domestic pigs are very much like children, both structurally and sentimentally. The closest Telefol approximation of the English word 'family' is *ulimal*, and this specifically denotes a man, his wife, children, and pigs. Domestic pigs live in houses with their families, and their section of the floor (the *kong abiin*) is immediately adjacent to the women and children's floor (the *digim*--see Fig. 1 above). Such pigs are individually named, and respond to them when called. They recognize their parents and generally accompany them when they set off for the bush. They both receive and demonstrate affection, listen to and often obey their parents' talk. They are thus demonstrably within the moral domain of human society. When they have misbehaved, as the sometimes do by breaking into gardens, they show the sulky wariness that Telefolmin attribute to shame, *fitom*. Being fully cultural creatures, they will often be lectured at length (cf. Wheatcroft 1973:63); if they persist in bad behaviour

they are blinded, but not so much as punishment as a corrective, since such a pig's powers of sight and discrimination have gone wrong. Particular pigs are recognized to have particular personalities, and Telefolmin will not permit their pigs to associate with one that has a poor reputation (much as we do with our children and their friends). In short, domestic pigs are very much like children to Telefolmin.

If we contrast domestic with wild pigs it becomes clear that they couldn't be more different, even though, to our eyes, they are the same animal. Domestic pigs are largely seen as female, and this is partly because women spend so much time tending them, partly because over two-thirds of the domestic herd is made up of sows, and partly because the attributes desired in them are a full skin tight with fat, heaviness, the colour white, moisture, and docility--all of which are attributes desired in women. Wild pigs, however, are seen as muscular, aggressive, dry (their meat is often smoked, but this is never the case with *kong*), and male: they are epitomized by their sharp and threatening tusks and red bloodshot eyes, and their tusks, penes, and testicles are often items of male adornment. In contrast to domestic pigs, wild pigs are not simply non-cultural--they are anti-cultural. A favourite image of wildness is *sacaman*, the wild pig; and a mother may scold an unruly child by calling him a *sacaman man*, 'wild pig child'. This is because wild pigs have no *sinik*, which is here equivalent to the awareness that marks the world of human relationships; a child who behaves as though he had no sense of others is acting like a wild pig, as though he too had no *sinik*. Wild pigs are of the bush and are the children of *aanangen*, wild spirit women, and are beyond man's control. Rather than being fed and sustained by men in a moral and reciprocal relationship, wild pigs are completely capricious, autonomous, and self-willed.<sup>24</sup> Instead of being fed by men, they take what they want by force, ruining gardens, and attack men if they get the chance. If domestic pigs are in a sense children (*man*) to Telefolmin, it is clear that

bush pigs are man's enemies (*waasi* or *saa*). When men kill domestic pigs, it is always with a touch of regret or sadness, and those who have acted as their parents will not partake of their flesh--more than once I have seen a pig's mother turning away in tears when her "child" was killed. But when wild pigs are killed there is no remorse--instead, all rejoice (including women and children, who may not eat wild pig flesh), for wild pigs are truly enemies, and there can be no bonds of human sympathy where they are concerned.

Despite the fact that the distinction between wild and domestic pigs is consistently and rigorously made, it is in fact fragile and flexible because transformations between the two are possible. Thus, hunters will occasionally find the litters of wild pigs in the forest, and these may be brought back to the village and domesticated, becoming *kong* instead of *saaman*. Though such pigs may betray their origins by willfulness and red eyes (cf. S. Errington 1971, Weiner 1977:65), they nonetheless are an unexpected bonus in the hunt. Far more frequently, however, a domestic pig that has been neglected by its parents will run off to the bush and become feral, a garden raider, and a *saaman*. This is aggravated in the case of sows since domestic herds have few boars--when in heat they will often run off to the forest to become impregnated by a wild boar. Though most such sows return home with their litters, many must be sought out by their parents, and many again are never recovered. When this happens they have become wild. We can thus see that these transformations, which are mainly in one direction, are another form of attrition or loss--entropy again--that can only be forestalled by human effort.

The analogical tie between domestic pigs and humans--particularly children, and even more especially, daughters--is extremely close. In the next section we shall see that it is even closer than we have already seen, for rules analogous to the incest tabu apply to the consumption of domestic pork and this reflects (among other things) the fact that domestic pigs and one's daughters are both nurtured within one's household only to be given to others.

But there is at least one sense in which the analogy points in another direction--sorcery. This is so because despite whatever affection people may have for their pigs, they are reared specifically to be killed and eaten. (Here we can allude to a general symbolic continuum that embraces sexual intercourse, killing, and eating--but while this is implicit in much of Telefol thought, there is no confusion between these different acts.) Put bluntly, though domestic pigs are nurtured as children in Telefolmin, they are also victims.

Telefolmin do not kill pigs lightly or frequently, and though some do kill pigs simply because others want to eat pork, this is frowned upon and seems to have a somewhat unsavoury and unseemly aura about it. Domestic pigs must be killed on a number of specified occasions, including rather infrequent feasts and rituals. Aside from this, it may be necessary to kill pigs to restore health, especially if *usong* are the cause of illness. Here we can see that this is a form of substitution, the pig replacing a potential human victim, and much the same logic applies in the case of the pigs killed for the return payment in bridewealth transactions. In a certain sense, then, pigs are kept so that they may be given up in lieu of people--they are, so to speak, the members of one's family that may be most readily parted with. It is nonetheless true that they must inevitably be killed and thus lost.

If we consider the fate of domestic pigs after death, we see that this both parallels and departs from the fate of humans. The parallel is evident insofar as the fate of domestic pigs is similar to that of people who die violently and become *momoyok*. The departure consists in the fact that there are no *kong* equivalents of *usong*--the bones of domestic pigs (their jawbones) are in fact kept (by the person to whom the head--a prized portion--was given), but only as trophies and reminders of festive times, for there is no *sinik* attached to them. Further, it is known that the *bagel* have domestic pigs in Bagelam, but their source remains a mystery and it is specifically

denied that these are the *bagel* of pigs who lived among humans in this world.

If domestic pigs have *sinik* but cannot become *usong* or *bagel*, what happens to them? As I have said, their fate is similar to that of humans who die with bloodshed. They do not, however, become *momoyok*--they become wild pigs instead. Men's metaphorical children are destined to become men's metaphorical enemies, and the moral relation between men and domestic pigs becomes necessarily transformed and inverted when men kill them. Here men are in a characteristic double-bind, for they *must* kill their pigs for a number of reasons to ensure their own welfare, but when they do this they are swelling the ranks of their adversaries in the bush, whose number continually increases over time. There is an intriguing irony implicit in all this, for it is the case that domestic pigs are often killed in times of adversity, and one kind of adversity that causes great concern is the destruction of gardens by marauding wild pigs.

If we compare the respective fates of pigs and humans, we can begin to see the outlines of some underlying dimensions of the Telefol world. Death in either case constitutes loss, and such loss can be of two kinds: either total severance, as is the case with *bagel*, or a continuing and antagonistic impingement on the world of the living, as is the case with *momoyok* and wild pigs (*saaman*). In the case of the latter there are a number of suggestive resonances. So, for example, *momoyok* are alternatively known as *saamin*, 'enemy children', and they take the form of *saman*, the flying foxes that raid gardens at night; wild pigs are also garden raiders, and come into being in much the same way as *saamin* or *saman*. Linguistic similarities here are difficult to build upon, for there are definite distinctions of a phonological nature (vowel length, tone) that discriminate between these lexical items and yet a further one, *saaman* (distinguished by tone from *saman* = 'fruit bat') with the meaning of 'far', 'distant', 'different'. It is tempting, despite

linguistic *caveats*, to regard *saaman*, *saamin*, *saman*, *saman*--'wild pig', 'victims of violent deaths', 'fruit bats', and 'distant'--as all forming a related set within a single semantic field. Whatever the etymological facts, however, one thing is clear: those members of society (whether human or porcine) who are killed become transformed into denizens of the world beyond society who nonetheless encroach upon man's world from the outside. Further, this encroachment threatens the very source of life and sustenance in a particularly concrete and graphic way--they destroy the gardens, which are both man's works in the outside (the bush) and his means of nurturing his world. Life in Telefol can be conveyed by various idioms, but two of the most powerful are with reference to *taro* (*iman*) and to *sinik*: to be alive is to have *sinik* (*sinik-so*), and we find that not only do *saaman* and *saamin/saman/momoyok* make war on gardens, but they are also--like all other things of the bush--without *sinik* (*sinik binim*). In an important sense, then, they are the embodiment of death which feeds on life.

Given all of this, we are now in a position to attempt a summary of the role of entropy in the Telefol cosmos. We can begin by noting that, as a general principle, order decreases and entropy increases directly in proportion to the distance from the village, which figures as the focus for a concentric ordering of space. Here order is not mere tidiness, but figures as a concentration of what is valued in the Telefol world and which can be summarized as security and stability. As one moves outward from this sphere the world becomes increasingly uncertain, opaque, and threatening until--at the very extremes--it is conceived as the very antithesis of human society in the land of the *kundunang*. Entropy also has a temporal axis in which the past figures as a time of potency and greatness, beginning with Afek's creation of Telefol society. Then everything was bigger, better, and more bountiful than now, and this corresponds to the movement of man through the Telefol world.

Far from being seen as accumulation, progression through time leads to diminution and depletion that will ultimately lead to the end of the Telefol world. Men thus face a universe in which progressive attrition, whether of women, pigs, productivity or human beings themselves, is a condition of their existence. Mortality poses the question of loss in the most dramatic terms with the knowledge that all who live will die and be gone. The dead are by and large severed entirely from the society of the living, and once gone to Bagelam may never return: life continually drains away.

One of the chief tasks that men in Telefolmin face, then, is to pursue their projects against such odds, and this is a task that requires continual effort. One of the major means at their disposal is the retrieval of those who were most successful by bringing them back to the *yolam* as *usong*. In this way they may resist the general way of the world, and to the extent that there is any collective accumulation of cultural resources in the Telefol world, it is in the *yolam* itself--this is the true centre of order, stability and continuity for Telefolmin. But even here a secure victory cannot be won, for relations between men and *usong* are themselves contingent and conditional, and the assistance of *usong* can be forfeited or lost.

In the end, it seems that the Telefol strategy is to maintain a bulwark of sorts against dissolution by attempting to draw back and concentrate society's resources while holding at bay and excluding that which lies outside man's control. This seems to be an underlying theme pervading a number of different areas of Telefol life. Organizationally it is clearest in the Telefol marriage system in which recovery of women and endogamy dominate arrangements. It is almost as though there were a gravitational field around the village as a nucleus marked by continual attempts to draw women back into the village orbit. To resort to another metaphor, the system can be visualized as a radiating network whose ragged edges are folded back inwards upon its centre. From a formal point of view this is in effect a sort of involuted



containment which simultaneously establishes village definition and protects its integrity by sundering it from what lies beyond.

On the cosmological plane this sense of ordering can be seen as an effort to stabilize flux by setting up discontinuities which act as barriers separating that which is within from that which is outside. Telefolmin build two kinds of fences: garden fences (*daam*) and the fences which encircle the *yolam* (*tobaadaam*), and in each case they serve both to protect and segregate, and to keep things from getting mixed up at man's expense. Thus garden fences protect taro from the surrounding bush, most importantly from the *saaman* who are men's pigs turned enemies. *Yolam* fences, in turn, serve both to contain *usong* and to protect the women and children to whom they are dangerous. Here we see the glimmerings of how Telefolmin establish and maintain order in the world, by separating and polarizing antitheses, by creating disjunction.

vi. Order and Disjunction: Food Tabus

One of the most striking aspects of Telefol society is that there is a dearth of prescriptions or positive rules for behaviour--much of what goes on seems to be *ad hoc* and contingent in character. It is difficult to elicit statements which clearly specify obligations of any fixed kind. For example, the role of mother's brothers is often strongly marked throughout Melanesia.

But in Telefolmin I neither heard nor extracted statements of the kind:

"mother's brothers (must) do X...". When I tried to discover why somebody had done some thing or another, it was generally the case that people couched their explanations either in terms of a detailed account of situational factors, or else by acquainting me with the biography of the particular individual concerned. What he (or she) did was most often sensible in terms of an idiosyncratic consistency with previous actions--it was "his way" (*i'lami kugup*).

When asking about what someone might do, I would often get a denial of any knowledge at all (*muu*--'who knows?') or else the comment that whatever happened

was the particular individual's own affair (*ilami san*). When rule-like statements were forthcoming, it was generally in the idiom of reciprocity and hence conditional: *if* such and such happened, *then* such and such other course was appropriate. For example, children *should* look after aged parents *if* their parents looked after them well and *if* they wished to do so.

But if Telefol society seems surprisingly lacking in "do's", this is more than compensated by the number of "don't's". All Telefolmin have a long list of things that they may *not* do, things which are forbidden and tabu (*amem*), and it soon became apparent that to the extent that there are any clear-cut guides to conduct in Telefol society, these are mainly negative. It is quite literally impossible to consider the full range of Telefol tabus here, but I will concentrate on some of the more salient features of the system of proscriptions, and the most comprehensive set of such tabus are those governing the consumption of food.

Food tabus have only occasionally received systematic treatment by ethnographers, and Douglas (1966) has almost single-handedly brought them to the forefront of anthropological interest in recent years. Many of her ideas first outlined in *Purity and Danger* have been instrumental in our understanding of the place of food tabus in society at large. One way or another, most of those who have written on such topics in a Melanesian context have drawn upon Douglas' work (cf. Bulmer 1967; Meigs 1976; Strathern 1977).

In this section I will discuss Telefol food tabus as a classificatory scheme which, in the spirit of Douglas, can be seen as a comprehensive set of categories that partition the natural world. These categories articulate with social categories whose own partitioning is aligned with them, and this shares the logic of totemic classifications (cf. Levi-Strauss 1963a, 1963b). There is a level of analysis beyond this, however, since food restrictions accomplish two further things in Telefol society: they specify occasions and relations of commensality with respect to specific foods, and they also imply (in their

positive aspect) a certain pattern of distribution and consumption with respect to foods. Finally, I will show how certain features of the system are relevant to the major theme of this chapter, order and entropy.

We can begin the discussion with a listing of Telefol food restrictions as they apply to specific categories of persons. For convenience, I will present these in tabular form:

TABLE IV  
Telefol Game Prohibitions by Age and Sex

Prohibited To	Wild Pigs	Eels	Birds	Lizards	Marsupials	Snakes	Frogs	Total
Senior Men	0	0	0	0	14	1	3	18
Novices	1	1	7	1	19	1	3	33
Young Boys	1	1	7	1	5	0	0	15
Young Girls	1	1	13	1	8	0	0	24
Women	1	1	14	1	8	0	0	25

A few notes concerning the tables are in order. Four of the animal categories listed have only one restricted variety: wild pigs, eels, lizards, and snakes. In the case of wild pigs and eels (*saaman* and *aaningok*), this is so because they are Telefol animal categories that consist only of a single member, a fact which in itself is suggestive. It should be noted that these two wild creatures can only be eaten by fully initiated men and are the only ones of the foods listed that may be eaten within the confines of the *yolam*: all other game varieties are prohibited (*amem*), and their names may not be spoken within hearing distance of the *yolam* or the *usong* inside. The single prohibited variety of lizard (*atim*) is *sogaalim*, a large goanna-like arboreal lizard whose skin is used for making drumheads: drums (*ot*) are the perquisite

of men who have passed the drum initiation (*ot ban*), one of the last of the series. Only old men eat *sogaalim*, and this is explained by the fact that the *sogaalim*'s skin is dry and scaly, like that of old men: they thus have nothing to lose by eating it, since their skin is that way already. The single restricted snake (*inap*) variety is *utan*, a large python that nests in caves or subterranean holes in stone. This is prohibited to all men and youths who have begun their initiation series. Of the remaining categories of animals, roughly half of all marsupials (*muk*) are marked by some restrictions, about a quarter of all birds (but a much higher proportion if those not hunted at all are excluded), and the majority of edible frogs (compare Barth 1975:165ff, 182ff; Hyndman 1976). In addition to these foods, there are three wild animals that are prohibited to all Telefolmin and may not be eaten under any circumstances: wild dogs (*dunkiil*), the large lowland cassowary (*uunok* = 'bird mother'), and a monotreme echidna (*igil*, with the secret name of *nukok* or *nukogeen* = 'marsupial mother'). Here it is clear that each of these is in some way anomalous, *dunkiil* being virtually identical in appearance to village dogs (*kayaam*), which are also forbidden to all Telefolmin as food, while *uunok* are huge flightless birds and *igil* are spiny ground-burrowing animals that eat neither plants nor animals and are (in terms of our classificatory scheme) neither marsupials nor mammals (cf. Douglas 1966 on the Lele pangolin and Bulmer 1967 on the cassowary among the Karam).

If we inspect the table as a whole it is possible to note some patterns in the overall shape of the food restrictions. In purely quantitative terms, young boys have the fewest food restrictions, followed closely by senior men. On the other hand, youths and females of all ages must observe a much larger series of prohibitions on food, and these fall most heavily on youths who have begun but not completed the initiation process (it should be noted that this table does not take into account particular prohibitions of limited

duration that apply during and immediately after different initiations of the series). We can note further that the situation of females (again in quantitative terms only) does not change much from childhood to old age, while males go through a radical alteration in the restrictions they must observe. Boys start out being able to eat a broader range of foods than anyone in the entire society, and their restrictions seem to be a less stringent version of those for women and girls. But by the time they have begun their initiation process that will transform them into men, they enter into the category of persons with the severest restrictions in the society. This changes once more after their initiation series is completed, when as senior men (*bisel*, 'big ones, adults') they once more occupy a position of relatively little restriction on foods. Though, as we shall see, the situation is far more complicated than it at first appears, the range of tabus which must be observed by different categories of people tends to correspond with what are seen as relative degrees of restriction or privilege. If we compare young boys with novices, we can see that the former are doubly privileged while the latter are doubly restricted: young boys may eat a number of foods ordinarily available only to women and only to senior men--they can have it both ways; novices are forbidden a number of foods prohibited to both women and senior men--they get it both coming and going. In a certain sense, then, we can see that while young boys are (in terms of the restrictions) *both* men and women, novices are *neither*. For example, two particular marsupials--*kuyaam* and *dabool*--occupy a significant place in the overall system because they are the quintessential marsupials permitted old men and old men only (it will be recalled that both novices and adult men are prohibited from eating a wide range of marsupials). Both of these--and in particular, *kuyaam*--are strictly prohibited to any but old men, but with the significant exception that young boys may consume this providing it is given to them by old men. At the same time, another marsupial--*uleseen*--is strictly prohibited to all

men, youths, and women of childbearing age and is seen as reserved for the consumption of old women. But *uleseen* may be eaten by both girls and young boys if an old woman gives them some to eat. *Kayaal*, a bandicoot, is forbidden to adult men and women, but may be eaten by boys before their first initiation as well as by prepubescent girls. By contrast, novices are forbidden food that is forbidden to adult men, and they are also prohibited from eating a number of foods proscribed for women as well.

If we view the system from the standpoint of its overall shape and linkages between social and natural categories, there is a striking pattern in the distribution of prohibitions affecting birds (*uun*), on the one hand, and marsupials (*nuk*), on the other. Here it will be worthwhile to explore this to see if there is anything further we can learn from this pattern, and a detailed tabulation of restrictions on birds and marsupials appears in Table V on the following page. To begin with, the general pattern is that fully-fledged men may eat virtually any bird within the scheme, but that they are prohibited from eating a relatively large number of marsupials. For women, the pattern is roughly complementary, if somewhat more restrictive: they are forbidden to eat a number of different birds, but have a correspondingly larger number of marsupials which are available to them but forbidden to men.

In this table (page 278), in a rough sort of way, we can see a general association between men and birds, on the one hand, and women and marsupials, on the other. In abstract and conceptual terms, this suggests that men are opposed to women as above is opposed to below (as Barth claims for the Baktaman, 1975:53f, 280; 167). There is some confirmation of this in other contexts, e.g., the tale of the young man and his three brothers who turned into *tiyam* birds, and this certainly fits with the association between women and frogs and the subterranean *utan* python. But here we ought to be cautious, for men are also associated with eels, which dwell in the lowest

TABLE V

Restricted Birds and Marsupials

	<u>Birds</u>	<u>Marsupials</u>
Forbidden to Men:	<i>uunok**</i>	<i>igil**</i> <i>uleseen</i> <i>tlooben</i> <i>mangkan</i> <i>inggat</i> <i>agalal</i> <i>biilok</i> <i>bubuk</i> <i>okgeyam</i> <i>sinok</i> <i>ubil</i> <i>kayaal*</i> <i>ilaam</i> <i>kutal*</i> <i>dulfen*</i>
Forbidden to Women:	<i>uunok**</i> <i>kumsop</i> <i>bogol</i> <i>nelenim</i> <i>tetiin</i> <i>selman</i> <i>suu</i> <i>sengaa</i> <i>kabeel</i> <i>biseng</i> <i>dufaal</i> <i>abim</i> <i>yook</i> <i>oga</i> <i>fufalim</i>	<i>igil**</i> <i>kutal*</i> <i>dulfen*</i> <i>soobim</i> <i>kutinin</i> <i>kuyaam</i> <i>dabool</i> <i>ditip</i> <i>kayaal*</i>

\*Forbidden to both women and men

\*\*Forbidden to all Telefolmin

parts of Telefol country, in the beds of large rivers, and while *kuyaam*, the quintessential male marsupial, is to be found in trees, he makes his home in holes in the ground, or even in caves, just like the *utan* python. Thus while we can note what seems to be an overall or general sort of pattern, we ought to be on guard against reading this too strongly. It seems we may be on

firmer ground if we review, briefly, some of the salient characteristics of each of the animals concerned,

Here we immediately encounter some difficulty, for identification of marsupials proved to be more problematic than imagined, and this is largely because I only occasionally was able to actually examine a few such creatures before they had been singed or dismembered, and the difficulty is further compounded by my general lack of familiarity with the characteristics of various species of marsupials. In most instances, therefore, I have had to rely on verbal descriptions, and many of these are necessarily vague. With these qualifications, however, we may begin by examining those marsupials forbidden to men and reserved for women. One of the most striking characteristics of women's marsupials (*unang nuk*) is that some of them are not marsupials at all, but are instead placental rodents. (Here I should note that this apparent confusion is a result of translation--properly speaking, it is more correct to translate the category *nuk* as 'small furry animals', but I have called them 'marsupials' because this seems more convenient and because the majority of *nuk* are indeed marsupials.) Most of these are identifiable as rats or rat-like animals, and many of them are found not in the deep bush but in or around gardens or the village itself. It is tempting here to suggest that it is their zoological status and their marginal location in space--wild animals that are found in semi-domestic locales--that make them unsuitable for male consumption but appropriate for women and children. Telefolmin, however, do not say this. Instead, they point out that these are *nuk* that women may kill on their own without the aid of bow and arrow. Further, men say that such animals eat rubbish, and that men do not eat them for this reason. (Here it should be noted that this does not exclude other explanations and could even be seen as a rationalization of other factors--see Strathern and Strathern 1968.) *Nuk* that fall into this category include: *sinok*, *ilacm*, *mangkan*, *ingat*, *agalal*, *biilok*, *bubuk*, and *ubil*. Of the remaining *nuk*



forbidden to men--*uleseen*, *tlooben*, *okgeyam*, *kayaal*, *kutal*, *dulfen*--there are two classes. One set, comprising *kayaal*, *dulfen*, *kutak*, is forbidden to all of reproductive age. The second set, *uleseen*, *tlooben*, *okgeyam*, affords another series of contrasts between men and women. *Okgeyam* (= *ok kayaam*, 'water dog') is an amphibious marsupial that sounds much like the North American muskrat, and is clearly an anomalous creature in the Telefol scheme of classification. *Uleseen* is said to be awkward, clumsy, and bad-smelling, and men say that they may not eat this because to do so might afflict them with these characteristics (women, on the other hand, are presented as being this way anyway). The *tlooben* is likewise a slow and weak terrestrial marsupial, and men say it is forbidden to them for similar reasons.

If we summarize the set of composite qualities manifested in marsupials forbidden to men but reserved for women, we find that the system manages to suggest several associations between these various animals and women while denying similar associations for men. It serves to polarize and segregate attributes seen in the natural world on the basis of gender: there is thus an analogical connection between wildness intruding into garden and village, the consumption of rubbish (inferior food?), an ambiguous relation to aquatic and terrestrial realms, slowness, weakness, awkwardness, clumsiness, bad odours and femininity. All these are seen as undesirable for men and at the same time somehow characteristic of women, and we may further suggest that the underlying theme of these various qualities is a sort of messiness or disorderliness joined with debility. Ideologically, the implication is a specification of female inferiority and the protection of men from such failings.

If we turn to an examination of foods prohibited to women and reserved for men, the situation is somewhat different. Taking the category of *nuk* first, we must consider the following animals: *kuyaam*, *dabool*, *ditip*, *soobim*, and *kutinim*. Here there is some difficulty, for the prohibition on

women eating *soobim* and *ditip* receives no ideological elaboration, and the only apparent characteristic they share is simply that they are small marsupials. This muteness may or may not be significant, but provides little material for analysis. In the case of *kutinim* we are on somewhat better ground. *Kutinim* is unique as a marsupial carnivore, described as a quick and speedy cat-like animal with a spotted skin. As a predator he is seen as particularly well suited for men, who are also hunters. At the same time, some fear his spotty skin, and for this reason he is mainly eaten by old men whose skin has already deteriorated with age. *Kuyacam* and *dabool* are the prototypical marsupials for men, being the two largest (and meatiest) varieties to be found in Telefolmin, and one of the first things that men say about them is simply that they are large and tasty, being superior as food. *Dabool* is a large tree kangaroo (about the size of a small dog), brown with a white patch of fur on his chest. *Dabool* is reserved for fully initiated men, and tends to be eaten mainly by older men within this category. This is explained in part by drawing attention to the white fur, since this connotes the white hair of old age--it is feared that if younger men eat *dabool* before at least some of their hair has turned white, then they will age prematurely. *Kuyacam* is perhaps the most strongly marked of all the marsupials reserved for men, and he has several significant attributes. It is also the most severely restricted, and is meant for senior men only--a man may not eat *kuyacam* at all until the entire initiation sequence is completed and he is granted admission to the *katibam*, the house reserved for senior men. Further, a man may not eat *kuyacam* at all while his father or elder brothers are alive unless one of them personally hands it to him under their left armpit. If a man violates these rules, he runs the risk of death for himself, his family, and his pigs: his taro will run away and his gardens will not produce. Should a woman eat *kuyacam*, disaster would be instantaneous. Like *dabool*, *kuyacam* is among the

largest of the marsupials to be found in the area (it is a large spotted cuscus, *Phalanger* sp.), and like the *dabool*, its fur colour has associations with old men since it is grey. In addition to these characteristics, the *kuyacam* is said to be the cleverest of the marsupials in the forest, and consequently one of the most difficult for hunters to bag. Finally, the *kuyacam* seems to be associated with growth and fertility in some undefined way. It is for this reason that it is permitted for very small boys to eat it (with the approval of an old man), since it is said to make them grow quickly; it seems to be for similar reasons that men say they should not really eat it unless their taro is very young and doing very poorly--then the crop will come up quickly. But if consumed indiscriminately (even by those qualified to do so), the result will be too much of a good thing as people age prematurely and taro crops rot in the ground.

A summary of the characteristics of those marsupials reserved for men's consumption seems to show few of the characteristics found in the women's set. Instead, we find these attributes: large size, much meat, predation (the animal analogue of hunting) combined with quickness, the colour white associated with age, spottiness associated with the dry skin of old age, cleverness, and some ambiguous and ill-defined power to promote growth and fertility. Clearly, at an ideological level, there is a linkage here between masculinity and features very different from those associated with women, features which seen from the male point of view serve to underwrite male superiority. While the women's foods may in a general sense be seen as somehow debilitating, which suffices to explain the fact that men are prohibited from consuming them, the men's foods are held in high esteem. At the same time, it is perhaps worth noting that there is an underside to this, given the preoccupation with aging and decay with reference to the men's foods: there is the hint that men are in some sense more vulnerable here than women.

So far our attention has been concentrated on the category of marsupials. When we turn to an examination of the category of birds a range of other features comes into view. Of the birds mentioned, a number are birds of prey. Among these are: *bogol*, the black and white harpy eagle; *nelinim*, a reddish hawk; *tetiin*, 'the dancer', another reddish hawk; *suu*, another red bird of prey (?a lorikeet); and *selman*, a large nocturnal eagle owl with white and russet brown feathers. These birds are all hunters, they make marsupials their main prey, and the first among these is *bogol*. *Bogol* has strong associations with warfare, and Telefolmin would decorate themselves with white *bogol* feathers and black body paint when they went off to fight the enemy. *Bogol* can only be eaten after the completion of the *bogol ban*, which is now discontinued but was the last of the series of male initiations. The *bogol ban* was mainly directed towards success in warfare and hunting, belonging to the Arrow Side, and this reinforces the associations of the *bogol* as the killer with an unerring eye and tenacious grasp. Women are prohibited from eating *bogol* and other birds of prey as a matter of protection, for should they do so they would suffer gynecological troubles that might prove fatal and would certainly end their childbearing and pig-rearing capacities (see the tale about the pregnant woman, the *kuyaam*, and the *bogol*, Chapter 2 above).

Aside from the birds of prey, however, there are a number of other birds that do not at first seem to constitute any clear-cut grouping. This being the case, I will simply take them in turn. Three of the birds are especially prized as game. These are *abiim*, *yook*, and *oga*, all of which are pigeons that have much meat and fly in flocks, making them relatively easy to hunt. There are two other prized game birds as well, one being the mountain cassowary (*kumsop*), an extremely large flightless bird akin to the Australian emu, and the other being the *sengaa*, a large black bush fowl that broadly resembles a scaled-down version of the cassowary (see Gell 1975:281). Both

of these birds are uncommonly large, black, and terrestrial. In addition, the *sengaa* is seen as a sort of natural gardener, since it sweeps up leaves on the forest floor into tidy mounds in which its red eggs are deposited for incubation. In addition, the *sengaa* has associations with clandestine sorcery, its feet providing one of the materials used in the *biit ban*. The *kumsop* is known mainly for its elusiveness and speed, and avoids man. At the same time, it is a dangerous adversary when cornered and is entirely capable of disemboweling man or dog with powerful kicks from its claw-tipped legs. There is, however, one puzzling aspect of the cassowary that I will merely note here: it seems to be seen as symbolically feminine rather than masculine in character. In addition to these two terrestrial birds, there is another bird, the *fufalim*, that is terrestrial in a different sense. The *fufalim* is a cave swallow that emerges at dusk and is black on the top and white on the underside. Another small bird that also figures in the set is *biseng*, the King Bird of Paradise. *Biseng* is bright red, and is said to have originated as the result of adultery and violence: an elder brother caught his younger brother in adultery with his wife, and so he killed his younger brother and placed his bleeding heart in the thorns of a wild sago palm. It is from this heart that *biseng* originated. One of the larger birds of the set is the hornbill, *kabeel*. *Kabeel* is the prototypical image of manhood, and is seen by Telefolmin to embody many of the characteristics they wish to encourage in youths. They are large, strong fliers; they are clever and resort to ruses to get what they want; they mate for life and are social birds at the same time and conscientiously provide for their young in nests built in holes in tree trunks. The hornbill's long beak has definite phallic associations, and can sometimes be substituted for the *kameen* gourd that men normally wear as a penis covering. Finally, we come to the last bird of the set, *dufaál*, a red parrot whose feathers form the basis of festive headdresses with which Telefolmin adorn themselves.

The set of birds reserved for men and prohibited to women seems broadly to break down into two major clusters: those birds that hunt, and those that are good to hunt, i.e., large game birds. The first cluster has already been enumerated, and the second comprises: *kumsop*, *sengaa*, *kabeel*, *abim*, *yook*, and *oga*. This still leaves a rather large residue unaccounted for, however, and it turns out there is another clustering of birds that cross-cuts these two: birds which have the colour red (*isaklut*). Following Telefol attributions, the following birds are marked by the colour red: *nelenim*, *tetiin*, *suu*, *abim* (eyes and feet), *yook* (feet), *oga* (feet), *kumsop* (almost entirely black, but with wattle-like appendages and red genitals), *sengaa* (black but lays red eggs), *biseng*, and *dufaal*. This accounts for all except *selman*, the eagle owl, and the three birds of black and white plumage, *bogol*, *kabeel*, and *fufalim*. Here it is worthwhile to pause to consider how it is that women are forbidden, as men say, to eat red birds.

The colour red has strong associations with blood, the colour term being derived from the word for blood ('blood' = *isak*; 'red' = *isaklut* = *isak* + *ulutap*, 'blood-like'). Men say that the colour red is not good for women. In the context of red birds, it is feared that if women were to eat these they would pass blood in their urine or suffer from very heavy menstrual loss of blood. But this is not the only case in which blood or redness is said to be inimical to women. During their menses, for example, they are not permitted any kind of red pandanus, since this would increase their menstrual flow and they would be in danger of bleeding to death. Red oil pandanus (*em*) is in other contexts associated with blood--when prepared (the exclusive prerogative of men) it produces a thick red oily sauce, and people sometimes eat this when they are tired, saying that they change or renew and replace their blood in this way. Women are also prohibited from eating a number of garden crops. These are all men's crops, most of which seem to have a phallic character (e.g., yams, *waan aalab*, *waan amem*; certain varieties of sugar cane,

*kwet tenep*, *kwet afaayim*, and others; certain varieties of bananas, *suum aalab*, *suum umkan*, *suum toen* and others; certain varieties of oil pandanus, *em naam*, *em ayaap*, and others), and most of these are crops which grow above ground. But all such crops--bananas, yams, sugar cane, pandanus--are not forbidden, and although this does not exhaust the inventory, all of the varieties that are red in colour are so prohibited. There is, in addition to this, one variety of taro that is forbidden to women (and children): *iman tobaal*, a taro distinguished by a mottled red and white flesh, which men liken to meat. Significantly, men offer precisely the same reason for these prohibitions as they do for the ban on red birds. Finally, women are also prohibited from touching the red cordyline plant, *tobaa*, with which the *yolam* is fenced, and this too is said to be for their own protection.

It is clear that women are to be segregated from the colour red, and from its association with blood. Further, it is also clear that this is done in order to protect their procreative and life-giving powers, and it is perhaps for this reason that menstrual blood (*nok isak*--'vagina blood') is so dangerous, requiring women to be segregated in the no man's land of the *dungam*. We might add that from this perspective menstruation seems to be a form of bloodshed that is potent because it is, so to speak, "mixed up"--it is in a sense a fruitless bloodshed, since it is not the blood of the hunt (which produces meat). At the same time, the fact that a woman is menstruating indicates that she is not pregnant--she sheds blood instead of bearing a child. Here we may be able to make some sense of some of the tabus surrounding menstruation. If a husband has contact with his wife during her period, he will be blinded by a red fog and his hunting will be fruitless. If she ventures into the village plaza, it becomes a muddy mess. If she goes into the true bush she will be attacked by a bush spirit, human becoming prey in the bush. If she goes into a garden, it will fail, the taro being infected by a red rot called 'blood'

(*isak*), while wild pigs and rats ravage the crop--whatever might remain to be harvested will not cook properly and will remain raw (*asit*) and of the bush--men say it would be like wild (inedible) taro. The segregation of women, then, from red things (and creatures such as birds of prey, or dangerous birds such as the cassowary, or birds like the *biseng* and *sengaa* which are associated with killing) protects against the impairment of their life-giving powers (childbearing, gardening) and also forestalls the exaggeration of the one aspect of feminine physiology that is both associated with procreation and betokens its absence: menstruation. Here we can see that in a sense women are polarized in relation to men's engagement in bloodshed by minimizing their own relation to the flow of blood. Hence the prohibition on red things for women serves to heighten the contrast between them and men and firmly allocates them to processes of life-giving, a prohibition echoed in the tabu on women touching arrows or shields (*at kom*, which are decorated with sprays of *tobaa*--red cordyline--for battle) or the bones of the dead in *men amem* (women are also prohibited from handling a corpse once it has been carried from the village to the bush en route to the exposure platform).

We can now attempt to summarize the ideological (and classificatory) implications of restrictions concerning birds and marsupials on the basis of gender. With respect to birds, the situation is fairly straightforward. Birds of the colour red (signifying blood), birds of prey, and birds associated with violence (the dangerous cassowary, the *sengaa* linked to *biit* sorcery--a man's art--and the *biseng* connected with adultery and murder) are all forbidden to women for reasons that seem ultimately to turn on the contradictory relation of life-giving to life-taking. From this point of view, then, women are the life-givers, and men are the life-takers. This polarization of the sexes along this axis as a matter of conventional prohibition or disjunction also has further ideological implications, namely, that were such regulations not to be observed, women might cease to be



life-givers and could--though this is nowhere stated--conceivably become life-takers. Here it might be helpful to recall that this is precisely what *kundunang*, whose husbands are wild dogs--and hunters--are; they kill men on sight and cannibalize their own children. This is a world in which men have no place. Such an understanding is reinforced by a consideration of menstrual prohibitions, which indicate the dangers of women *cum* blood: the productivity of the garden is jeopardized both directly and by the inimical forces of the bush (recalling the association of wild pigs with death), while men's productivity as killers in the bush likewise suffers and the village itself threatens to become an amorphous pool of sloppy goo. In this series of restrictions, then, we can see the mobilization of the symbolic resources of the world at large for the establishment and maintenance of a human order in the face of potent and potentially chaotic and destructive possibilities: here the tabus clearly serve to articulate social and cosmological orders and through disjunction inhibit the world's propensity towards what I call entropy.

The situation is more complicated when we return to the prohibitions on marsupials. Whereas the restrictions concerning birds effect a clear and overwhelming categorical differentiation of the sexes, the division of species of marsupials is less one-sided and somewhat ambiguous by comparison. If the situation with birds is tidy, things get messy with the marsupials.

Since the majority of the restricted varieties of marsupials are those that are forbidden to men and reserved for women (and children, in general), let us begin with them. We may start with a zoological observation, namely, that most of the marsupials (*nuk*) with which women are associated are not really marsupials, but are placental mammals, and as such they are more closely akin to humans and their domestic animals (pigs and dogs) than other forest animals (with the notable exception of wild pigs). This accords with the spatial situation of rats and other rodents, for they are often to be

found in or around gardens or even in the village itself. In a sense, they may be seen as wild animals that live closest to home. Here we may note that such animals are viewed by men with distaste, and they point out that they are the consumers of refuse. It is possible to understand this in two different ways: such animals tend to blur the boundaries between the world of man and the world beyond his control, the bush; at the same time, this ambiguity can be read differently to suggest that they are the least alien of the natural world. There is a further hint here of an association with productivity, most evident in the case of the *inggat*, which men find appropriate for rituals involving the village site itself when they emphasize the fact that it is prolific and has numerous offspring within one nest. Here we begin to get a sense of some problematic underlying ambivalence, and this may be a reflection of male ambivalence towards women in other contexts, since they are both a source (and perhaps *the* source) of productivity (children, gardens) while at the same time being difficult to manage and control. The notion of unmanageability crops up again in the case of *okgeyam*, which is neither fish nor fowl, and perhaps this explains the linkage of women with the awkwardness and clumsiness associated with *uleseen*. Finally there are associations with "bad smells" (*tang mafak*), weakness, and general debility, and it seems that men are protecting themselves by shunning such associations. By contrast, the male marsupials par excellence are said to be large and good tasting, and are associated with productivity (particularly the *kuyaam*). This is the productivity of growth, however, and is particularly closely tied to gardens, a quickening that must be managed: to eat *kuyaam* may speed up the growth of taro, but to eat too much *kuyaam* may carry things too far so that the crop rots in the ground, just as it also threatens to cause men to age prematurely. Hence only very old and very young males may eat this: the former have already matured to a ripe old age, and thus have nothing to lose by aging, while the

latter have all their growth ahead of them. Here we should recall the size and colouring of *dabool* and *kuyaa*, remembering that to be large is to be old (*afaalik*).

In regard to marsupials it seems that men are not so much safeguarding women and their fertility (except perhaps in the case of *kutinim*) as they are appropriating it for themselves, while at the same time risking aging and decay. It is perhaps for this reason that the restrictions on eating marsupials are most stringent for male novices, who are in the middle of the transition from childhood to adulthood and at the zenith of their growth. At the same time, women are aligned with those marsupials that are ambiguous and intrusive in man's world, and perhaps, impure (see Douglas 1966, 1975; Leach 1964; Tambiah 1969).

Returning to the system as a whole, we may see that the effective association with men and birds--and the exclusion of women from such a connection--correlates with the fact that it is the men who are the exclusive hunters and warriors. The more mixed nature of prohibitions concerning marsupials seems to reflect an engagement by both sexes in processes of growth--they both garden and are both implicated in the production of human beings--but this engagement for men is one that carries certain risks of aging, debility, and decay (cf. the associations of the colour white). Given this overall scheme, the tabus serve to align these qualities with gender categories while at the same time polarizing them through disjunction and segregation. They thus underwrite an order that has cosmological, social, and physiological dimensions.

Until now I have concentrated on the tabus linking and separating men, women, birds, and marsupials as a categorical and ideological system. I have suggested that this not only accomplishes a social differentiation of the sexes (akin to totemic systems of classification in its logic), but that

there is an implicit organization of processes of nurturing and killing, life-giving and life-taking embodied in this system. Here the chief principle seems to be that nurturing and killing stand in an antithetical relation to one another, something which certainly echoes a division of the social world at another level, the differentiation of men of the Taro Side (*iman miit*) and the Arrow Side (*un miit*) in ritual. Before proceeding further, it will be helpful to see if we can find additional confirmation for this. We may begin by broadening the analysis to include prohibitions concerning the consumption of wild pigs, *saaman*.

As we have already seen, wild pigs are in a metaphorical sense enemies that prey upon gardens, the source of life. Further, only fully initiated men may eat wild pigs, and this is specifically tied to their completion of the arrow rite (*un at* or *un baal*, and sometimes referred to as the wild pig initiation, *saaman ban*) which was always accompanied by the hunting of wild pigs and was in the past a general preliminary to warfare. In a host of ways wild pigs signify aggression, wildness, and death. In a sense they *are* death, for besides being without *sinik*, they are the result of killing that which men have nurtured and possesses *sinik*--domestic pigs (*kong*). Should a woman eat a wild pig, the consequences are much the same as if she had entered a garden during her menstrual period. The growing taro is jeopardized: the taro itself suffers directly, and is said to run away. But in addition, the garden will be invaded not only by wild pigs, but by those *nuk* most directly associated with women, rats. Here it is as though a whole chain of consequences ensue from the failure to separate nurturing and killing, with a resulting collapse inwards of the bush and flight outwards of the domestic: the wild animals come into the garden and the taro flees into the bush. The chain begins with the slaying of a domestic pig (fed by women and by men but killed by men) and its consumption, leading to the transformation of the pig's

*sinik* into a wild pig; the wild pig preys upon gardens. Nurturing to killing, domestic to wild, followed by reversal when the gardens no longer promote life but are consumed by death. (This parallels the attacks on gardens--specifically, on men's crops--by *momoyok*, which can be seen as retaliation and a collapsing of the nurturing/killing polarity along the same lines). When men kill wild pigs and consume them among themselves, it brings the cycle to a close through a sort of double negation, i.e., they destroy the destroyer. But for women to come into contact with wild pig would be to initiate the whole process over again by bringing nurturing and powers of productivity into contact with those of destruction and death, unleashing another series of similar consequences.

We can see a similar logic in operation in a different context. Chickens (called simply *uun*, 'bird') were introduced to Telefolmin by the Europeans in the 1950s. This was meant to augment the amount of protein in the local diet, and it would seem that it would appeal to people. But chicken-raising has been a dramatic failure in Telefolmin. One of the chief difficulties seems to be that people do not really look after their chickens very conscientiously and let them run free to forage rather than penning and feeding them. When people go off to gardens they cannot, of course, take their chickens along. A great many fall prey to village dogs, and a good number are also stolen--presumably by irresponsible boys and youths--and eaten in the bush. As a result, few people really expend much energy on chicken-raising or expect it to amount to much. But there is an additional difficulty, and it is that were they to look after chickens in the way Europeans advise, they would become engaged in an ideological contradiction, for chickens are birds. Birds are wild things, and this means that they may be killed relatively opportunistically, as game. The idea of individuals raising wild animals, nurturing them, and claiming rights over them is alien to Telefol notions of how the world is ordered. This is most clearly manifested in the refusal by a

number of men to eat chicken, though others say it is good tasty meat. Their refusal is based on the insistence that this should be *amem*, tabu or forbidden. They argue on two related grounds: (a) wild things are not man's or his to feed, and it is wrong to feed birds; (b) creatures that one does feed (as, for example, domestic pigs--see below) cannot be eaten by those who feed them. Once again, nurturing and killing are in contradiction and ought to be kept distinct and separate. The principle is here illustrated in sharp relief precisely because it is a novel application where there is no standardized precedent.

I have already mentioned that women's menstrual blood is inimical to the growth of taro. In fact, all blood endangers taro, and should blood come into contact with a garden the crop will fail because of a red rot called 'blood' (*isak*). I learned of this accidentally when I went with Yemis and some others when he was clearing a new garden. After some sketching, surveying, and note-taking I wanted to become useful since everyone else was busily working while I sat idle. Eventually I persuaded someone to lend me an axe so that I might help with splitting rails for fencing. While doing so, I managed to cut my ankle with the axe and my companions had to render first aid and then carried me to the mission clinic. When I finally returned to the village I sought out Bufalok to thank him for helping me--he had said the appropriate spells and bandaged my ankle while I lay bleeding on the ground, and his work was effective and appreciated. When I saw him, he was relieved to see that I was better. But as soon as that was established, he gave me a severe tongue-lashing for my big-headedness and pridefulness in insisting on working with an axe--garden work was their business and writing was my business, and I should have had enough sense to realize this without having to be told all the time. (I was thenceforth prohibited from handling axes for the duration of my stay.) To make matters worse, he continued, I had spoiled Yemis' garden and all that work had gone for nothing. At the time I thought

this was merely an allusion to the disruption caused by my accident. But later, when Yemis' garden succumbed to *isak*, I was the only one in the village who was surprised.

Blood and taro are incompatible, just as the colour red and women stand in an antithetical relationship, and just as Arrow and Taro are necessarily distinct from one another: in this we begin to glimpse the shape of an overall premise of order in the Telefol world. The fundamental principle is that nurturing and killing are contradictory processes and that man must keep them apart if society and life itself are to be maintained. This provides one of the major means of forestalling entropy, and here we may see that what I have called entropy--loss, dissipation, disorganization--is the result of failing to properly manage this contradiction. This is perhaps clearest in a series of tabus which serve to protect taro growth. Thus, women may not enter gardens during their menses, nor may blood be shed in a garden. Further, men should not enter gardens--especially young ones--immediately after they have killed game or seen blood, and freshly harvested taro cannot be cooked with meat unless all the blood is gone. In the past, enemy ambushes sometimes caught people in their gardens, and if this happened the gardens in question had to be abandoned if blood actually fell within them. When a person dies their corpse is placed on an exposure platform in a garden belonging to them; the taro in this garden is burned and the garden itself must be abandoned, for this is where the blood and the fluids of decomposition remain--to attempt to grow anything in that plot would be futile until a great deal of time has passed, for the garden is filled with death.

The segregation of nurturing and killing underlies the logic of tabu in Telefolmin, and this logic is bound intimately with notions of life and death, the enterprises of gardening and hunting, relations between the sexes, and the exhaustive division of labour in men's ritual. Here we can see that such a mutually exclusive division among the men--that between Taro and Arrow--

is in a certain sense already entailed by this logic, for men are engaged in both gardening and hunting. Men say that if one spends all of his time in garden work with his wife and children, then his skin will become heavy, he will tire easily along the track, and he will become sluggish and lack vitality. While women are completely engaged in gardening, child rearing, and pig rearing, men's activities must embrace both gardening and hunting. There are a number of tabus which serve to keep these activities separate in time and space, but in the world of ritual men are firmly allocated to one realm or another and the rites themselves are likewise completely insulated from one another. Here we see, then, how this principle of segregation yields a differentiation rooted in cosmological notions that have organizational consequences. Implicit in such differentiation is the notion of exchange and reciprocal dependency, and we find this manifested directly in some of the regulations concerning the consumption of food.

We have seen already how the consumption of wild game is governed by food tabus, but little has yet been said of domestic pigs (*kong*). Given the antithetical relation between nurturing and killing, it is clear that domestic pigs pose a problem, since men look after them and feed them but also kill them and eat them. It is perhaps in this sense that there is a formal resemblance between pig rearing and sorcery, since in both the two processes--which ultimately relate to the idea of killing one of one's own--are closely connected. I have already shown that Telefolmin regard their domestic pigs as metaphorical children, and this is true in a deeply felt and non-trivial sense. Men explain their reluctance to kill pigs not only in terms of what we would understand as a desire to retain something of one's own: they also say, quite simply, that they feel sorry for their pigs. This relation to their pigs is not simply the result of close association or proximity--instead, it is rooted in commensality, for men and their pigs eat the same food from the same gardens. As is the case elsewhere in New Guinea, commensal relations are very



strongly marked, and those who share food--especially over a period of time--are not only bound to each other by what we would understand as reciprocity but are also linked by shared substance. The food they have eaten together is a bond rooted in their very flesh, and this can form a kinship between people--or people and their pigs--as real as that based on conception (see, e.g., Mead 1963, 1970; Salisbury 1964, 1965; Schieffelin 1976; Strathern 1973, 1977; Wagner 1967; Rubel and Rosman 1978). Thus we can understand that people are reluctant to kill or eat their pigs as a matter of deep sentiment.

There is something more than this, however: it is not simply disturbing to eat pigs one has fed--it is forbidden (*amem*). To consume flesh that one has nurtured and with which one's own flesh shares substance is tantamount to incest. We have already seen one aspect of this problem in the avoidance of chickens by a number of men. In the case of domestic pigs the problem is not a matter of wild food being treated as though it were a domestic food, but rather that to eat one's pig is to eat one's "child". To do so is thought to result instantly and unavoidably in death, and the consequences go beyond this, for those who have eaten their own pigs will be consumed by Bisiilki, the huge dog, instead of going to Bagelam. This prohibition is called *dubung*.

*Dubung* is a rule that specifies that people may not eat their own pigs--pigs they feed--and further demands that people not eat the pigs of their children, i.e., any cognates of a junior generation. This is a sort of transitive feature, and people explain this by saying that since one has fed one's children (*man*), then to eat pigs that they have fed would be the same as if one had fed them oneself. In addition to these restrictions, it is also forbidden to eat the offspring of any such pig within the span of three generations (reckoned matrilineally), since such pigs will have suckled and been nurtured by those one has nurtured oneself.

Here nurturing and killing are then separated by the *dubung* rule--in a general sense pigs are nurtured and then killed and eaten by men, but they can never be eaten by those who have, one way or another, nurtured them. Instead, others eat them. Here too we can see that this separation of engagement in processes of nurturing and killing is accomplished by differentiating between one's own pigs and those of others, those which one may not eat and those which one may eat, and this is reminiscent of what the Arapesh have to say about similar matters (Mead 1970:283):

Other people's women  
Other people's pigs  
Other people's yams that they have piled up  
You can eat.  
Your own women  
Your own pigs  
Your own yams that you have piled up  
You may not eat.

Here we can see that the *dubung* rule is analogous to the incest tabu in two different ways: it forbids one to consume that which one has produced, or to kill what one has nurtured, and it requires one to engage in exchange and reciprocal relations with others. Telefolmin understand this implication of the *dubung* rule very well, and say that because of *dubung* pigs are shared widely. Thus it is that men also form reciprocal agistment partnerships, each looking after the other's pigs, and thus it is that the pork of such pigs is given to others who, in due time, are expected to reciprocate.

So far I have concentrated on an analysis of food restrictions primarily as they relate to categories of persons and qualities associated with them, moving to a consideration of the ideological basis for such discriminations in terms of a logic of compatibilities and incompatibilities. Much of this in turn may be resolved with reference to the contradictory nature of nurturing and killing in Telefol thought, as illustrated not only in prohibitions affecting the consumption of wild game but also those connected

with gardening and the protection of the taro crop. Finally, the problematic nature of domestic pig rearing resides in the conjunction of processes of nurturing and killing within the same context, and this problem is resolved by the *dubung* tabu, whose underlying logic bridges that of the other tabus and its sociological analogue, the incest tabu. We can thus see how a series of fundamental assumptions about the nature of life-giving and life-taking in the world articulate with the necessity for each person to participate in giving and taking of a more immediately familiar kind, reciprocity. It is at this level that we can begin to apprehend something of the nature of how order in the Telefol world--both cosmologically and sociologically--is constructed. It is now appropriate to turn to a consideration of how all these regulations concerning the consumption of food, whose character is primarily negative (i.e., they are tabus), entail in their positive aspect a series of rules of exchange and of commensality.

We may begin with a look again at wild game and its distribution. One of the first things to note is that men tend to talk as though they get to eat all of the good foods, while the less esteemed game is that reserved for women and their children. Thus, men may eat such delicacies as wild pigs, cassowaries, pigeons, eels, and the large *dabool* and *kuyaa* marsupials; women have as their exclusive foods such things as rats, frogs, and the cave-dwelling *utan* python, as well as foods generally characterized as having a bad smell. Further, the men point out that their foods are large and may (must) be shared among several, while the women's foods are relatively small and hardly worth sharing, even if they were permitted to all to eat. Here we find an echo of the opposition between men's sociality and the women's preoccupation with narrow domestic interests, and this is further reinforced by the notion that men's foods are village foods and should not be eaten in the bush (this applies particularly strongly in the case of wild pigs and eels, which ought

properly speaking to be eaten in the *yolam*). In a sense then we can see how many of the men's foods are "socialized", i.e., they cannot be consumed within the confines of a single household, but must instead be shared out between men of different households within the village. Thus it appears that men are both privileged and obliged by the system: they monopolize the choice game, which they must share among each other in the village to the exclusion of women and children. Here, however, we should not be too hasty in accepting their view of the situation. I have already discussed the ambivalences and tensions that men face with regard to food sharing, especially when in the village. In the village men are enjoined to socialize with one another, either in the *yolam* or in the visits other men pay to them in their homes. When others come to visit--and here it should be recalled that evening visitors are always men, for women remain in their houses with their children and pigs--hospitality is prescribed, and food is offered as a matter of course. To deny a guest food that is clearly at hand is extremely poor etiquette and leads inevitably to bad feelings. This is exacerbated if the visitor is from another village, for such resentment towards a host could be translated into sorcery. It is not unusual for this situation to cause tension, and wives--who are less bound by conventions of politeness than men--will complain if hospitality to visitors seems to be eating into their children's provisions. Here, once again, the demands of male sociality and household interests are at odds.

Against this background the prohibition of certain foods to men takes on another aspect. Many of the foods that are reserved for women (and children) are items that women themselves may gather, especially rats and frogs. Frog collecting is an exclusively feminine pursuit, and of the half dozen or so varieties regarded as edible about half are forbidden to men. Various such foods are held in low esteem by men, and they are small rather than large creatures. But both rats and frogs are found relatively routinely by women, and they share these with their children and are in fact likely to

be the most regular source of animal protein on the menu. The fact that many of these cannot be eaten by men serves to insulate them from the demands of hospitality, for though one may not refuse food to a visitor, one is also forbidden to offer guests food which is prohibited to them. The rules concerning restrictions on the edibility of various kinds of game then serve to mediate the contradiction between male sociality and domesticity by partitioning the different kinds of game and allocating routinely available and relatively small items to women and the children whom they feed while reserving the large and relatively spectacular kinds of game for men who share such foods with each other (cf. Schieffelin 1976:68f). Thus we can see that the men's assertion that they get to eat good food while the women eat poor food tends to reflect the ideological weighting of men's relations with one another while at the same time masking the fact that it is the women and the children who in fact enjoy the most regular additions of meat to their diet.

When we turn our attention to the *dubung* rule we find a curious consistency with this pattern. As already explained, it is forbidden not only to eat one's own pig (or a pig that one has fed), it is also tabu to eat the flesh of a pig owned or tended by anyone addressed as *man*, 'child'. This has several interesting effects on the pattern of food distribution and consumption. One of these, the sharing of pork between different households in the village, is fairly clear-cut and obvious, and here we should recall that both wild and domestic pigs should be eaten in the village lest *usong* bring illness. This also means that when a man's pig is killed and distributed he (and his wife) and all those who call him *man* are perforce excluded from the distribution. Ideally, what should happen is that at least one other pig--one not prohibited to him--will be killed at the same time so that all may eat. This does not always happen, for a variety of reasons, but in any event what-even he gives ought to be reciprocated, if not in the present, then in the future. But this is not always an easy matter, for an entailment of the *dubung*

rule is that a man may receive pork only from seniors or contemporaries, not from juniors, for all cognates (and in practice, this means all villagers) of junior generations are called *man*. This means that as a man grows older the range of domestic pigs that he may eat shrinks as the ranks of his elders and contemporaries dwindle and the number of 'children' increases. This results in a situation in which older men are progressively phased out of distributions of domestic pork. In many cases there may be only a handful of men who may exchange pork with each other, and even here it is difficult, for they must be certain that the pigs in question are not closely related to pigs that they (or a 'child') have fed. In practice it is thus not unusual to see a cluster of older men sitting off to one side by themselves when pork is distributed, and though they may have an interest in the details of the distribution, they themselves must simply watch from the sidelines, for they have reached the stage where all domestic pork has been virtually excluded from their diet. The only meat that they may eat is game from the forest, and it is in consideration of this that some young men will make a special effort to find game so that their uncles and fathers may eat too when a pig is killed.

In theory, this situation applies to all men and women equally, and the *dubung* rule is not phrased in terms of gender: *all* pigs that one feeds, and all pigs fed by one's 'children' are prohibited. But in fact, most women can look forward to a share of pork at any major distribution. This is so because of a peculiarity of Telefol kinship terminology. The term for 'child', *man*, refers to all cognates of junior generations, but if a woman is the speaker there is an exception to this rule. The term for 'father's sister' and for 'elder sister' in Telefol is *baaben*, and the appropriate reciprocal terms are *neeng* (yZ, BD) and *ning* (yB, BS). In usage, a woman not only refers to her own 'true' younger siblings by these terms, but also uses them with reference to the children of any male cognate of the same generation (e.g., MBSC, FZSC, MZSC, FBSC). Thus it is that a woman falling into the category

*baaben* is not only a permissible recipient of a share of a man's pig, but this is in fact said to be her due. So while old men become excluded from pork distributions, women of even very advanced years may and do receive shares when domestic pigs are killed. Although women too must observe the *dubung* rule, its consequences for them are less severe simply because the category *man* is for them defined much less broadly than it is for men. Thus it is that the apparent imbalance in permitted foods for old men and old women, such that the former may eat both wild and domestic pork while the latter may only eat domestic pork, is less real than it first seems. Old men are in effect mechanically excluded from eating domestic pork while women may continue to do so, and the advantage of being able to eat wild pork is thus not simply a privilege but perhaps also a compensation.

It now seems possible to come to a summary of the significance of food tabus in Telefol society. These tabus form a system of rules governing not only the consumption of various categories of foods by certain categories of persons, but by implication are also rules of commensality in so far as they dictate which kinds of food may be shared between which kinds of people. In this respect they are perhaps the clearest and most highly differentiated rules in the social structure, which is otherwise characterized by an overall vagueness and diffuseness. Here we must remember that Telefolmin, like other Melanesians, place great store in relations of giving and receiving, and reciprocities concerning food are among those most deeply felt and most socially meaningful. From this point of view, then, the tabus are a system of organizing such relations, chiefly along the axes of sex and age. With a few exceptions--especially with regard to wild pigs, for which formal hunts may be organized--men in Telefolmin generally do not go out to hunt for any specific item of game. They simply take what they can find. But when game is bagged its placement within the scheme of tabus already specifies to whom

it may be given and with whom one may share it. If a *kuyaa*m is found, it can only be eaten by senior men, and if the hunter's father or elder brother(s) are still living he himself may not partake of it. If instead an *uleseen* is bagged, it must be turned over to a woman to eat, and this meat may not be eaten by men who come to visit. If a wild pig is killed, it must be eaten in the village and shared among the senior men in the *yola*m. And so on.

I have already argued that this scheme goes some way to resolve the conflict between sociable hospitality and household consumption by allocating specific foods distinctly to one range of social categories or another. To the extent that this is true, decisions concerning food and its distribution may be phrased in terms of obligation and the protection of potential recipients from putative dangers. I have likewise shown how the system of tabus manifestly articulates categorical connections between the social and natural worlds in ideologically meaningful ways. But in a broader sense the structure of the system as a whole can teach us something more fundamental about Telefou culture and its preoccupation with the management of the problems posed by entropy, and this forms the topic of the next and final section of this chapter.

#### vii. Managing Order and Entropy

I began this chapter with the suggestion that while the very notion of order is essential to anthropology and any anthropological account of another society, we must take care to look at how notions of order are conceived and manifested in the societies we study. This is particularly important in New Guinea ethnography since so much of our treatment of the social order (or social structure, or organization) has proved to be problematic (see, e.g., Cook 1966; Kaberry 1967; Langness 1964; Pouwer 1960, 1966; Watson 1965, 1970). This difficulty is traceable in part to the fact



that when the indigenous ideologies of New Guinea societies are considered, neither the natural world nor the world of social relations seem to manifest a stable and articulate coherence--order, as Errington (1974) has said for the Karavarans, *cannot be assumed*.

In the Telefol case it seems clear that the social order is set in the wider context of a world that is at best indifferent and at worst hostile to man and his projects. In Telefolmin human society is most concretely represented in the village, and the village is man's clear space (literally, 'the clearing') within the surrounding bush. The village clearing is an island of light and security within a sea of forest that holds shadowy but real dangers, and the haven of the village is only maintained at the cost of human effort. Further, while the bush is *a priori* and taken as given, human society is itself a contingent construction. Here the cosmos at large is less a reflection of the human order (or vice-versa) than an encompassing and enveloping presence against which human order is defined and sustained.

The fundamental assumption Telefolmin hold about man's place in the cosmos is that he is subject to entropy, *biniman*, the drift towards nothingness and the inevitable and progressive degeneration of order into chaos--the Telefolmin and the order established by Afek are fated to pass finally and irrevocably out of existence. Men and all their works will pass and only the bush will remain. This conception of the world is marked by a gradient of progressive decline and decay in both spatial and temporal dimensions.

Along a spatial axis man's control and the hegemony of the cultural order degenerate the further one moves away from the stable centre afforded by the village. It is here that the conceptual opposition of village and bush comes to the fore; the former holds friends, neighbours, and kin; the latter is the domain of *biit* sorcerers, enemies, wild pigs and other garden predators, and finally the home of various spirit beings. As one moves

further away the world becomes more *asit*--wild, strange, alien, and antagonistic. To leave the village behind is to remove oneself from the proper order of things, until one comes to the peripheries of the Telefol universe in the land of the *kundunang*, the amazons who eat men and their own sons and mate with wild dogs. This is the antithesis of human society, where men have no place and where they dare not go. Movement away from the centre also represents attrition or loss: the flight of taro that betokens a poor harvest; the elopement of women who abandon their families; the escape of pigs who become feral and raid the gardens of their erstwhile parents; the departure of the dead whose legacy to the living is sorrow and emptiness. Dissipation and abandonment and the negation of all that men work for lies on the horizon.

Time too has its place in the dialectic of order and entropy. Movement through time is accompanied by a similar degeneration marked by the decline in the size and numbers of men and pigs, a retardation of growth processes, and an increasing rate of deterioration and decay as the world runs down. The things of the past were large; the future represents an unavoidable dwindling as the world is emptied. This is a logic in which there is no gain or accumulation but only an outward flow, dissipation, and loss--*biniman*. Though men may work to forestall this, they cannot stem or prevent it: if a man ages as the result of procreating children, he must nonetheless do so, for he will in any event die; if the Telefol cosmos comes nearer the end with each rebuilding of the mother house (*amogeen*) at Telefolip, men must nonetheless rebuild it or face a nearer doom.

The problem of entropy is the chief preoccupation of Telefol cosmological thought, grounded in the assumption that (in the Greek sense) chaos encompasses cosmos. In the end all will become nothing, and it is this perspective which informs the Telefol address to questions of the nature of order. Given this context, order is not simply an aesthetic or speculative matter, but a concern of tangible and immediate importance. In the preceding

sections of this chapter I examined different aspects of the order of the Telefol world, and will now briefly review them from the standpoint of the interplay of order with entropy.

If we consider the relevance of *tenum miit* to the ordering of Telefol society we come to two basic conclusions: organizationally the various *tenum miit* categories are irrelevant and are (because of their inherently ambiguous nature) incapable of providing the structural basis of group formation; at the same time, the ensemble of *tenum miit* attributes (as embodied in narratives) serves to construct a remarkably coherent image of the nature of Telefol society as a whole. In other words, their chief significance is as ideological representations rather than as organizational units. Having said this, we can go on to suggest that *tenum miit* are still consequential insofar as they offer an assertion of the possible bases of order. The key elements in this assertion are that Telefolmin are both diverse and unitary in their origins, and that Telefolmin *are* Telefolmin by virtue of their association with Afek and the ancestral village of Telefolip; that the ancestors of the Atemkayaakmin and Kubrenmin became Telefolmin--and fully human--through accretion and "domestication" at Telefolip; and that order is accomplished through a comprehensive structuring of complementarities in ritual. At the same time, these complementarities are themselves ordered in terms of a limited number of axiomatic discriminations, the most comprehensive of which is the partition of ritual into two distinct spheres: the life-giving and nurturing Taro side (*iman miit*) and the Arrow side (*un miit*) associated with life-taking and the shedding of blood. Here we find the germ of the Telefol formulation of order in terms of the differentiation and polarization of antithetical acts.

*Tenum miit* offer a glimpse of the ideological principles of order in Telefolmin: to locate the actualities of the social order we must turn to the village. Here society ceases to be an abstraction and takes a concrete form, and it is also here that we can begin to see entropy as a practical concern.

While the village is the most enduring and clearly defined entity of Telefol society (apotheosized in Telefolip), it nonetheless leads a precarious sort of shadow existence. Autonomous households spend much of their time dispersed in isolated bush gardens, and the village is faced with the organizational puzzle of counterbalancing dispersion (an organizational manifestation of entropy) with aggregation. Lacking the machinery of central authority, leadership, or institutional methods of resolving difficulties between villagers, disputes are masked and avoided rather than resolved and trouble between villagers leads to fragmentation and dispersal, intensifying the already strong centrifugal tendencies of Telefol society. This is largely the consequence of the ideological denial of strife in village life, and the cost of maintaining the facade of solidarity is the banishment of its contradiction to the bush through the separation of antagonists.

To some extent village solidarity is realized in food sharing and hospitality within the village. Such sharing is virtually prescribed, but this occasions a conflict between personal needs and desires and socially required generosity, a conflict which is often managed through concealed private consumption, often in the bush. Once again conflict--here often at the level of collective versus household interests--is masked by separation and avoidance. To the extent that such problems are confronted directly by Telefol society, it is largely in terms of an ideological identification between women and narrow household interests, on the one hand, and between men and the broader interests of community, on the other hand. Thus these organizational problems are recast as sexual opposition: men of different households are joined together by separating them from their wives, and this finds its clearest expression in the village-wide community of male initiates in the *yolam*.

The *yolam* is the *sine qua non* of village definition in Telefolmin. It is the home of the *usong* who watch over the village and is the

organizational focus of rites underwriting garden prosperity and success in hunting (and, in the past, warfare). It is through entry into the *yolam* through a series of initiations that boys become men in Telefolmin, and participation in the affairs of the *yolam* defines manhood in much the same way that the *yolam's* presence defines a village. It is this sense in which the *yolam* is the indispensable anchoring point of Telefol society.

In most Melanesian societies exchange and reciprocity provide one of the most pervasive bases of social relations, and this is true of Telefol society as well. The exchange or sharing of food is one such aspect of Telefol life, but the social significance of reciprocity is even more clearly pronounced in Telefol marriage arrangements. Marriage in Telefolmin is first and foremost conceived in terms of the exchange of women, and the social relations flowing from marriage are relations rooted in reciprocity. One of the first priorities in Telefol marriage arrangements is reclamation of the loss entailed in the marriage of one of one's own women, and it is in this light that the practice of endogamy and the preference for sister exchange are to be understood as attempts to come to grips with entropy. To the extent that villages are able to pursue endogamous policies--which is to say, that they are able to seal off marriage exchanges and contain them within the sphere of village relations--they manage to forestall the loss of women to outsiders. This is one of the ways in which the integrity and success of villages is judged in Telefol eyes, conceptualized in terms of village strength and growth. The organizational consequence in a densely reticulating network of cognatic and affinal relations within the village and a correspondingly sharp discontinuity between villages. From the point of view of particular men within the society, endogamy confers the added advantage of some security of the expectations of return and reciprocation of women. That such expectations are not always realized is a measure of the ambiguities inherent in a cognatically based system of kin reckoning and, both in ideology

and often in fact, of the willful ways of women. In these terms we may then understand much of the actual organization of Telefol society as an attempt to shore up the village as an entity through involution, a sealing-off of the possible routes of leakage or attrition to the outside: an attempt to manage entropy by shoring up the self-contained discreteness of the village.

The theme of holding on to one's own against the threat of loss, a generalized concern to maintain the centre against the outside, is one of the leitmotifs of Telefol culture. While much of this is evident in the practical affairs of maintaining social arrangements, this concern is perhaps most clearly apparent in Telefol ideas concerning mortality and man's fate. The loss that is the most wrenching and the most final is that of death. Most of those who die are irrevocably severed from the living: they become *bageł* and depart for Bagelam, where they remain detached and apart from the living. Those who die violently become the garden-raiding *momoyok*, preying upon the source of life, just as the domestic pigs (which must be slaughtered in human interests) become wild pigs and make war on man's work. The result of death is either estrangement or antagonism. This is the inevitability of entropy in its perhaps most dramatic form.

Against this, men have one resource: the *usong*. *Usong* are the dead whom men retrieve and bring back within the circle of the living, and *usong* are men's allies in the struggle against entropy. As renowned gardeners or hunters who succumb only to the death of old age, *usong* are those who succeeded against entropy in life. The relation between men and *usong* is one of mutual dependence, but like all other relations in Telefol society, this is a relation of reciprocity contingent upon the performance of both parties. So it is that men only hold on to (*waafunamin*) *usong* who have been reliable, and *usong* only assist those who have looked after them well: failure on either side results in termination of the relationship. In the end, the *usong* residing in the *yolam* provide the necessary focal point for security and

stability in the Telefol world, but this falls far short of a permanent victory over entropy and is instead no better than a holding action requiring continual effort on the part of all concerned. Though the *yolam* implies a definite stability and continuity in the Telefol social order, the only finality is on the side of entropy.

Telefol cosmological ideas place men's society in a potentially precarious and contingent relation to the world at large. While it is possible to regulate this relation to some extent by insulating the world of the village from that of the bush, it is clear that this cannot be done in any sort of definitive way for a people who practice hunting in addition to gardening. What we do find in Telefolmin, however, is that there is an extensive elaboration of food tabus, especially in regard to the consumption of game animals. In a society generally devoid of codified rules for behaviour, the tabus occupy a significant place in the regulation of conduct by specifying what must *not* be done. They thus structure men's relations at what is perhaps the most intimate point of contact with the natural world while at the same time ordering relations between social categories based on sex, age, and ritual status. These tabus erect boundaries partitioning the population and aligning them with categories of natural species. At the sociological level the food tabus specify restrictions (and implicit prescriptions) and commensality and the sharing or distribution of food. At the cosmological level they serve to polarize and segregate antithetical (and hence entropy-promoting) qualities and processes, and in so doing aim at maintaining the integrity of man's world by sealing off realms of productivity from realms of destruction.

If we consider the tabus in more detail some of the basic principles of ordering may be apprehended. Women are strictly separated from creatures associated with the colour red and bloodshed (red birds, birds of prey), while men are segregated from animals with attributes of awkwardness, slowness,

weakness, and general debility. Thus we may say that while men are in some sense associated with vitality, women are closely tied to life-oriented processes and fecundity. The vitality of the men seems to be primarily the vitality of the hunter and warrior--the killer--and this is antithetical to the powers of women, and must be kept separate from them. Failure to do so can result in the loss of these positive powers and the destruction of taro, that which men are most anxious to nurture.

In the system of food tabus entropy is managed by the separation of contradictory elements and processes, and reflects the central importance of the distinction between nurturing and killing. This is reflected in a host of restrictions meant to prevent contact between taro and blood. Reflexes of this underlying principle pervade usages pertaining to relations between the sexes, the ritual division into Taro Side and Arrow Side (*iman mit*, *un mit*), and the segregation in space and time of gardening and hunting. Breach of such tabus opens the way for entropy (the latent potential of the cosmos) as taro flees to the bush and gardens are invaded by wild pigs and other enemies of gardens. To breach tabu is to destroy the differentiation upon which man's order depends. Here, then, the alignments and disjunctions embodied in the tabus constitute a grammar of affinities and antitheses with cosmological, sociological, and even physiological dimensions. The tabus are a total system structuring the relations between man and nature with organize the circulation of the fruits of human productivity and inform all of this with meaning. At the same time, it is necessary once more to underscore the point that the order implicit in the system of tabus is not seen as a given or *a priori* order: rather, it is, like much else in the Telefol scheme of things, an order which is maintained only through men's acts.

Man's place in the world was established when Afek built the first *yolam*--the Telefolip--and made the first village clearing at Telefolip. Since



then Telefolmin have made war on enemies, hunted, and gardened, all the while holding fast to their *yolam* and their villages, all the while rebuilding Telefolip and its *yolam*. This is the hub around which Telefol fortunes revolve, and as the Telefolip fares, so fare the Telefolmin. But with each remove from this origin in time and space there is a progressive attenuation and deterioration of the order which Afek established.

The place Afek carved out for man began with the tasks of clearing away the bush and constructing a home for *usong*, and men's tasks ever since have consisted in clearing and building, and retaining that which is theirs. But none of these tasks can be finally and permanently completed--the forest reclaims clearings, houses rot, all that men possess may leave them. It is as though men are forever engaged in pulling in and holding onto that which threatens to slip away--women, children, neighbours, the dead; pigs, taro, life itself. The Telefol image of this process of loss is that of water running off a taro leaf, and this is man's life. At the same time, the outer world which surrounds man threatens to engulf him--the wild pigs, marsupials, flying foxes and weeds that invade the gardens; the enemies that come to raid; the grass encroaching on the village plaza. All this he must keep at bay.

All is less now than before. The old are fewer, their infirmities afflict the young. Pigs are killed to secure well-being, but this only adds to the number of wild pigs that destroy the gardens. Being mortal, men must procreate children to replace themselves, but this hastens their own end. The Telefolip must be rebuilt, but each time this is done the end draws nearer. The waning of the world proceeds at an accelerating pace, the distance between life's beginning and end dwindling until Bagelam eventually fills and, as Afek foretold, a child is born wearing a *mafuum* headdress. And then--*binim*. Finish. Nothing.

If this predicament seems daunting, it is not the same as saying that men are helpless. Entropy may still be combated if not defeated. This

may be done positively through life-promoting acts of gardening and nurturing. If women, children, pigs and *usong* may abandon men, this is less likely if men look after them well. At the same time, the encroachment of that which lies beyond man's domain may be fought directly through hunting and warfare. Further, Afek left behind means by which men may secure the bulwarks of their world. One of the most important of these is the *yolam* to which *usong* may return to aid the living in the rites she devised for hunting, fighting, and gardening. Another means resides in the food tabus she established to help order the world. All of these--*yolam*, *usong*, food tabus--may be summed up as *amem*: sacred, apart, forbidden. Order and coherence to the Telefol world depend upon disjunction, the demarcation separating what must be kept apart, the discontinuities that serve to forestall the dissolution of man's world. This order is not rooted in the nature of things, but instead opposes it. The order Afek bequeathed to Telefolmin is not a given order, but is instead one to which men must adhere and which they must preserve (*waafunamin*), an order that may be violated or destroyed through men's acts.

Entropy is thus resisted through the order of tabu and sacredness, a bounding and structuring of man's world. Order in Telefolmin ultimately depends on the sacred and the tabu--*amem*. An exploration of what is *amem* is the next chapter's task.



Plate 1: View of Ifitaman from a mountain garden.



Plate 2: In a garden (note fruit pandanus trees in foreground).



Plate 3: The village of Telefolip from the air.



Plate 4: A garden house in the bush from the air.

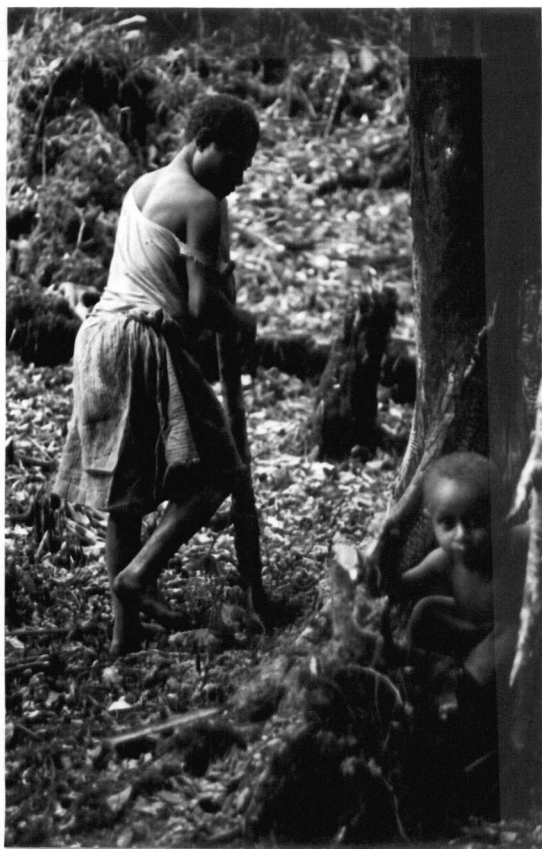


Plate 5: Planting taro.

Plate 6: Konungen, my self-appointed mother, always has some roast taro on hand.





Plate 7: Yemis, a Christian convert, displays a prize taro grown with the aid of Bufalok's secret skills.

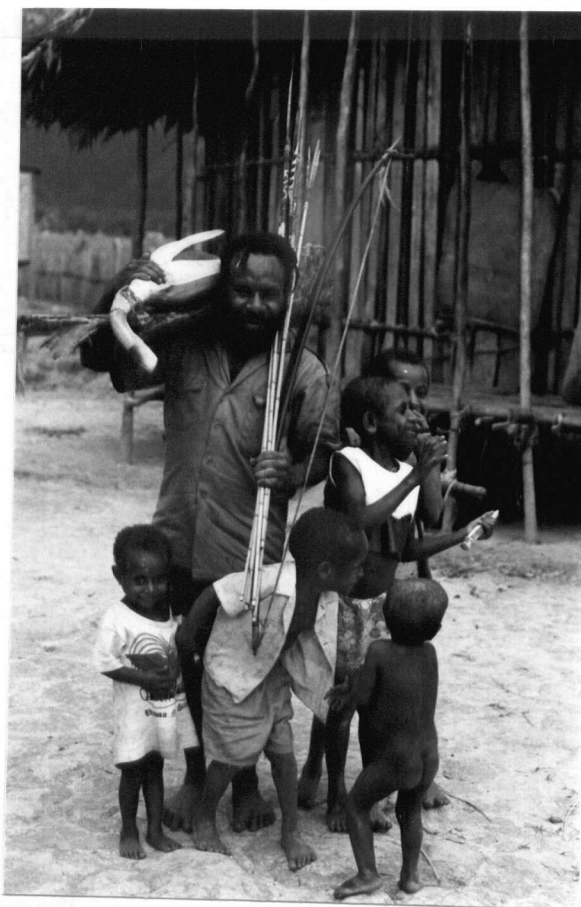


Plate 8: Dakasim brings home some pandanus from the bush.



Plate 9: An informal pandanus feast in Derolengam.  
The ethnographer's house is in the right background.

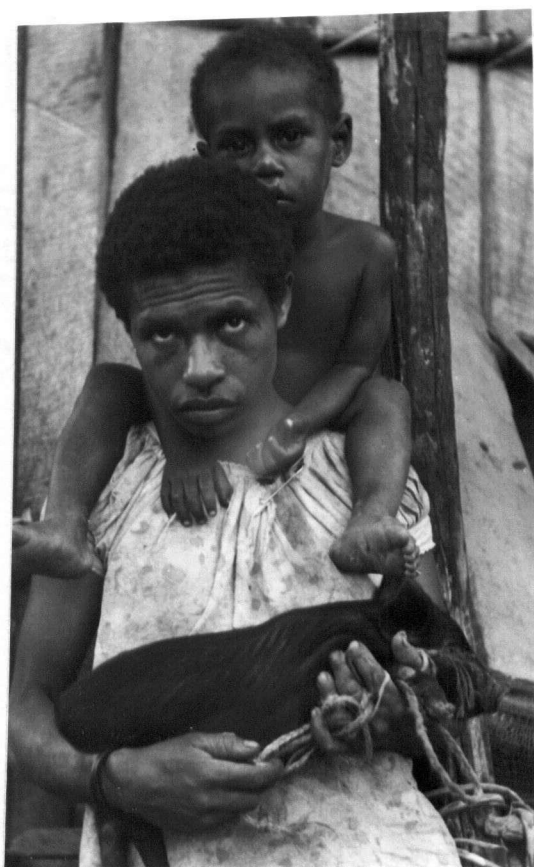


Plate 10: One of Derolengam's mothers.

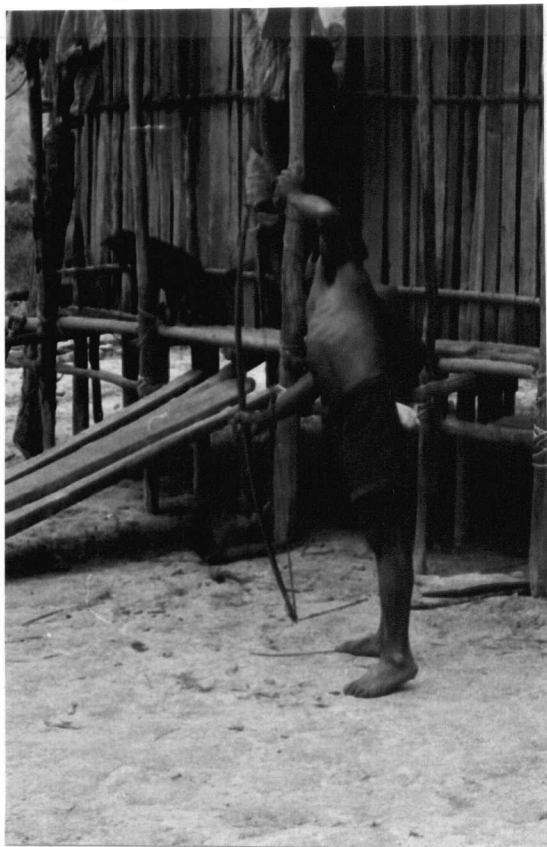


Plate 11: Dakasim kills a pig for a troublesome *usong*, whose *men amem* he bears.

Plate 12: Telefol men danced when they fought; Welagim shows his style while Dakasim holds the shield whose name is Nantepnok, "I'm hungry (for enemies)".

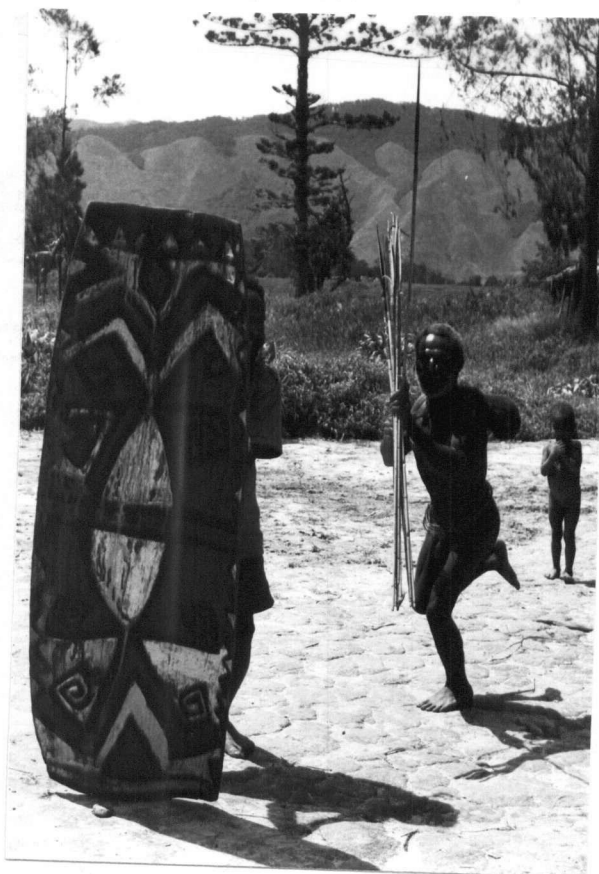






Plate 13: Welagim puts the finishing touches on an arrow.

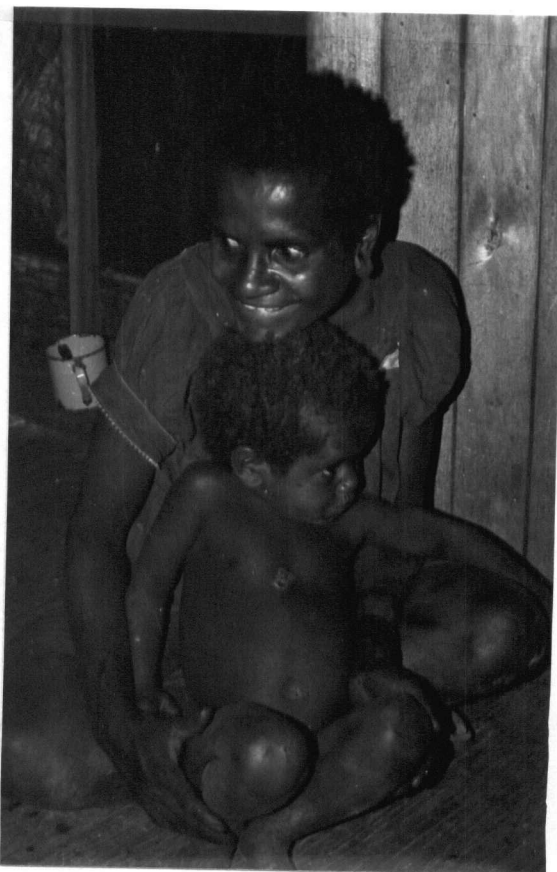


Plate 14: Yasimen and her child.



Plate 15: Running the gauntlet in the public phase of a junior initiation (Fegolmin; photo courtesy of B. Jones).

Plate 16: Two lads shortly after emerging from the *dagasal ban*.





Plate 17: Two *mafuum* initiates before their *yolam*. Note their *sel* headdresses, one of which must be re-bound (Fegolmin).

Plate 18: Derolengam men turned out for Independence Day (September 1975).





Plate 19: The Telefolip, the "mother house" for all Telefolmin, and the prototype for all *yolam*. This house was dismantled and rebuilt in the *am dekota* rite in 1978 (see frontispiece).



Plate 20: A *dungam* (women's birth and menstrual hut), the route by which Telefolmin enter the world.



Plate 21: Ropen, leader of the Ok Bembem cult, in school uniform and accompanied by his senior "coaches".

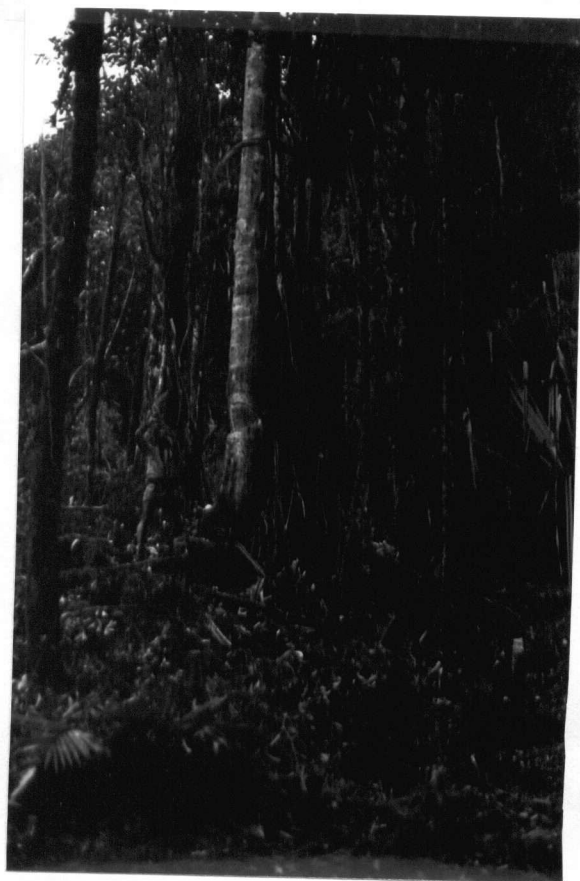


Plate 22: Dakasim makes a garden by attacking the forest.

## CHAPTER 4

THE WORLD OF THE *YOLAM*i. Introduction

Inside the enclosure, on the side where the circle of dwelling-houses was not complete, stood the ritual men's house: the *iwool*. Only initiated men and boys are allowed to enter this building... As uninitiated people we were not only not allowed into an *iwool*, but were not even permitted to look in through the door... There is probably not a great deal to be seen in the *iwool*... (Brongersma and Venema 1962:89).

...it is probably only through participation for some time in *Yolam* activities that an adequate awareness emerges of the mystery of ancestral control of taro, the positive sanctifying effect of secrecy, and the collective obligations and fate that tie fellow members of the community together (Barth 1975:117).

The Telefolmin are Afek's last-born, the last of a number of peoples she created before she died. This explains both why Telefolmin are shorter than many of their neighbours---for she was an old woman and tired when she gave birth to them---and why Telefolmin are the principal guardians of her legacy, because they have the last and most immediate connection to her of all the peoples to whom she gave rise. After she brought forth the Telefolmin she ended her work---it was finished, and she died and brought no others into the world.

Though Afek created a number of peoples---the Oksapmin, the Dulanmin, Sogaamin, Iligimin, Ulapmin, Tifalmin, Opkeemin, Kofelmin, and Telefolmin---she only built *yolam* in three places. The first was far off to the west, near Bagelam and at a place called Tumbigilabip, not far from the village called Kabolabip among the Kofelmin. These are the people of the Star Mountains of Irian Jaya of whom Brongersma and Venema write (see also Pouwer 1964), and among whom the *yolam* is known as *iwool* or *iwoolam*. The second was at Bultem,

where it forms the centre (*abiip miton*, 'principal village' or *hetkwata*, Pidgin "headquarters") of Opkeemin society. The third was Telefolip itself. It is from these three *yolam* that all the *yolam* of the Min peoples, known variously as *iwool*, *iwoolam*, *yawolam*, *amyol*, *ameyol*, *yolam*, *dawolam*, *yuanap*, derived.

Though there is undoubtedly a great range of variation in the significance and usages pertaining to *yolam* among these various peoples, they all have two features in common: they form the focal point around which men's collective activities turn, and they are all circumscribed, sacred, set apart, and their precincts are secret and forbidden to non-initiates (see, e.g., Barth 1975, Brongersma and Venema 1962, Jones 1976, Pouwer 1964).

It's not hard to detect a note of sour grapes in the remark made by Brongersma and Venema about what the Kofel analogue of the *yolam* held. They were, as they recognized, not being accorded the status of full adults (p. 89), and this no doubt was an affront. After all, they were not simply tourists or sight-seers, they were legitimate researchers--their job was to find things out and have a look around, and here the savants were being told by savages that there was something they (the savages) knew that the researchers were not qualified to know. Under the circumstances pique is understandable, and Brongersma and Venema might be excused for suggesting that the savages really had nothing worth seeing or knowing anyway.

Neither Brongersma nor Venema were ethnographers--though their account contains much useful ethnographic detail--and so this was perhaps little more than an ironic vignette for them. In my own case, however, matters stood very differently since my overriding task was to find out about Telefol culture, and much of what I was told persuaded me that somehow or another the heart of the culture was concealed somewhere in the *yolam*. But, like Brongersma and Venema, I was also told that I would not be permitted to enter or to peer into its interior. The *yolam* was *amem*--sacred, tabu, and,



as I came to understand, secret. Here, then, was something more than just a source of annoyance or irritation, though I must confess to such feelings. I was in effect being told that what I sought and what was important was to be found, but that it was beyond my reach. The *yolam* would not be mine to know.

This was a source of deep frustration, for quite apart from personal implications ("they're telling me I'm not grown up, that I'm not trusted, I'm an outsider, I don't know anything, they're teasing me and toying with me, they're trying to drive me away" and other half-truths of field paranoia), this meant that my work was doomed to be flawed and incomplete. At the outset this was less disturbing. I could tell myself--and them--in truth that I had not come to pry into their *yolam*. I had come instead to look at local level politics, and was more interested in how men achieved power and influence, what it was that went into making a big man (cf. Sahlin 1963); I wanted to understand how disputes were settled and how prestige and exchange were related (cf. Burridge 1957). It would be enough to find out about these things--I wasn't really interested in the *yolam*. When, after several months in the field, I realized that there were no big men and that it was unlikely that I would ever witness public disputing, I suspected Telefolmin once more of perversely stalling my work. I consoled myself by recalling that I was a guest there, and felt some admiration and respect for the Telefol ability to maintain their integrity in the face of what history had brought them in the form of missions and administration. They had held on to their *yolam* and sense of themselves for over two decades, and no doubt much of this could be attributed to the devotion with which they protected the sanctity of the *yolam* (this was somewhat tarnished when I later learned that Australian patrol officers were regularly allowed to enter them). It seemed to me that this was also something deeply rooted in the Telefol psyche, since they gave the impression of being astonishingly self-contained, circumspect, somewhat dour and reserved in their manner. This was not something I should take



personally. They were simply being themselves and showing to me one of the underlying features of their culture, something that I should attend to rather than resist or resent. Besides--there was probably very little to see inside their *yolam* anyway.

This, basically, was where my understanding of the *yolam* began. The *yolam* was important, and part of this was signalled in the fact that the *yolam* and everything associated with it were *amem*; but because such things were *amem*, they were by definition secret. In the end, it turned out, I was eventually invited to join other men in the *yolam*, and even before that some began to tell me about things that were *amem*. But in fact the secrecy surrounding the *yolam* proved to be important, not only in terms of understanding the *yolam* itself, but also in terms of grasping what Telefolmin mean when they say something is *amem*, as we shall see later.

## ii. The *Yolam* and Its Contents

*Yolam* is the generic term Telefolmin give to any house of the men's cult, houses from which women and non-initiates are debarred. There are three kinds of houses that may be termed *yolam*: the *kabeelam*, the *katibam*, and the *yolam* proper. *Kabeelam* are primarily for junior initiates, i.e., those who have begun but not completed their initiation sequence, though any men who have been through at least the first initiation may enter. *Kabeel* is the hornbill, and the *kabeelam* is literally the 'hornbill house'. *Kabeelam* are usually relatively large houses equipped with long verandahs upon which men may perch, much like the gregarious hornbills after which such houses are named. This is a house in which youths not fully introduced to the *yolam* proper may sleep, and such houses serve as dormitories and clubhouses. *Katibam* are literally 'little houses' (*katip* + *am*), so called because they are for the exclusive use of old men who are unfortunately never very numerous. Like the *kabeelam*, the *katibam* can also serve as a dormitory, but one from

which all but the most senior men are excluded--this permits them to discuss matters in secrecy and away from the hearing of those not properly introduced to esoteric lore (*weng amem*).

Each of these three kinds of houses shares certain features in common which tend to mark them off from the dwelling houses (*unangam*, literally 'woman house') that make up the rest of the village. They are all spatially segregated from the remainder of the village within the *yolabiip*, the *yolam* clearing, and the general area of the *yolabiip* is avoided by non-initiates. As we have already seen, the walls of these houses are not simply made up of split timbers, as is the case with other houses. Instead, their walls are made up of an unbroken line of houseposts (*am kun*, 'house bone/strength'), and this signifies the unity and collectivity of the men's congregation as a whole, and also its strength. Further, this unbroken line of houseposts serves to enclose the area beneath the floor (*kabutem*). This is done to prevent dogs, pigs, or children from wandering beneath the houses and coming into contact with ashes from their hearths. Should they do so, they would be endangered. Children would either simply die or age prematurely; pigs would become so skinny that their bones would protrude, and they would die; dogs would bloat and swell until they too died. The ashes from the hearths are *amem* and dangerous, and so the walling in of the *kabutem* is a protective measure.

Not all villages possess the full complement of houses of the *yolabiip*. In many there will be no *katibam* at all, especially if there are too few old men to warrant the work of constructing one. In such cases they will simply sleep in the *yolam* proper if they wish to remain in the *yolabiip* overnight. Again, a number of villages do without *kabeelam*. Partly this depends upon the number of young junior initiates within the village, and partly upon the energy of their seniors. In the absence of a *kabeelam*, youths will either sleep in the *yolam* or in an *unangam* as the men see fit. The

*yolam* proper--which can also be distinguished as an *amogeen* ('house-mother') or *amabem* (= *am* + *amem*, 'house-sacred')--is absolutely essential to every village, and is invariably present. Further, all the houses of the *yolabiip* ought ideally to be enclosed within the *tobaadaam*, a living fence of red cordyline. This is not invariably the case, however, and sometimes *kabeelam* and *katibam* may be found outside the circle of the fence. This is never so in the case of *yolam* proper, and such a fence is an integral feature of a true *yolam*. *Yolam*, therefore, belong to all the men and if the *kabeelam* and *katibam* are more or less optional, the *yolam* proper is clearly crucial to the community of men and to the village as a whole.

The fence is made up of *tobaa*, the red cordyline, and this marks the boundary beyond which women and children may not pass. Women, as we have already seen, should be segregated from a number of red things and they are forbidden to touch *tobaa*. This is for their own protection, and men say this also serves to protect them from the *usong* housed within the *yolam*, who may cause sickness. In addition, *tobaa* have *sinik* ('spirit'), and men say they act as sentries and whistle if any trespassers go beyond the fence. This whistling draws the attention of the *usong* (*yolam* spirits) who will then take appropriate action. It is this property of *tobaa* that men put to use if a village has been troubled by sickness from outside the village or if many people have seen apparitions (bush spirits or sometimes ghosts) hovering near the village: *tobaa* will be planted along the paths at the margins of the bush, thus barring the way for further such troubles. Finally, the fence is also meant to keep domestic pigs out of the *yolabiip*, for should they enter this area their flesh would become tabu and dangerous (*amem*) to women and children: only those permitted to enter the *yolam* would be able to eat it. This occasionally served as a means whereby men could control women whose shrill quarrels disrupted village life, for their pigs could be seized and

taken by men within the fence, thereby depriving all women (and children) of pork.

Within the yard enclosed by the fence a few plants may be found such as bananas (*suum*), a yam perhaps (*waan amem*, *waan aalab*, *nelii*), and one or two varieties of ginger (*kumak*, *sebalam*). In addition to these there will also be a number of grasses and weeds, which it is forbidden (*amem* once again) to uproot or disturb (cf. Brongersma and Venema 1962:plate 14). Beyond lies the *yolam* itself and its small oval door surmounted by a carved and painted facade in red, white, and black, the *amitung* (cf. B. Craig 1967).<sup>1</sup>

It takes some time for the eyes to adjust to the dark interior of Telefol houses, since there are no windows and but a single small doorway. This is true of *yolam* as well, but when one's eyes do adjust it becomes clear one is not in an ordinary house. As in all Telefol houses there are two hearths, set on the right and the left of the doorway, and much of the interior has the coal black sheen from smoky fires. But the walls bear little resemblance to those of other houses. What strikes one at first is that there is little of the ordinary pandanus bark lining to be seen. It is there, to be sure, but it is obscured from view by row after row of domestic pigs' jaws running the entire length of the building and extending from floor to ceiling. Though soot darkened, the jaws are painted in alternating bands of red and white with ochre (*bagan*) and powdered limestone (*bogung*). Beyond this, however, there is something else that holds the eye, for one's gaze is drawn towards the blackened netbags that are the *men amem* containing the skulls of the *usong*; often enough, the *usong* return one's gaze from empty sockets that stare out past rotted bark string and through the doorway to look over the village as a whole. Hanging in a row at eye level along the back wall, the assembled company of *usong* are the permanent residents of the *yolam*, the arresting presence around which the *yolam* is built.

The interior of the *yolam* is divided into two halves, the *iman ilo* and the *un ilo* (Taro side, Arrow side), corresponding to the two divisions of men into Taro and Arrow spheres (*iman mit*, *un mit*) respectively. The *usong* and their *men amem* are likewise so divided into *iman men* and *un men*, and only a man belonging to the Taro side may have contact with *iman men* and only men of the Arrow side may come into contact with *un men*. The division in the *yolam* of Taro and Arrow is a reflection of the cosmological separation of nurturing and killing, gardening and hunting, and in most *yolam* the Arrow floor and its hearth (*un abiin*, *un tuul*) are oriented in the direction of enemy territory or hunting grounds (*nuk bagan*, *saaman bagan*), while the Taro floor and hearth are oriented in the direction of major gardening areas (*iman bagan*, *iman ilang*). Thus within the *yolam* one generally finds the things of gardening--say, the adze (*fubi*) of an *usong*--arranged along the back wall of the *iman abiin*, while the things of war and hunting--shields (*at kom*), arrows (*un*), black palm or stone-headed clubs (*biyal sinam*, *tingii*), or cane cuirasses (*naam*) of the *usong*--along the *un abiin*. Here too we find a reflection of the dichotomy between wild and domestic pigs (*saaman* and *kong*), and while the *usong* like the smell and the fat of any pigs, men must take care to cook wild pigs (and eels, *aaningok*) only in the Arrow hearth and domestic pigs only in the Taro hearth. Should this order be violated, or should the ashes from the two hearths be mixed, entropy would reign free with the flight of taro and domestic pigs and the invasion of wild pigs and enemies.

### iii. The Telefolip

Of all the *yolam* in Telefolmin, one stands apart from the rest. This is the Telefolip itself that was first built by Afek and has been rebuilt on the same site by Telefolmin ever since. This is the house which the Iligimin attempted to destroy and for which the Iligimin were annihilated. It

not only looks after the people of Telefolip *per se*, nor even just the Telefolmin--this is the mother house (*amogeen*) of all Afek's descendants (*Afekman*) and the fortunes of all these peoples (even those at enmity with Telefolmin) are bound to this house.

The Telefolip is the largest man-made structure in the Telefol world, a towering house looming above the village named after it, rising to over ten meters in height, a stature undiminished by the tin-roofed buildings of the government or mission stations. The Telefolip's massive presence is not only felt within the village itself, for it may be clearly seen from a number of distant ridges and hills, a house emerging from the forest. The central place of the Telefolip as Afek's house takes visible shape in its size--it is the huge house, the *am afek*, and men convey this by saying it is the "headquarters" of all the Min peoples (cf. Pidgin *hetkwata*), and they compare it to the House of Parliament in the capital of Port Moresby, of which they have heard.

The village of Telefolip has two entrances, the men's path (*tenu ilep*) and the women's path (*unang ilep*), the former entering the village via the *yolabiip* and the latter skirting around through the low and muddy area below the village to enter from the side, near where the *dungan* and administratively required pit latrines are located. Anyone may enter the village along the women's path, but only those who have been introduced to the *yolam* may enter by the men's path. The men's path branches off from general walking tracts and leads into the *yolabiip* through a beautiful park-like grove of hoop-pines (*dli*). These trees are the tallest and oldest to be found in the entire valley of Ifitaman, taller even than the giants of the deep forest. The grove is the *Telefolip dlitem* ('in the midst of the Telefolip hoop-pines'), and is *amem*, sacred. Visible from miles away, they mark the spot that Afek selected for the site of Telefolip, and they may not be cut or damaged, nor may any of the other flora or fauna of the grove. Walking along through the cool

broken shade of the grove one is in a world that remains primeval and recalls the events of the beginning of the Telefol cosmos. The tallest hoop pine in the grove is the tree upon which Ataanim, the Sun himself, sat when he and Afek conversed; a cleft cutting through the ridge at right angles is where the tail of Ungkigingim, a monstrous snake, finally came to rest when he was killed by his mother's brother, and the profusion of bamboo just beyond it is where his skin sloughed off at his death. In amongst the undergrowth on the west can be seen the spike-like leaves of the Man Vine, the *temum sok*, whose crown holds brilliant flame-like flowers of almost translucent scarlet. This is in the direction of Ifikot, the place where the Ok Ifi cuts a ravine past the village. To the east lies Mofumkot, where Afek made her first gardens. Here the white flowers of the Taro Vine, the *iman sok*, ramble from the men's path and through the bush below. Of all the things in the grove, these two vines (*sok*, 'vine/rope/lashing') are the most sacred and must not be interfered with. If the Man Vine is cut or damaged, there will be sickness and death for Telefolmin and all of Afek's descendants; if the Taro Vine is harmed the taro crops of all of these peoples will suffer.

Emerging from the grove and into the sunlight of the *yolabiip* one can see the Kuyapkan (the special name for the Telefolip *kabeelam*), the *katibam*, and the Telefolip itself. Here, in the cleared area just outside the cordyline fence is a huge mound of charred stone, remnants of cooking stones from generations of feasts held by men here. Here also is an isolated protruding pillar of earth surmounted by a *tobaa*, the Kingboltil where the blood of domestic pigs killed in *yolam* rites flows into the earth. Just beyond lies a low mound under which lie the corpses of a woman and her husband, both of whom had to be killed after she had witnessed something which was *amem*. On the other side lies the stile over which one crosses the fence and approaches the Telefolip itself.

Men may enter this enclosure at any time, providing a number of circumstances are met. A man may not enter beyond the fence if he is carrying or has recently killed or eaten cassowaries, marsupials (*nuk*), red oil pandanus (*em*) or bananas (*sum*, particularly those varieties that are eaten raw)--here it is interesting to note that men speak of harvesting pandanus and bananas in the same terms with which they refer to game, as a matter of 'killing' (*acamin*). A man is also prohibited entry if he has recently had sexual intercourse or if his wife has recently given birth. Finally, men may not enter immediately after the death of a close relative.

The path through the yard of the Telefolip goes round the house on the Ifikot side, and here two small mounds stand, one in the front, and one in the rear of the house, and these are complemented by two similar mounds on the east or Mofumkot side. The Ifikot side is of the Arrow sphere, and each of these mounds has red *tobaa* growing from them, and at the top are placed the perforated stone discs of *tingii* war clubs. On the top of the two corresponding mounds on the Mofumkot side are no club heads, and cordyline plants grow from them, but they are the green *kong kasak* variety associated with domestic pig (*kong*) husbandry. This corresponds with the internal division of the Telefolip into Arrow side and Taro side, and a closer look at the enclosed area shows that plants in which green leaves and white flowers predominate are to be found on the Mofumkot or Taro side, while the colour red predominates in the plants of the Ifikot or Arrow side.

Aside from the imposing size of the Telefolip, it is marked by some features which tend to distinguish it from other *yolam*. One of these is a small awning-like platform above the door upon which men dance during one phase of the taro rite, the *iman ban*. In addition to this, the outside walls of the Telefolip are covered with a herring-bone pattern of wooden slats (see Plate 19). During the construction of the Telefolip, each man is assigned one vertical column of such slats to build, during which time they must sing



continually. Exceptionally fast workers may complete two such columns, and this is taken as a sign that they will become polygynous and marry two wives. This pattern was given to Afek by the Sun, Atanim, when he sat atop the hoop-pine and is called *un miip*, 'arrow binding'. In this way it is hoped that the houseposts will all be securely bound while at the same time indicating that the Telefolip walls consist metaphorically of a fence of arrows.

The floor of the Telefolip is quite high, being elevated perhaps twenty feet or so above the ground. The interior of the Telefolip is much like that of other *yolam*, with the Arrow hearth located on the Ifikot side of the floor and the Taro hearth located on the Mofumkot side. There are some differences, however. The house is considerably larger in floor area than other *yolam*, in keeping with its overall proportions and its pre-eminent place among *yolam*. Further, there is little wood to be seen along the walls, for they are completely covered by row after row of painted jawbones of domestic pigs. They number at least in the thousands---I originally began counting them on entry, and my Telefolip companions were delighted that I kept losing track, for this confirmed what they had already told me: there are pigs' jaws there beyond counting. Unlike some other *yolam*, there are also a fair number of intact skulls and jawbones of wild pigs in the Telefolip arranged around the edges and margins of the walls: along the floorboards and where the roof adjoins the walls, and surrounding the doorway. Unlike the domestic jawbones, from which they are readily distinguished by the presence of large tusks, these are painted entirely red with ochre instead of having alternations of red and white. Finally, there is one further difference which is both intriguing and perplexing: there are only two *men amem* in the Telefolip, one for Taro and the other for Arrow. The men explained that these were the only *men amem* they kept in Telefolip. I was refused the names of these two *usong*, since this is extremely *amem*; when I suggested that they were perhaps Afek

herself and Ataanim, or perhaps Afek and her younger brother, this was vehemently denied.

In the Telefolip, as in all other *yolam*, the division between Taro and Arrow is paramount. In the case of Telefolip, however, it is a division deriving directly from Afek herself. When she was constructing the Telefolip she struck the ground on the site with her digging stick, breaking a mound there in two. This was the separation of the realm of hunting and warfare from that of gardening and pig rearing, and the reason the floor of the Telefolip is elevated to the height that it derives from this deed, for the twin hearths are situated directly above the two mounds that she thus created by sundering the earth. Under the floor of the Telefolip are the roots and the source (*magam*, *mit*) of the Man Vine and Taro Vine, the one stemming from the Arrow side, the other from the Taro side. These two vines run out throughout the surrounding countryside with many unseen underground shoots, and connect the earth with men's well-being and Afek's division between Arrow and Taro. It is this, among other things, that the Telefolip shelters and conceals, and it is also these two vines that the Telefolip sustains, for below its floor (*abiin*) lies the 'umbilical cord' (*abin*) connecting it with the earth. Knowledge of this is highly *anem* for a number of reasons, one of which is the possibility that someone might attempt to destroy one or both of the vines: a couple of generations ago a man was distraught and furious at the death of his son and attempted to hack the Man Vine under the Telefolip floor with an adze and he had to be shot to prevent its destruction.

#### iv. Initiations

While the *yolam* and its *usong* serve generally to protect the village and its members, it is also the context for a series of rites known by the general term *ban*. There are *bans* of many kinds but the majority of them are initiatory in character and serve to introduce novices into a new stage of

participation in the community of the *yolam* and the world of things *amem*. In addition, many such *bans* may have other aims as well, as we shall see.

In general there are a number of features all *bans* share regardless of their particular type. Women are always excluded, with the exception of the *kong ban*, which is both a feast and a rite designed to promote the growth and health of domestic pigs. During the course of a *ban* there are secret (*amem*) and more public (here, *kem*, 'open, visible') phases; whatever transpires during the secret phases must remain unknown to those who have not participated in them, and as in other cases of *amem* prohibitions, this is as much for the protection of non-participants and the safeguarding of the world at large as it is a matter of privilege. The participants in the *ban* are known as *ban kaseɫ* and may not have direct physical contact or share food with those who are not participants. Not only would this spoil the *ban* itself, it would endanger non-participants as well, since participants are charged with *mamiin*, a powerful 'heat' during the course of the *ban*. It goes without saying that none of the participants may have sexual intercourse immediately before, during, or after a *ban*. Because of the *mamiin* with which they are charged, most participants--especially the novices or initiands, known as *ilang*, which is also the general term for garden--must not come into contact with water, since it will cool them and is also inimical to *sinik*, or spirit.

In addition to these features, there are certain other characteristic aspects of most *bans*. Many of them involve *men amem* or other relics and hence imply the participation of *usong*. The living participants are of course divided into initiators and initiands, and men of the former category are further subdivided into two groups on the basis of the functions they perform in relation to the initiands. Most *bans* of an initiatory kind include phases in which novices are beaten, threatened, or otherwise subjected to hardship. The men who do this fall into one category and may be known variously as *magayim*, 'enemies' (*waasi*) or Fathers (*aalabal*). There is a second group of

initiators, however, who remain with the initiands throughout all or most of their trials and who protect, feed, and succor the youths. These men are their *ogeenal*, their Mothers. This division of initiators on the basis of their participation vis-a-vis the initiands does not remain constant from one initiation to the next, though there is some tendency for Mothers to repeat their role for particular boys if they are so inclined. Further, these relations are independent of those of kinship, and neither Fathers or Mothers need be kinsmen of any particular type to the initiands. There is, however, one restriction pertaining to kinship, namely, that it is forbidden for a father to come into direct contact with his son during the latter's initiation. Should this happen, or should a father touch his son's face paint of ochre, the father will age prematurely and die.<sup>2</sup> It is clear, therefore, that the Fathers and Mothers in initiations are so entirely by virtue of their role in the rituals themselves.

Aside from the organization of participants, there are certain other broad features that most initiations have in common. Most *bans* are accompanied by the killing of pigs and a small feast for the participants, and foods of various kinds may become prohibited or permitted as the result of participation in *bans*. It is also generally the case that there will be a prohibition of variable duration on the sharing of red oil pandanus between fathers and recently initiated sons following a *ban*. Some time after the conclusion of a *ban* the youths who have passed through it will present a small feast of red oil pandanus to their Mothers as compensation for the care they provided, and this is named after the specific *ban* concerned, e.g., a *dagasal bil* is made for the Mothers of a *dagasal ban*, a *mafuum bil* is made for the Mothers of a *mafuum ban*, etc.

One of the most significant aspects of all *bans* is the admission of the novices to the world of men's knowledge, and all *bans* embody teaching of various kinds. There are several distinct Telefol speech genres employed in

*bans*, and these are generally used by the Mothers of the novices during various phases of the rites. One such genre is *weng kem*, 'open speech'. *Weng kem* is non-sacred speech that may be used in a wide range of contexts and generally has the character of moral instruction. This is present in all *bans*, but plays an especially prominent role in the fourth initiation of the sequence, the *mafum ban*, which emphasizes the growing maturity of novices on the threshold of adulthood. In *weng kem* the Mothers instruct the youths in proper conduct. There are warnings about the dangers of adultery and swaggering pride: youths should not rely on the wives of elder brothers for help in gardening, lest they become too close; young men wishing to marry should not speak of this or boast of their prowess, but quietly demonstrate their industry in energetic gardening and hunting and display their mettle through generosity and quiet gifts to others--then men will think of marrying their sisters or daughters to them. The strength and vitality of youth is something which they should learn to handle properly: if there is heavy work to be done (for example, in housebuilding) they should lend a hand to their elders rather than running off to the bush like children; wet and cold and rainy weather should not deter them from hunting at night in the forest, for it will be harder for them to do when they get older and are less hardy; if there is a dance, they should dance energetically and strongly, but they should remember that the dances are for all, even white-haired men, and even the most decrepit ancient has a right to dance without being made fun of--they will be old themselves soon enough. Young men should avoid the temptation to exult in their bodies or use their youth and strength to dominate others. By all means, they are to be hard, hot, and stinging (*kun-so*, *mamin-so*, *atul-so*) with their enemies and those who would take advantage of them, and their anger (*oolisak*, 'belly blood', *tibisak*, 'forehead blood', *bubul atul*, 'stinging heart', *bubul mafak*, 'bad heart') should be fierce. But among friends, neighbours, and kin they must also learn to temper this and to be open and receptive to others'

needs, to be soft-spoken and conciliatory (*bet bubul*, 'soft heart'). When they have something, they should be prepared to give it; if a man's children are crying they are probably hungry and one should not go to eat at his house, but instead leave a bit of taro on their verandah without words. If there is an old man staying in the village when others have gone off to the bush, one should sit and talk with him and keep him company or bring him some meat from the hunt. When a man is distributing pork he should see that none are left out, nor should he deny a share to men simply because they are unlikely to reciprocate. When a young man has a family he should clear many gardens for his wife and children, build strong fences, plant and look after his taro and his planting stock well, and he should hunt regularly to provide meat for his wife and children. But he should not spend all his time in the bush like a hermit or some forest animal and should return to the village often to share the company of other men and sleep with them in the *yolam*. If he finds good men's food in the bush, he must bring this back to the village to share it with others rather than gorging himself. And if, for some reason, he is angered by another villager, his mouth should not be hot and his words angry. Instead he should not give others shame (*fitom*) but be patient and quiet. The man who does these things will live long--those who do not will die early and invite the attentions of *tamoon* and *biit* sorcerers, angry *usong*, and will be avoided by resentful neighbours. All these things are taught to youths in the *weng kem* given them in their initiations, and it is thus that they are taught how to conduct themselves like men in Telefolmin.

In addition to instruction in *weng kem*, novices are both entertained and instructed with *weng doo*. *Weng doo* is a veiled or indirect form of speech which generally has metaphorical content. In the context of initiations, *weng doo* is also entertaining and often funny, and shares the nature of both jokes and riddles. *Doo fukunin* means to recall or remember, and *weng doo* is perhaps best understood as speech which reminds people and evokes memories or

thoughts. *Weng doo* is not simply spoken, but is often pantomimed with hilarious effect--in *weng doo* the misdeeds or misadventures of the youths present are recalled, alluded to, and dramatized while the details of identities, places, and other circumstances are concealed. For example, when Dakasim was a little boy he and his brother Bufalok got some birds in the bush and had built a tiny fire in which to cook them when an old man came upon them. Scattering the feathers into the undergrowth and concealing the birds, they hoped to avoid having to share them with the old fellow. He asked them why they had built a fire there in the middle of nowhere, and they replied (feebly) that they were cold and had merely stopped to warm themselves. The old man nodded and continued on his way, and their lie permitted them to dine undetected. They had gotten away with it. Several years later, however, when Dakasim was in the *mafuum ban* he saw the same old man, in company with other Mothers, pantomime the following scene. Two small boys (with little boy voices) shot dozens of birds, hastily loading one after the other into their netbags until they were stuffed. They built a roaring fire (here, in the hearth) in which to cook them when a skinny and starving old man staggered along, and the audience roared at the antics of the boys as they frantically tried to conceal all the birds behind and under the bushes (here, members of the audience). The ancient came and, after giving the two boys some succulent sugar cane, wondered at such a big fire on such a fine day, whereupon the boys claimed they were cold and began shivering (but with fear rather than cold, their eyes enormous). After some dialogue filled with puns--e.g., what fine arrows (*un*--but the word for bird is *un*) the two boys had!--the old man staggered off into the forest, where he died of starvation while the two boys wolfed down their food. The performance was enjoyed by all the novices, and served (as does all *weng doo*) to lighten the discomfort, apprehension, and fear of the initiation itself. Mothers work hard at such skits to make the going easier, for they all know how trying and frightening the initiations

are for the boys. But there is also a serious point, and all *weng doo* have a moral which serves to prod the boys' awareness of their shortcomings as children and their responsibilities as men. *Weng doo* are thus a sort of lighthearted commentary on the fallibility of youth, and while providing comic relief for the otherwise extremely serious business of initiation, they provide (like the rest of the initiation process) food for thought and reflection. In addition, for each such *weng doo* there is at least one member of the audience to whom it speaks personally but discreetly: the unnamed youth will realize that all along he has been under scrutiny. He is not publicly shamed, as he would be if he were identified, but he knows that his misdeeds have not escaped notice. Older men, in fact, rarely rebuke boys directly, but they are always on the lookout for misbehaviour that will be quietly filed away until it is time to remind boys later in *weng doo*.

Though youths are taught *weng kem* and *weng doo* in their initiations, such things are not themselves *amem* and may be freely discussed outside the initiation context. This is not so, however, for the third major speech genre employed in initiation, *weng amem*. *Weng amem* is speech that is sacred, tabu, forbidden, powerful, and secret. I reserve discussion of *weng amem* for a subsequent section, but for now will simply say that most *weng amem* consists of mythic narratives about the doings of Afek (*Afek sang*). Such narratives may not be discussed in the hearing of women, for it is dangerous to them--should a woman hear *weng amem* her belly would swell until she became huge and died. If children or youths who have not passed through the appropriate initiation hear *weng amem* they would remain small and their growth stunted. In addition, a man who revealed *weng amem* would run the risk of his taro running away and retaliation by *usong* or other men. *Weng amem* is not idle talk, and should not be spoken too often, even among those who may converse about such things. It has efficacy, and most of the phrases used in either Taro or Arrow ritual are highly secret and known only to the men of the



appropriate sphere--should a Taro man learn of the inner core (*magam*) of *weng amem* of the Arrow sphere, his success in both gardening and hunting would be jeopardized, and the same holds true in the case of Arrow men learning the *weng amem* of the Taro side. The differentiation of Arrow and Taro must be maintained and applies not only to the concrete acts of nurturing and killing or the division of the *yolam*, but to speech and knowledge itself.

The initiatory *bans* in Telefolmin are arranged in a sequence which a boy enters at perhaps age seven or so and completes some years later, generally when he is in his mid-twenties. The *bans* of the series are: *dagasal ban*, *om ban*, *tlalalep ban*, *mafuum ban*, *ot ban*, and *tap ban*. I will sketch each of these in turn.

#### iv.(a). *Dagasal Ban*

The *dagasal ban* is the first of the initiation sequence and is a relatively small scale event which may be held in any village independently of other villages, though occasionally villages will combine for this purpose, especially if each has only a few lads to initiate.

The *dagasal ban* begins rather gently, and some consideration is given to age differentials among the boys to be initiated. The younger boys, some of whom may only be around six years old, are exempted from the full treatment given out to those slightly older, who may be as old as ten or twelve years, depending on the amount of time that elapsed between the current and the previous *dagasal ban*. On the afternoon of the day appointed for the commencement of the rite, the boys are assembled by the men who will act as their Mothers and taken to a dwelling house selected for the rite. All others will be prohibited from this house for the time being. The boys are generally apprehensive and fearful, for although they know nothing of the details of the rite, they know that they will be introduced into the *yolam*, which has up until now been prohibited to them and the object of fear. They will also have

heard rumours and tall tales about horrible things that happen to boys in initiations, particularly if they have been poorly behaved. This general sense of misgiving is probably intensified by the fact that they will have been given no prior warning of the initiation, and when they are collected by the men who will be their Mothers, their real mothers begin crying and wailing songs that indicate they will be losing their sons and fear they may die. For all these reasons they are uneasy, and some try to run away. Few succeed, for they receive no help from others and their fathers stand by impassively as they are taken off. Many cry and some lose their bladder control, but they are cautioned not to resist or to struggle, for otherwise things will go harder for them in what is to come.

Thus wrenched from their homes and their families, they sit in a dwelling house with their Mothers who explain that they will look after them and see that they come to no harm. This is followed by the performance of *weng doo* which serves to dissipate some of the tension and put the boys at ease. Sometime during the course of this, one particular *weng doo* will be put to them in the form of a riddle. An old man will enter the house, and in his closed hand the beak of a small bird will be visibly protruding. He walks round the interior of the house, showing this to all the boys while keeping his hand closed around the bird all the while. Then he puts the question to them: is the bird dead or alive? Each must answer in turn, but as can be seen, the answer is elusive. Some say the bird is alive, others say it is dead, others still say they don't know. Rarely, one of the boys gives the correct answer to the riddle. If so, the men present silently take note of him, for he will be watched and later given intensive instruction in sacred and secret (*amem*) matters. If not, it is of no importance, and in any event nothing more is said of the matter. For some, the meaning of the riddle will be explained later when they are older; for others it will simply remain a riddle.

The *ban* is now in progress, and none of the participants may drink water from this point until the conclusion of the rite. Shortly before sunset the older boys are segregated from the younger boys. The latter remain in the house with some of their Mothers while the others are taken outside. There the other initiators, the Fathers, are assembled in two ranks leading from the door of the house to the entry of the fence, where the boys and their Mothers will enter the *yolabiip*. In their hands the Fathers (who are also called the *waasi*, enemies) hold switches or bundles of *tagaa*, stinging nettles, including one particular variety whose name is *kalbio*, 'here I am!'. This is a gauntlet which the boys must run to enter the safety of the *yolabiip*. Again, many are frightened by the spectacle of the painted men who will flog them, and some try to run away. These boys never succeed, and for them a specially severe beating is in store.

The rest of the villagers--women and children and the fathers of the boys--stand on the verandahs of their houses to watch, and some shout comments to the initiators. If a boy has been badly behaved a mother or father may tell the Fathers to really give it to him, while others may tell them to be easy with their boy. Most of the boys will have seen this at least once before as spectators, but this time they are the subjects of such treatment. For most boys the worst part of this experience is the apprehension and the fright itself, for their Mothers will run the gauntlet with them and protect and shield them with their backs while the children run below and ahead of them. Thus in most cases it is the Mother rather than the boy who takes the greatest beating. But if a boy is or has been troublesome, his Mother will stand aside and the boy will have to negotiate the passage to the *yolabiip* on his own, his back taking the full weight of the blows of the Fathers.

Once inside the *yolabiip* all the participants assemble. Here the boys are taught the songs of the *dagasal*, the *tandet*, young children's initiation songs. They sing of leaving their mothers and of leaving behind

foods such as *yook*, the tasty pigeons which will henceforth be prohibited to them until after they have become men. Then the door of the *yolam* is unboarded and most of the Mothers go inside. At the entrance to the *yolam* stand two of the Mothers who hold cucumbers (*timit*) in their hands. The cucumbers have been cut in half, and each of these men stands on either side of the doorway with a piece of cucumber in each hand. The boys are lined up in rough order of seniority and are then ready to enter the *yolam* as twilight begins. As each boy enters, the two Mothers slap him on the chest and the back with the cucumber so that the juice runs down over both sides of the boy's heart. This is done for a number of reasons, though this is not explained to the boys. It is meant to promote growth and make the boys straight and tall (*timitim*; the cucumber is both straight and the most quickly maturing crop in the garden, along with beans, *mil*); it is also said that the coolness and moisture of the cucumber juice protect the boys from the heat (*mamiin*) of the *usong* who are about to meet them; in any event, cucumber juice is said to soothe the hot pain of stinging nettles, which can raise welts on a boy's skin (remembering that water is forbidden).

As the boys enter the *yolam* for the first time they are told alternately to sit at one hearth or the other: one will sit at the Taro hearth, the next at the Arrow hearth, the one after him at the Taro hearth, and so on until all have been seated. Thus it is that boys become allocated to Arrow or Taro sides. Occasionally a boy will be seated on a particular side out of turn. This is most likely to happen if it has been made known that a man---perhaps his father or his mother's brother---wishes specifically to pass his esoteric knowledge (*weng amem*) of a particular sphere (Arrow or Taro) on to the boy in question. When all are seated the Mothers explain to them that from this day forward they belong either to Arrow side or to Taro side, as well as explaining the difference between the two and the fact that it is forbidden (*amem*) to mix them.

Hanging from the ceiling of the *yolam* are a number of bamboo tubes. These containers are filled with the rendered fat of domestic pigs (*kong togol*), and this is one of the first ritual secrets that the boys are introduced to. This grease will form part of the base for their body and face paint, and the use of pig grease for this and the knowledge of its nature and source is extremely *anem*--the boys are told that they will be killed and their bodies thrown in a stream if they reveal this to women or uninitiated children, who must never know of this. The grease comes from the belly fat of a pig, and the means by which it is rendered are explained. Immediately afterwards the boys are told to stand up and their Mothers cover them from head to toe with the grease, singing all the while, and to the grease they add powdered red ochre (*bagan*, 'earth') until all the boys are painted with a glowing red sheen.

Hanging from the rafters of the *yolam* are also a number of ropes made from vine. Instead of being allowed to sit once more, the boys' Fathers tell them to grasp these vines firmly and remain standing. Then the men begin to sing and the boys are told to sing along, and to dance. This continues for some time until eventually one or more of the boys grows tired and begins to sit down once more. The minute a boy stops dancing, however, or even loses his grip on the vine, one of the Fathers will take a sheaf of wild pandanus (*sel*) leaves and thrust it into the fire burning in the nearest hearth. Thus armed with a firebrand, he will beat the boy with fire and tell him that he must grasp the vine once more and continue to dance. Presently huge fires are made in the hearths while the boys continue to dance, and they are told that they must dance and dance the night through until dawn while the fires are stoked and kept raging.

This is a night of intense discomfort and exhaustion, and the boys soon feel the effects of tabu on water as the sweat rolls off their bodies. The heat from the fires is severe, and the initiators themselves retire to

the edges of the floor along the outside walls to get as far from the heat as possible, only rising to thrash with firebrands those who show signs of letting up. The boys soon tire and their feet grow leaden, and now they must grasp the vines firmly simply to keep from falling to the floor. Despite this, they are kept dancing, even if the dance becomes little more than shuffling in place. When their spirits flag the Mothers will attempt to cheer them by telling *weng doo*. Whatever happens, the boys may not be allowed to fall asleep, for should they do so they will become poor hunters of marsupials by moonlight and would meet an early death. This continues until dawn.

Sometime during the night the Mothers will begin singing once again, but this time the songs they sing are different, for they sing of the journeys of Afek and her coming to Telefolmin. The songs themselves are cryptic, consisting mainly of allusions to the various places where Afek passed. This is the boys' first introduction to the *weng amem* of *Afek sang*, the sacred speech of the tales of Afek. The boys, who in any event are barely conscious, are told to listen to what they are told but not to think (*aget fukunin*) about what they are told--the *weng amem* should simply be taken in and become part of their flesh (*dam*, a word also used to mean 'truth') and their bones (*kun*, also meaning 'strength'). They are also sternly warned against speaking of such things, for this is *amem*--should they do so, they will be killed by their own fathers and brothers and die unmourned. So it is that boys are given their first encounter with the esoteric and sacred knowledge of *weng amem*. Few men remember much of the details of the content of the *Afek sang* told them in the *dagasal ban*, but the force of the encounter is still recalled after many years. After this time older men may take them aside and from time to time tell them more of such matters, for if they do not yet understand, they will at least have heard.

Just before dawn the initiators begin a new song, repeating over and over again "*kwin buson, daan buson*," "greens at evening, greens at dawn," a

phrase which remains cryptic but which the boys also sing. The dancing ordeal now comes to a close, and at dawn the weary boys are allowed to rest, but not yet to sleep. Some of the Mothers now go to the *unangam* in which the younger boys and their Mothers remained. Their night was spent in occasional *weng doo*, general conversation, and sleep--a stark contrast with the experience of the older boys. These younger ones are now summoned with their Mothers to the *yolam*. There is no gauntlet to run and they pass through the fence without incident. As with their seniors, they line up in rough order of size and age and enter the *yolam* door after having been struck with cucumbers. When they come inside they take their place at either the Arrow hearth or the Taro hearth with the others, and they are also told about Arrow side and Taro side. Any questions they make about the night's activities in the *yolam* are turned aside or simply answered by saying "we danced and sang, that's all." The older boys are forbidden to tell them anything of the previous night, which the little ones will learn themselves in the next *dagasal ban*.

The Mothers tell the new boys to stand so that they may be painted like their elder brothers, and the pig grease is explained to them with the same warning as they too are covered with the fat and ochre. Then they sit down with the rest once more. Now the time has come for the presentation of the *dagasal* themselves.

*Dagasal* are special netbags given to boys when they pass through the *dagasal ban*, and are the distinctive emblems of those who have begun the journey to manhood. Sometime before the *dagasal ban* takes place a boy's father will set aside a particularly fine netbag that his wife makes--this will be their son's *dagasal*. Then the father will quietly go off to hunt a hornbill to procure its feathers, or else he will obtain them from a man who already has some. The netbag will be kept hidden, perhaps in a friend's house, and he will work the quills of the black hornbill feathers into the bag until it is covered on one side with row after row of the feathers,

resembling the arrangement of a wing or a tail. This will be his son's *dagasal*.

On the dawn of the day following the boys' dancing ordeal each of their fathers will approach the *yolam* with their *dagasal* and hand them over to the Fathers of the initiation, the *aalabal*. The Fathers take them inside and hand them over to the Mothers, the *ogeenal*. Taking these, the Mothers then take the halved cucumbers with which each boy has been struck--these have been carefully set aside, and the *dagasal* and the cucumbers are matched for each boy. The Mothers take the cucumbers and place them inside each bag, and to these they add small bamboo tubes of rendered pig fat stopped with aromatic leaves. These are to be kept concealed in their *dagasal*, whose feathers shield the bag's contents from view. Once again the boys are reminded that this is all highly secret and *amem*--women and children must never learn of the contents of the bags. The Mothers then hand over each *dagasal* to its proper recipient. They are instructed that the cucumber must remain in the bag and be allowed to rot, while the pig grease will be used from time to time to renew their body paint.

When all of the *dagasal* have been distributed the boys sling them over their backs while their Mothers adorn them with crowns of red parrot (*dufaal*) feathers and headbands of white *bonang* (bridewealth cowries) while the rest of the men similarly decorate themselves. Thus resplendent in red, black, and white the men and boys line up in double file and prepare to exit from the *yolam*. They emerge into the *yolabiip*, and beyond in the village plaza the women and children wait. The lines are tidied up and then the men and boys sing the *tandet* once more and file out into the plaza as they dance past each of the houses. As they pass, the women exclaim their admiration for these beautiful lads and pretend not to recognize their own sons, singing impromptu songs of their own, remarking how large their sons have grown or how beautiful the 'hornbills' (*kabeel*) are. As the men complete the circuit



of the village they take some bananas from their own netbags. These are *sum usii*, a short and sweet sugar banana which is forbidden to women. As soon as the circuit is completed, the men take up their *usii* and pelt the boys' mothers with them, driving them away from their sons. As the women retire in disarray, the men and boys file up once again and dance up to the *kabeelam*, where all enter. (If there is no *kabeelam* in the village, they will go to a *tiimam*, a house built specially for this purpose).

Once in the *kabeelam* the boys are allocated to their proper areas, again in terms of Taro or Arrow, and here--at least--they are allowed to sleep. While they sleep their Mothers remain in the house with them while the Fathers go outside to find food for them. Outside the fence many of the boys' mothers will have gathered with taro and other food for their sons, and this they hand over to the Fathers. In the meantime, some of the other Fathers will have gone off to nearby gardens to cut sugar cane for the boys and the initiators, for water is still forbidden and this will be their only source of moisture until the ban on water is lifted. The Fathers return to the *kabeelam* with this food, which they then hand over to the waiting Mothers. The Mothers take this food into the *kabeelam* where they remain with the boys while the Fathers retire to the *yolam* where they eat and rest themselves.

When the boys begin to stir and waken in the *kabeelam* the Mothers cook and distribute food to them and comfort them, saying that what lies ahead will now be easy for them. They perform *weng doo* and instruct the boys in food tabus that they must now observe, such as the prohibition on *yook* and other red birds, the tabu on eating oil pandanus with their fathers, and the injunction not to eat the bones of domestic pigs (*kong kun*). They are also told that from now on they may enter the *yolabiip* and the *kabeelam* whenever they wish and may also re-enter the *yolam* in the company of senior men, though it is not yet safe for them to sleep there. The remainder of the day and the evening are spent lounging and eating together in the house.

Before dawn of the following day the Mothers awaken the boys and tell them the secret tale of Afek and her younger brother, how she taught him to make himself beautiful and how she gave him the *yolam* for his own. They then instruct the boys in the practice of arising before dawn and washing themselves with dew (here called *binigok*, 'star' or 'firefly') so that they may greet the sun clean and gleaming, just as Afek's younger brother had done. They are also told how to renew their paint with the pig grease in their *dagasal*, and this too is how Afek's younger brother made himself beautiful. Once again, the boys are warned against revealing any of this to the uninitiated, for this is *amem*, secret and sacred. The boys are then taken outside where they wash and anoint themselves as instructed. This is done a little way off into the bush, in an area near the *yolabiip* where the women have been warned to keep away. Here each boy has a small shelter or house, the *milam*. They are brought here, where the Fathers await them. After the dew-washing and anointing with grease each boy is made to lie down on the ground, where the *milam* shelters their face. Here they must lie silently and without stirring under the watchful eyes of the Fathers, who beat them and threaten to kill them if they speak or move. Here again many of the boys are frightened, but they are reassured and there are no further beatings unless they disobey.

The boys remain under their individual *milam* through the night with their bodies partially exposed to the elements. If they are lucky, it will rain during the night, and though the cold and wet are uncomfortable, this is to the good for they must remain quiet and silent under their *milam* until most of their body paint has been washed away. The following dawn the boys get up once again to relieve themselves and to wash with dew and cover themselves once again with pig fat.

When their body paint has been washed away by the rain the boys are told they are now permitted to return to the village and to their mothers,

where they may sleep in dwelling houses once again. From this point on they may drink water and may go about their lives normally except that they must avoid gardens until their face paint (protected by the *milam*) has worn completely away. Once again they are cautioned against telling anything of what has taken place, nor should they converse about it among themselves. They are enjoined to continue to wash themselves with dew before dawn each day and to continue to anoint themselves with pig grease from their *dagasal* if they wish to grow hardy and strong. They should not spend too much time sleeping by the fireside in their house lest they become lazy and sluggish. Their Mothers will continue to look after them and if a boy is particularly small they may take him into the *yolam* once again to renew his face paint until he is judged to have grown sufficiently.

This is the conclusion of the *dagasal ban*, and the boys will return to their families. Shortly afterward each boy's Mother will kill a pig and will give it to the boy who was his 'child' during the initiation. The latter does not eat this, but instead distributes it to each of his friends. Some time after this, the boy's father will make a small feast of oil pandanus for the men who acted as his son's Mothers and in this way compensates them and thanks them for looking after his son for him.

#### iv.(b). Om Ban

The next rite of the initiation sequence is the *om ban*, the sago initiation. Sago (*om*) is a hot country food not found in Telefolmin, and in preparation for the *om ban* men must make an expedition to either the lower lying regions of the Sepik (Ok Tekin) downstream from Telefol country proper, or they must venture into the deep valley of the Strickland (Ok Om) to the northeast. Here they fell wild sago palms and extract the starch from the pith in preparation for the *om ban*.

Like the *dagasal ban*, the *om ban* may be held in any village independently or other villages. In contrast to the *dagasal ban*, the *om ban* is a relatively simple rite, lasting only one afternoon and one evening. There is no public phase to the *om ban*, and it may take place quietly without the knowledge of any but the participants. In the afternoon of the day on which the *om ban* is to be performed the men who have agreed to be the Mothers for the boys will go off separately and summon each of their charges to the *kabeelam* or to the *yolam* if a *kabeelam* is lacking. As each boy enters the house he is struck by Fathers who stand waiting on either side of the doorway. Once again *tagaa*, stinging nettles, are used; this time, however, the beating is not severe and is almost perfunctory. As soon as this has taken place the boys sit down at the appropriate hearth, where they join others who have similarly been brought in. At this point the boys are once again fearful and apprehensive, recalling the ordeals of the *dagasal ban*. Once again water is prohibited to the *ban kasei*, and once again the Mothers inaugurate things by performing *weng doo*.

Presently sunset begins to fall and the initiators--both Mothers and Fathers line up in single file, forming a line encircling the two hearths of the house. The boys are then told to crawl the length of this line underneath the spread legs of their initiators. This suggests an obvious birth symbolism, but Telefolmin explain this (as do Baktaman in a similar rite--see Barth 1975:66) as fastening or binding the *sinik* ('spirit') of the boys. When all have completed the circuit they sit once again at the appropriate hearths. The initiators, both Mothers and Fathers, then join them after having produced bundles wrapped in leaves. These, the boys are told, are cakes of a particularly fine grated taro (*iman ninii*), and they all eat them together. When they have eaten, the men explain that this is not taro at all, but that it is sago (*om*). This is followed by a brief narration of *weng amem*, the stories of how Afek sent sago away from Telefolmin, and this is

followed by a similar narration of how Afek sent the wild animals away from Telefolip. The men then explain to the boys a number of tabus they must now observe, most of which will be in force until after the conclusion of the *tap ban*: they must not eat the hairless tails or paws ('hands'--*sagal*) of any marsupials (*muk*), nor the feet (also 'hands') of birds; they may not eat the liver (*iin*) of birds or pigs; they may not eat *sum aalab* ('banana father'), *waan aalab* ('tuber father'--a yam), *kwet tenep* (a red sugar cane), or *kwet ugit* (an extremely succulent green sugar cane, ?'sugar female'). Should they break any of these tabus their growth would be impaired and they would remain small children.

After this the men and boys sit together chatting quietly. The men point out, once again, some vines hanging from the rafters of the house. At this the boys are once more apprehensive, but their Mothers tell them not to worry. These vines are all bound together to form one long rope circumscribing the house, with numerous ends dangling. The men uncoil these and draw them down to where the boys remain sitting. Those boys who are wearing penis gourds are told to remove them. When all the boys are thus naked, the men take one of the ends of the vines and tie it firmly around the penis of each of the boys. Thus secured to the house, the boys are told to go to sleep. Nothing further ensues until the next morning. Then the vines are untied, and the boys are given the usual warnings and exhortations about the *amem* character of all that has taken place. They are then told that they may drink water and go. The *ban* is thus concluded as quietly as it began.

#### iv.(c). Tlalalep Ban

The *om ban* may take place as soon as a month or as late as a couple of years after the completion of the *dagasal ban*. After the *om ban* has been completed, the stage is set for the next *ban* of the sequence, the *tlalalep ban*. As with the *dagasal* and *om bans*, the *tlalalep ban* may be held by any

village on its own, though men will often prefer to send their sons to the *tlalalep* at Telefolip if its timing is convenient. The Telefolip *tlalalep ban* is in principle no different from that of any other village, save for the fact that it is performed in the ravine of a small tributary of the Ok Ifi, called Ok Tlalalep, and it is from this stream that the rite takes its name.

The timing of the *tlalalep* is somewhat variable, but men feel that it should not take place too long after the completion of the *om ban*. The *tlalalep ban* is sometimes called the *ifet ban*, from *ifet*, the name for switches used to thrash the initiands. This is appropriate, for the chief purpose of the *tlalalep ban* resides in the act of thrashing the youths, and this is deemed essential to their growth and well-being. The *ban* itself is quite simple, and lasts only for the duration of a single day. The boys are taken quietly from the village by their Mothers to a prearranged spot in the bush where women have been warned to stay away. When they arrive they are led into a clearing, where their Mothers have told them good food awaits them. Here they sit down and see leaf bundles in heaps, and they are told to wait for others who will presently join them. With a shout the Fathers rush from the surrounding undergrowth and uncover the piles of banana leaves under which there is no food, but instead *ifet*, switches made from the branches of the *igin* tree. The *igin* is the tree from which men make the bark dishes in which red oil pandanus is prepared, but it is also the tree from which *at kom*, the war shields, are made. At this some of the boys may attempt to bolt, but there are yet other Fathers waiting in the bush and along the track to intercept them. The Fathers, decorated and raising their switches threateningly, form into two lines, and the Mothers gather the boys together at one end and explain to them that they must run the gauntlet. Unlike the *dagasal ban*, however, they must do this unassisted and unsheltered by their Mothers. They are told not to turn aside or to stumble or to slow down, lest

the rain of blows fall heavily upon them. Then, one by one, they are sent to run between the two lines, being pushed into the middle if necessary.

When all have passed through the lines the men and the boys gather together and sit once more. Sometimes a man will provide some cooked pork, which they will all eat together, though this is not strictly speaking necessary. Many of the boys are shaken, and some cry with pain. The Mothers take some cut cucumbers or ripe *suum kalom* bananas from their netbags and use the juices of these to soothe the boys' cuts and bruises. Many of the men feel sympathy for the boys and their pain, but the thrashing is necessary. Should a boy fail to go through this he may well be lost in warfare, being too frightened of pain to break through an ambushing line of enemy warriors. The experience is said to harden and strengthen the boys, and it is also said to promote their growth. Up until this time the boys have spent much of their time in the company of their mothers, and men say that this makes their skin heavy so that the boys remain small. When they are beaten, however, this is said to open and loosen their skin so that it does not cling too firmly to their bodies--when their skin is thus loosened there is room for new growth, an observation verified by the swelling that usually accompanies such beatings.

As the men and the boys sit and talk afterwards, the men tell them the *weng amem* about Afek and how the enmity between Telefolmin and Tifalmin came about. The men generally review the various rules and tabus that must be observed and explain to the boys that they may now go to the *yolam* unaccompanied if they wish, and that they are also welcome to sleep there. After the completion of the *tlalalep ban* the boys are also allowed to eat a variety of red oil pandanus known as *em ayaap* ('enemy pandanus', *ayaap* being a term for the ghosts of enemy warriors), and they are taught its secret name, *em kool*. Up until this time boys were only permitted to eat *em ayaap* if they were given a light spanking by a man present (other than their father;

*ayaap* is completely forbidden to females). When nightfall draws near the men and the boys return to the village after they have once more been reminded that everything that has happened is *amem*.

iv.(d). *Mafuum Ban*

Following the conclusion of the *tlalalep ban* there is a hiatus of some years before any further initiations take place. During this time the boys will have become youths and will then have been given piecemeal and informal teaching of more *weng amem*, tales of Afek. This is a period of growing responsibility and maturity, and most of the youths will be well-established gardeners and hunters in their own right. They will spend much of their time in the company of the men of their *yolam* and will have been given at least rudimentary introduction to some of the *usong* of their own sphere, whether Taro or Arrow. A number of them will begin to think of marriage, and some will already have done so by the time they are ready for the next initiation. This is the *mafuum ban*.

Of all the initiation *bans*, the *mafuum ban* is perhaps the most spectacular. Unlike those I have discussed so far, the *mafuum* cannot be held by just any village, nor may it be held by a single village on its own. For those Telefolmin who live in Eliptaman the *mafuum* may be held either at Afogavip or Ubtemtigin. For the Telefolmin of Ifitaman, and indeed for the majority of Telefolmin (whether in Eliptaman or Ifitaman) and many of the neighbouring Ulapmin and Fegolmin as well, the only proper site for the *mafuum ban* is Telefolip. It was here that the *mafuum ban* originated, and this is still the only place where men from many different areas come for the *mafuum*: even some of the Falamin, enemies of the Telefolmin, would come to Telefolip to do the *mafuum*, and at such times they could come without fear of attack, for during the *mafuum* and other major *bans* peace must prevail among the participants.



The *mafuum ban* is a major undertaking requiring the participation of hundreds of men from a number of different villages, and it is accordingly held more infrequently than any of the *bans* so far discussed. Though such matters are hard to gauge in the absence of calendars, it seems that the *mafuum* is held roughly once a decade or so. This means, among other things, that there is a relatively large age span among the youths to be initiated, and some of the initiands may be in their mid-teens while others may already be married men in their mid-twenties. Further, the *mafuum* is one of the *bans* in which men may participate as initiands more than once. Whatever their age, there are only two requirements for entry into the *mafuum*: a novice must have completed the *dagasal*, *om*, and *tlalalep bans*, and he must have the beginnings, at least, of a beard. Should a youth enter the *mafuum* before the appearance of facial hair, it is feared that his growth would be stunted. Further, the youths who are to be initiated into the *mafuum* should have a long growth of head hair, for this is important in the construction of the *mafuum* (or *sel*, after the wild pandanus used in its construction) headdress.

When the men of Telefolip have decided that a *mafuum ban* is to be held they send word out to all the outlying villages some months in advance to ready themselves. It will be decided which men will act as Mothers or Fathers for each village's youths, and the fathers of boys who will go to the initiation will look to it that there will be pigs available for the feast which is to accompany the *ban*. On the day before the assembly of men and youths at Telefolip, each village will have a small feast of pork in the *yolam* for those who are about to go to the *ban*. On the following day all decorate themselves with feathers and take up their shields and set off for Telefolip. Contingents from each village travel separately, and as each draws within a mile or two of the village they form up in single file, led by their shields, and break into vigorous dancing, twanging their bowstrings and twirling their flashing broad-bladed arrows in the sunlight, alternating the long drawn-out

tones of men's songs (*fump*) with antiphonal cries (*yuml*). In a melee of song and dancing each contingent makes its way toward Telefolip in sharp cadence, the sound converging on the village from different quarters in the bush and rising in pitch as each party approaches. Flashing their carved and painted shields from side to side each contingent enters at the pace of a quick march, does a circuit of the village plaza in Telefolip and then files through the fence of the mother house where the *yolabiip* is buzzing with befeathered men and youths. Indeed, so many are present that it is necessary for some of the old men of Telefolip to say secret words (*weng amem*) to cause the *yolabiip* to open and spread so that there will be enough room for them all: the men are as numerous as the leaves on trees and shine like flowers or stars. The *ban* has begun.

From now until the next fourteen days have passed it will be forbidden for the participants to drink water. The men who have carried the shields to Telefolip take them up into the *amogeen*, whose door will remain unboarded for the duration of the *ban*. Having done this, they return to join the others down below in the *yolabiip*. In the meantime, a careful count will have been made of all the youths to be initiated, and when this has been done the appropriate number of cucumbers will have been gathered by the initiators from nearby gardens. When these men return with the cucumbers all the *ban kasei* assemble in front of the Telefolip *kabeelan*, known as the Kuyapkan, "where they killed him"--so named for the tale about a tall stranger who once entered there during a *ban* and was killed. When all have gathered, the Fathers surround the youths before the door of the Kuyapkan while all of the Mothers save for two men go inside. These two remain on either side of the doorway with netbags full of halved cucumbers and as each youth enters the house he is struck by them with these over the heart, as in the *dagasa'i ban*. Once inside the youths and their Mothers sit at the appropriate hearths, jammed tightly against one another as the house is packed. From this point on

only the initiands themselves and their Mothers may enter the house until the conclusion of the rite, and the Fathers remain outside and sleep either in the *yolam* or the *katibam*.

Inside the Kuyapkan the Mothers point out light coloured bundles of leaves tucked away in the rafters and piled on the drying racks over the fireplaces. These are sheafs of the leaves of wild pandanus, *sel*, and will form the basic material for the construction of the *mafuum* (or *sel*) headdress itself. The men explain that these must be thoroughly dried in the fire and then smoked once more in the rafters before the headdresses can be constructed, and they take down bundles of the leaves and distribute them to the boys present. As soon as everybody is equipped with a bundle the men demonstrate how the leaves are to be dried and they all set about their work. This process continues over the next six days and is pretty much uneventful. The Mothers lighten the tedium with *weng doo* and jokes. In the meantime, the Fathers collect food from the women of the village and occasionally from mothers who will have come to Telefolip with food for their sons. The Fathers explain to the women that their brothers and sons may not take water, so they are especially anxious to be given sweet bananas and succulent varieties of sugar cane to ease the boys' parched throats. This, however, is a hoax, for such foods are appropriated by the Fathers for themselves (they too are under a water restriction)--they hand on only the cooked taro given to them. This is passed through the doorway of the Kuyapkan to the Mothers inside, who in turn distribute it to the initiands. All during this period the participants must refrain from drinking water, and the novices are not even permitted sugar cane or moisture-laden foods and many lose their appetite for taro, which begins to stick in their throats. The Mothers must observe these same restrictions while inside the Kuyapkan, though they may have sugar cane or chew sections of banana stalk for moisture if they leave the house to do so.

At the end of the seventh day the leaves have been sufficiently dried, and the Mothers instruct the boys in tearing the leaves into long slender strips for use later on. Just before dawn on the eighth day the men quietly take the boys out of the Kuyapkan, taking the pandanus strips with them. They exit the village via the men's path. They pass along here in the darkness when suddenly the Fathers set upon them from both sides with switches. The startled boys are urged to run as fast as they can to a rise in the path beyond the ambushing Fathers, and they manage to do so without sustaining many blows. When they all reach this low rise the Fathers disappear into the forest as quickly as they emerged, and the boys are told that the worst is now over and that they need not be afraid. From this point the boys and their Mothers make for a nearby stretch of bush along the Ok Ifi called Mafuum-saanin, 'planting the *mafuum*'. Here each boy is seated in the damp cold at the base of a wild pandanus tree and they are taught the songs of the *mafuum*, the *mafuumdet*, which they sing in high falsetto voices. Many of the *mafuumdet* have an almost plaintive quality, and they sing of men whose wives were seduced away from them, of others who were betrayed by friends to enemies, and of some who saved their friends through determination and bravery. Embodied in such songs are brief and almost poetically condensed allusions to the perils of manhood. They sing one further *mafuumdet* in which they evoke a sense of their own situation, singing, "I sit at the base of the wild pandanus, the cold makes me shiver, I hear something down below but I don't know what it is..."

When dawn breaks the youths are told to remain where they are as the Mothers continue singing and set about their work. Squatting behind the youths they begin to make the *mafuum*. Working as quickly as possible and singing all the while, they pull out tufts of hair from the initiand's head, pull them back tightly, and begin to wrap the white pandanus strips around each tuft in spiral fashion. The strips are wound as tightly as possible, and as one strip comes to an end another is wrapped around that until each tuft of hair ends in a thin

'tail' about 30 inches or so long. As each strip is wound a thin bark thread is also wound around it to bind the leaves tightly. It takes considerable time to complete the process and the constant tugging, twisting, and pulling of the hair is quite painful. Still, the youths are expected not to show their pain but instead to sing if they have difficulty. By early afternoon this hair-binding process will have been largely completed, each youth's head sprouting an array of white rope-like lengthenings.

When all the initiands' hair has been bound in this manner the men proceed to the next stage in constructing the headdress. One tuft of hair at the front will be worked, and along with the strips of wild pandanus a red feather of the *biseng* (King Bird of Paradise) will also be worked in among the white pandanus strip in such a way that only a small portion of it remains visible. Next, the individual cords of the headdress will be divided into two sections: one section comprises the upper and forwardmost portion, and this is termed the *imak* (Male or Husband); the cords of the lower and hindmost portion are gathered together in another bundle called the *igit* (Female). The Female section is larger, comprising many more strands than the Male portion, and all of this is gathered together and bound with bark cord until it forms a nearly conical appendage hanging from the rear of the headdress which is now emerging. Around this a small strip of bark cloth will be wrapped, and this too will be bound to the bundle with cord made of bark fibre. The Female portion thus completed, the strands of the Male section are now gathered together and pulled back. These are bound to form a somewhat smaller bundle, and the strands are formed around a blade-shaped wooden piece, perhaps eight inches or so in length. Before the final strands are tied in place the Mothers take two dried marsupial testicles and place them in the middle of the bundle, after which all is securely tied. The *mafuum* headdress is now nearly completed with its twin vertically arranged "pony tails", and all that remains at this stage is the true *mafuum saanin* signalled by the renewed singing of

of *mafuumdet* by all present: amid the singing the men 'plant' a single white tailfeather of the *kabeel*, the hornbill, in the Male portion of the *mafuum*.

In the afternoon the youths and their Mothers return once more to the Kuyapkan, where they pass the evening singing *mafuumdet*. On the following morning they enter the ninth day of the rite, and the youths are once again led out of the Kuyapkan via the men's path. The Mothers lead them up to the hill called Ilintigin, north of Telefolip. There they are brought through a stretch of bush and into a clearing which has been 'fenced' with branches of the *igin* tree. The initiands are told to seat themselves in two long facing rows, and their Mothers sit behind them. Once again some of the youths become apprehensive, and sometimes a few of them will try to escape from the enclosure--but to no avail, for concealed in the surrounding bush are the Fathers, the men who will kill these boys. Presently the youths hear a tumult and hubbub beyond the enclosure, and in burst the Fathers, bearing bulging metbags full of the stinging nettle called "here I am!"--*kalbio*! Many of the boys struggle but their Mothers attempt to reassure them when, at a signal, they reach around the youths from behind and pin them in position on the ground. There is no place to run, no means of escape.

The Fathers are all shouting and begin to form a long line with their legs intertwined--a sort of "chorus line"--and with a kicking shuffle step start moving down the lines of boys. As they enter, they sing in accelerating pitch the chant "*kwiin mamamamamaa, kwiin mamamamamaa, abiip fogop, abiip fogop, kwiin mamamamamaa, abiip fogop...*". This is the chant men sing when they kill wild pigs and bring them into the *yolam*, and was also chanted when they killed enemies in warfare. At each youth the leader of the line will dance in place, thrashing his forehead and right forearm (held in position by the Mothers, who prevent the boys from turning aside) repeatedly with forceful blows, and after a few choruses he will move on to the next youth while the man behind him continues to thrash the previous lad in time to

the chant. In this way each boy is beaten with nettles several times in succession by all of the Fathers; when the line of dancing and chanting initiators has completed the circuit they continue on again from the beginning until all of their nettles have been pulverized on the skin of the initiands. On and on it goes, and some of the boys faint from fear and pain, but they are beaten like all the others, whether conscious or not.

Eventually the chanting and the beating subsides, and the Fathers unsling their nettle bags and set them aside. Others bring stoppered bamboo tubes and small bundles of leaf packets and place them in the centre where the Fathers stand. These are the ingredients for the face and body paint that the initiands will wear. Among other things, such paint will not only make the youths beautiful--it will also conceal the evidence of the beatings from the mothers and sisters of the initiands when they see them once more.

The face paint is made up of a number of different ingredients, and the Fathers identify these for the youths. Most of the bamboo tubes contain the rendered fat of pigs, to which they were introduced in the *dagasal ban*. Some of the packets contain the sap of trees: *silil dan* is used for the paint covering the face of the initiands, while *uyam dan* is for the paint which will cover the lower portion of their body and their legs. Here we should note that sap, *dan*, is thought of as tree blood and the word also denotes the clear fluid that human bodies exude around cuts and sores. In other containers are quantities of *tin*, beeswax, the same as is used to fasten the *sogaalim* skin membranes that form drumheads. Here also are large piles of a variety of red and black sugar cane called *kwet malandom*, and some of the bundles contain the eggs of a bush fowl, the *kwaa leng*. Finally, the initiands are told about the most important ingredient of all, the red ochre that gives its colour to the paint. Ochre is known generally by the term *bagan*, which simply means 'earth' or 'soil'. But now they are told that this isn't simply *bagan*, which in the sense of 'earth' may be found anywhere--it is *bagan isak*, 'earth blood' which

is only to be found in a few places, notably in a spot called Saafoltigin near Ulapmin. This name, however, is *amem* and should not be spoken in the hearing of women and children. This *bagan isak* is from Afek herself, and they are told its even more secret name, *tobaal* (cf. *tobaa*, red cordyline; *iman tobaal*, a red variety of taro).

After this explanation the men begin to apply the paint mixture to the swollen and puffy skin of the initiands. First the *kwaaleng* eggs are broken over their heads, and this is worked into their foreheads and the Male portion of the *mafuum*. After this their skin is coated with the appropriate tree sap. Then the beeswax, juice of the *kwet malandon*, pig's fat and a portion of the ochre are mixed in bamboo tubes and this is applied to the whole of their bodies and to the Male portion of the *mafuum*. When this has been done, powdered ochre is then applied over the entire surface, taking care once more to work it into the Male of the *mafuum*.

The painting now completed, the entire party returns once more to Telefolip. Some of the youths are so badly swollen that their eyes are unable to open, and these initiands are led back by their Mothers who take their hands and warn them of obstacles in their path. On the way back the Fathers take up their stone adzes and make as if to strike the youths and split open their heads, but this is only a feint and there is no more beating. When they arrive in Telefolip, the party goes to the plaza where many women are gathered and, as in the *dagasäl ban*, they wonder who these large and beautiful men are and cannot identify their kinsmen. At the same time, the Mothers sing a song of rejoicing that alludes to the ripening of fruit in the forest and celebrates the wild foods that have now matured and are ready for the picking. Then, three times the initiands and the men approach the *yolam* fence singing and dancing, and twice they fall back: on the third effort they all surge forward and go into the *yolabiip*. The Mothers and the initiands then return to the



Kuyapkan, where they will eat and sleep, and the Fathers retire to the *yolam*.

The following day all rest after the ordeal of Ilintigin, and the Mothers tell the youths the secret tales of how Afek cooked an enemy at Ilintigin and of a man she killed at Saafoltigin. In the afternoon the Mothers (who, it will be remembered have been permitted to chew sugar cane and sections of banana stalk outside the Kuyapkan) begin talking incessantly of water and begin joking about the thirst of the initiands. This is done intentionally to heighten their discomfort. Suddenly the Fathers, who have been waiting outside, lean one after one through the doorway. In their hands they hold full water gourds (*oget*) and they shake these over the inmates of the house until all have been drenched in what men describe as something akin to rain inside the house. The lads have been given water, but they remain thirsty, for they have been unable to drink any of it. Then a few old men enter, carrying bulging netbags lined with banana leaves. These are full of cut lengths of juicy sugar cane, and as the old men complain about the boys-- "I alone plant sugar; you don't help me at all"--they unload the contents of their bags into heaps on the floor, which are then distributed to the parched boys who may from now on slake their thirst with sugar. At this time the youths are also given large *suum kalom* bananas and ripe yellow cucumbers which they must not, however, eat; these are to be kept in their netbags and stored until later.

After the trials of the previous days the youths now have a relatively easy time of it, and the remaining three days they remain in the Kuyapkan with their Mothers, eating as they like. During this time there is general conversation and *weng doo* accompanied by moral instruction in *weng kem*. On the morning of the fourteenth and last day an old man enters the Kuyapkan and sings " *bogolok diip diip, misiok diip diip...* (eagle water drink drink, [secret name] eagle water drink drink...). After this the initiates

may now end their seclusion and are given water to drink. This marks the formal closing of the *ban* itself. The new initiates are instructed in certain tabus they must observe: they may not share red oil pandanus with their fathers until after they have made a pandanus feast for those who initiated them; they must avoid oil pandanus until their paint has worn off of its own accord, and this may not be washed; they and the Mothers who bound their hair in the *mafuum* must avoid taro gardens until their paint has worn off; under no circumstances must they allow any of their paint to inadvertently come into contact with their fathers, for this would endanger them.

These instructions having been completed, all exit the Kuyapkan and amid drumming and singing by their seniors the new initiates enter the Telefolip plaza where they dance in a single-file procession. While this is going on the other men begin shooting and singeing pigs, which the boy's fathers have brought to Telefolip for a feast. Women bring forward huge netbags of taro and other garden foods. As the youths, handsome in their paint and headdresses, dance around the village plaza young women may select initiates to whom they are attracted and follow behind them while grasping the tail end of their *mafuum*. Shortly afterwards the youths assemble once again with the men before the fence. Now the senior men tell the women in angry tones to keep away, complaining that it was the men and not the women who did the hard work of making these young men. From the back of the *yolabiip* the Fathers dance out in a line brandishing and making threatening gestures with switches of *igin*. This time, however, they do not threaten the young initiates, but instead direct their attentions to the women. What ensues is a mock fight in which all of the men take out ripe cucumbers and pelt the women with them, and the youths also take out their *suum kalom* bananas and do likewise with them. The women flee screaming and laughing, and it is said that if a lad calls a woman's name and strikes her with one of these bananas she will be smitten by him (as we say) and will from that day

forward think of nobody else but him, even if she is already married. Here it is also said that if a woman gets a good look at the red *biseng* feather tucked into the front of a young man's *mafuum* the result will be the same. Because of this, mothers and fathers urge their daughters to avert their eyes and to run for their lives when the banana and cucumber barrage begins.

Soon the men have exhausted their ammunition, and gradually things return to some semblance of normalcy amid high spirits. The remainder of the day is spent in feasting and dancing which goes into the night and finishes on the following dawn. The pigs' jaws from the feast will be taken into the Telefolip, the shield taken down once more and the door boarded up. Exhausted but lighthearted, each village's contingent gathers up its gear and parcels of pork and sets off for home. The *mafuum ban* is at an end.

#### iv.(e). Iman (Ot/Tap) Ban

The next *ban* in the sequence is the *ot ban*--the drum *ban*--which together with the *tap ban* which follows forms part of a larger rite, the *iman ban*, or taro rite. Strictly speaking, the *ot ban* is simply that portion of the *iman ban* in which the initiands receive their drums (*ot*), while the *tap ban* denotes the phase in which initiands are showered with hot coals and ashes. The *iman ban* will usually be performed within a year after the conclusion of the *mafuum ban*, though the timing of this is somewhat variable. The *iman ban* is meant to introduce the initiands to the means of promoting taro fertility, and it is directed as much to the welfare of taro gardens as it is to the initiands themselves. For this reason the timing of the *iman ban* is often related to the current state of gardens--if the gardens are doing well there is no pressing need for an *iman ban*, and it may in fact be undesirable since it would represent an unwarranted summoning of aid from the *usong* who will be involved. On the other hand, if taro is doing poorly it will be necessary to conduct an *iman ban* relatively quickly.

*Iman ban* may be conducted by any village on its own, making use of the *usong* in their *yolam* who belong to Taro side. In some cases such an *iman ban* may be triggered by the death (of old age) of a particularly noted gardener, in which the retrieval of his bones becomes integrated into the rite as a whole. Such *iman ban*, however, are of only localized effect on taro and are not the focus of initiations. A man's first *iman ban* (including both the *ot* and *tap* portions) should always be done at Telefolip. It is only after such an introduction to the *iman ban* that men may participate in such rites in their home villages. One reason for this in the past was that men were to take up Afek's own drum, Kungubeen (said to be an archaic form of *kong + ogeen* = 'domestic pig mother'). This drum was, however, destroyed when the Iligimin burnt the Telefolip, and now men learn to play on their own drums. Telefolip is still, however, the site for the largest and most powerful *iman ban*, and is where men are initiated into the rite.

This is so for many reasons. To begin with, an *iman ban* at Telefolip encourages taro growth throughout Telefolmin and adjacent areas. This is not only because this is where Afek first performed the rite, but also because the Taro Vine/rope--*iman sok*--has its source underneath the Telefolip itself. Further, the participation of *usong* and the use of their bones as relics (in the sacred netbags, *men amem*) is critical in *iman bans* and the oldest relics and *usong* are the most powerful. The oldest *usong* of all are those at Telefolip, and of these one in particular is the most powerful of all--this one is known simply by the name of Oolkupmen, a name which cryptically refers to intestines, offal, feces (all termed *ool*) and to a kind of hidden deterioration, as in dry rot (*kup*). The name is, of course, unintelligible; in the *iman ban* the true identity of this *usong* is revealed.

As with other *bans* so far discussed, the *ot/tap* sequence begins when the Mothers of the youths to be initiated assemble them in their home villages and prepare to go to Telefolip. The men will have been given ample

warning in advance by the men of Telefolip, for the successful conclusion of an *iman ban* requires many pigs and much food. Extra gardens will have been planted and there will have been a quiet moratorium on the killing of pigs for several months before the *ban* actually begins. When the time for the *ban* approaches the Mothers not only gather together the youths under their charge, but at least one live pig for each initiand as well, donated by the youths' fathers. These will accompany the novices to Telefolip.

In contrast with the dramatic entry of the men for the *mafuum ban*, participants assemble at Telefolip in relative quiet, with no singing or dancing. The novices and their Mothers go into the Kuyapkan, where they sit at the appropriate hearths, while the pigs are tethered outside. In the meantime, the men who will act as Fathers assemble in the Telefolip itself. From this point on a prohibition on drinking water is in effect.

In the afternoon of the first day all the men and youths gather before the Kuyapkan and behind the Telefolip at the Kingboltil, the mound where pigs are killed. A pig is taken and tethered to the red *tobaa* growing out of the Kongboltil, where it is shot and it remains until its blood has seeped into the earth. Here the men all crowd around, novices and full initiates alike, with the Taro men towards the centre and the Arrow men on the edges. As this takes place, the man who shot the pig--a Taro man--rapidly mutters a phrase over the over again, but too quietly to be heard or understood by those around him. Following this, two other pigs are killed in the same manner, and when the last has been killed they are butchered and distributed in order of seniority: old men receive the first pig, which they take to the *katibam* to cook; active initiates (i.e., initiators, not initiands) receive the second pig, which they cook and eat in the *yolam*; finally, the third pig is given to the initiands, who retire to the *kabeelam* where they cook and eat it. Some of the Mothers go along to the Kuyapkan (the Telefolip *kabeelam*, it will be recalled) with the youths, mainly to

supervise the starting of the fire in the Taro hearth, where the pig will be cooked.

When night has fallen the Mothers lead the youths outside, and they are warned to remain absolutely silent. They are lined up behind the Telefolip with the Taro youths at the head of the line and the Arrow youths at the end. When they have formed up, three Mothers from the Taro side lead three pigs, which are sometimes decorated with small cowrie strings (*bonang*), and take them to the head of the line. Then, in silence and darkness, they tell the youths to follow them. They go to the Taro side of the Telefolip, on the side opposite the normal path around the tall house. They continue round the side, where they see two men standing holding cut cucumbers in their hands. The men tell them that they are now about to enter the Telefolip and meet Afek--but there is no door. Before their eyes, however, they see the three pigs being passed through the walls of the house. Then they are summoned, one by one, and they are once more struck with cucumber, but when they go a bit further they see that there is a secret entrance, a place where the wall (a cleverly constructed blind, consisting here only of the outer 'arrow binding') has been removed. Through this doorway they go, but when they enter amid whispered chants they find that they are not in the Telefolip they know. Here there are no rows of pigs' jaws, no hearths, no floor, no hanging bags of *usongs'* bones. Inside, all is darkness--they are not, in fact, in the Telefolip, they are in a chamber *under* it. This is the Telefolip Kabutem.

As the youths enter, they are told to go either to the Arrow side or Taro side, as is appropriate. The men who are inside watch to make sure they don't bump into the hearth posts or stumble across the two large bark-covered mounds that lie beneath each hearth. Here all remain in silence until the last youth has entered, when the wall panel is carefully replaced. Once again all are urged to be quiet--they are in the presence of Afek. Then the three

pigs, the *kong amem* ('sacred pigs') are coaxed into lying down next to the Taro mound. One Taro man, here called *tenum abem* ('sacred man'), takes a dagger made from the thighbone of a cassowary (*uunok*, the large lowland variety) and quickly but silently kills each of the pigs in turn. The pigs' mouths have been muffled with large lumps of taro, and they must not cry out, or the success of the *ban* will be jeopardized. The three pigs are butchered, and are to be allocated as before, but with one exception: the liver (*iin*), entrails (*ool*) and the bloody parts of the rib-cage and abdomen (*isak*) are separated from the remainder of the meat. These will be cooked on the spot to be eaten exclusively by those present who belong to the Taro division. Of the remainder, one of the hind legs from each pig is presented to those of the Arrow side, to be divided among themselves while the other hindquarter will remain for the Taro side. These too will presently be cooked, but the forequarters, head, and back of the pigs will be set aside.

Now, at this time, the youths have their first chance to look at their surroundings as the men set about making fires under the house. Five fires in all are built, the fifth one being the sacred fire, the *at amem*. In fact, there is not much to see. The floor is packed earth under the elevated floor of the house itself; the walls are bare but not otherwise unlike those of an ordinary house, except that no doorway is visible. What they do see, however, are the two mounds over which the hearths have been built. Each of these mounds is covered with large sheets of bark from the hoop pine, and as the youths watch, a Taro man squeezes cucumber juice over the mound on the Taro side. The Taro men approach, chanting in whispers, and begin to peel the layers of bark back, one by one. The chanting goes ahead at an accelerating tempo as the last sheets are removed, and when the final one has been lifted away they fall silent: there, glowing red in the firelight, is Afek herself, revealed to them. The men and youths on the Taro side are urged to take a good look so that they will know her and she them; the Arrow men may look too,

but must stay on their side of the house. As the *tenum abem* stands by, the sheets of bark are replaced one by one.

While all of this has been going on, cooking stones have been heated for the food they are about to eat. From the corners of the floor leaves of the *suum aalab* banana are brought out, and these will be used to cover the food as it cooks. When the leaf and stone ovens are opened, the Mothers present the youths with foods that have heretofore been forbidden them: *waan abem* yams, *waan aalab* yams, *suum aalab* and *suum umkan* bananas, yellow *em naam* pandanus, and *kwet tenep* and *kwet ugit* sugar cane. The *kwet ugit* cane is cut into sections and its green skin has already been peeled away, leaving white sticks to be eaten by the initiands. As this is presented to them, the men sing "Baanip, drink, come!". The youths are encouraged to sing this as well, though it is never explained who Baanip is. Finally, the Mothers cook a bark dish of *em ayaap* pandanus, and all share in a feast. The youths are once again reminded that they should not eat the bones of the pig, and the Mothers gather these up along with the seeds (*em muum*) of the pandanus. When all have eaten, the Mothers suggest that they now go visit the Fathers.

The party gets up to leave, but they do not exit in the same way as they entered. Above them--in the floor of the Telefolip which forms the ceiling of the chamber of the Kabutem--an opening appears. The Fathers have been waiting above in the main chamber all along, and now some of them of the Taro side dismantle a section of flooring that is really a sort of hatchway or trap door. The novices and their Mothers climb through this opening until all have reassembled on their appropriate sections of the Telefolip floor, after which the flooring is replaced.

Those portions of pork that had been set aside--the head, fore-quarters, and back--are now divided among the Fathers, after they have been cooked by Taro men in the Taro hearth. The youths' attention is drawn to the two *men amem* along the rear wall of the Telefolip, and they are informed that



these *men amem* aren't true *usong*, but are instead merely bags of bones meant to deceive the younger novices who are sometimes permitted to enter the house. On the Taro side of the floor, however, lies a huge netbag. This is the Oolkupmen, and the boys are also told that this man is the *Ot Mit Kayaak*, the 'owner of the source of drums'. The men then explain that it is this man who will help their taro grow, and his head is removed from the netbag and placed on some freshly cut taro leaves spread out on the floor. As the boys watch, the Taro men explain that this is Umoim, Afek's younger brother, and that his bones are kept in the first dwelling house that Afek built and through which Telefolmin enter the road to the Land of the Dead. They decorate Umoim with strings of cowries (*bonang*) and paint him with white *bogung* clay from a place near the source of the Ok Ifi. When this is completed, they take a portion of the leg of one of the pigs killed below (one of the portions from the Taro side), and to this are added small quantities of other unidentified meat and the seeds which the older men had collected from the *ayaap* pandanus cooked below. Then they wrap Umoim up in a taro leaf bundle to which they also tie the stalk of a red *tobaa* cordyline. While a couple of older men gather up bits of debris and the pig bones, which must be disposed of (with the exception of the jaws, later to be painted with red *bagan* and white *bogung* and used to adorn the Telefolip walls), the Taro men then replace Umoim in his netbag.

The major work of the evening is now concluded, and the initiands leave the Telefolip by the normal entrance with their Mothers and return to the Kuyapkan where they will sleep while the Fathers remain in the Telefolip for the night. When they re-enter the Kuyapkan they retire for a good night's sleep with full bellies and much to think about.

In the morning the inmates of the Kuyapkan awake and eat cold taro left over from the previous night. The Mothers get their charges together and they go into the Telefolip once more, but this time they go in through the

door. When they are inside, their Fathers wait for them with drums--these are the drums the youths' fathers have brought for them, and each novice is given his drum at this stage. While this is being done, the men explain how *sogaalim*, a large monitor lizard, gave the first drum to men and that it is his skin that men use to make the drum heads. At the same time, each youth is also given a *tlaam*, a bamboo jew's harp, which they will later be taught to play. Finally, each of the novices is given a stone adze, a *fubi* which will be his for clearing gardens. When these things have been distributed the men tell the youths the secret tales (*weng amem*) about Afek and Umoim, and how Umoim created the first *fubi*. When each boy has his paraphernalia they are told to stand as some men enter the Telefolip carrying bundles of the stalks of *tobaa* that have been broken off from the fence. The youths line up in two rows before the doorway, corresponding to the Taro and Arrow division, and as they do so each youth's adze is placed on his shoulder and a stalk of *tobaa* is placed in the crook of his right arm. They are told that they must continue to cradle the *tobaa* this way, and then they file out of the house and out into the village plaza below. Here they remain seated together for some time, drying in the sun, as the men say.

Soon the Mothers come out to join the youths, where they sit together chatting. In the afternoon the Fathers emerge from the house, carrying from their heads (in the fashion of women) a number of netbags, among which is the Oolkupmen to whom the boys were introduced the previous night. With the Fathers in the lead the men and youths set off in a procession into the bush. They are going to the *ilangok*, the 'mother of gardens'. As they set off, the Mothers untether the pigs that have been tied up near the *yolabiip*, and they take these and large bundles of taro stalks with them.

After some time in the bush they emerge at the *ilangok*. This is a large sturdily fenced garden clearing that has been set aside by one of the Taro men of Telefolip for the purpose of the *ban*. In the centre of the

clearing stands the *fofolam* ('seedling house'--the name for a small shade or shelter built to protect young seedlings), a long earthen-floored house built of tree branches and brush. The pigs are tethered about the clearing, and each youth lays down a bundle of taro stalks along with his *tobaa* stalk. The Fathers go into the *fofolam* while the novices and their Mothers wait outside. At a signal from the Fathers, the youths and their Mothers enter the *fofolam* where the novices are told to sit in two long facing lines, according to their status as either Taro or Arrow. There they see the Fathers assembled, wearing fine boar's tusks and adorned with strings of white cowries. Around the edges of the house are piles of firewood; at the far end of the house a pig is tethered, the *kong amem*, decorated with white *bogung* clay; in the centre is a long line of green taro leaves, and laid out on top of them are Umoim's head and forearm, along with the skulls and forearms of a number of other *usong*. These are the contents of the netbags the Fathers carried from the Telefolip, and among them are *men amem* from each of the villages participating in the *ban*--these are all *iman men*, taro netbags, and they have been brought by the Taro men from each village for the purpose of this rite. Like the *kong amem*, each of the bones of the *usong* has been painted white with *bogung*, for this is the colour of taro.

After the novices have been introduced to the *usong*, the heaps of firewood are piled around and behind the seated initiands and their Mothers. Then five of the Taro men step forward with their cane fire-making apparatus, *digii*, which they have been wearing around their waists. Each man takes one of the initiands and tells him to lie down--two are taken from each side, and the fifth is taken from the Taro side, and is taken to a spot near where the *kong amem* stands tethered. These men start singing and begin to make fire on the bodies of the initiands themselves. Four of the fires are made on the right forearms of the youths, while the fifth fire is started on the chest of the youth, over his heart. These fires are beneficial to the youths, and it

is said that 'heat' (*mamiin*) of a particularly potent form is imparted to them in this manner.

When the tinder, which is from the dried leaves of the *suum aalab* banana (instead of the usual wild pandanus leaf), is ignited the Fathers begin building fires behind the seated novices and their Mothers. The *tap* phase of the *ban* is now underway. The fires begin as a small cordon surrounding the youths, but the Fathers continue to stoke the fires until they are huge and burning fiercely. Great care must be taken at this time to ensure that the *fofolam*, which is made of brush, does not itself catch fire. The initiands are now surrounded by a ring of fire, and they must remain sitting in place.

When the fires have burned down a bit any incompletely burned pieces of wood are tossed outside and the Fathers begin to repeat, "*kuukuk!* *kuukuk!*". This is a sign that the novices are to bow their heads down between their legs, and their Mothers will sometimes hold their heads down if they do not do so quickly--if they fail to do this they will risk blindness, for what comes next is a shower of ashes and hot coals from above them. The Fathers take up sheets of bark which they had concealed in the branches of the *fofolam*, and they use these to scoop up fine grey-white ash from the fires and some of the coals, and they toss these up and over the bowed heads of the novices and their Mothers. It is at this stage that the novices become full men, and the ash shower is said to be a cooking of their skin, the completion of their development--it will only be later that the novices will also be informed that as a result of this shower their teeth will break, their hair fall out or turn white and the debilities of age beset them.

The Fathers continue for some time in this fashion, and there is burnt skin and the smell of singed hair. The Arrow men shower Taro men with ashes and vice-versa, while the man standing at the sacred fire made where the *kong amem* is tethered showers both sides indiscriminately. Before long, however, the Mothers arise and, urging the novices to join them, seize the

bark scoops from the Fathers. Now the tables are turned, and the Mothers and the novices retaliate by showering the Fathers with a deluge of coals and ashes, giving as good as they got: now that they have been put through the *tap ban* the youths are no longer children, but men. Finally, when there is no more to be scooped up, all the men sit once more, all sharing a dusting of white ash on their skins.

Now the man who has been standing at the sacred fire, the *tenum abem*, speaks. He directs the men's attention to the *kong amem*, and takes from his stringbag the sharpened thighbone of a cassowary. All of those present grasp this in turn, and then the Taro novices are called forward. They crowd around the *tenum abem* and the *kong amem*. In whispers, he tells them that this dagger is the leg of *uunok*, the mother of birds, and that this woman's secret name is Fitilkanip. Then, in a quiet rapid chant he whispers for Fitilkanip to come as all take hold of the dagger and drive it through the heart of the *kong amem* in one quick, quiet thrust. The pig must die instantly, and without noise or squeals--if not it is a sign that the *ban* itself will be unsuccessful and the gardens will suffer.

There is a hushed silence as the pig dies, but when it is over there are self-congratulatory smiles and relaxed talk among all present. Taking the cassowary dagger, the *tenum abem* makes a small incision in the pubic area of the pig (a sow) and cuts the skin called *imaan kaal* (*imaan* = urine, bladder, *kaal* = skin; note that *iman* = taro). Then he carefully removes the entrails (*ool* = intestines, feces), the liver (*iin*) and the bloody portions (*isak*) of the inner parts of the pig. This, he explains, is how the novices must remove the innards of the pigs they have brought to the garden, which they are now about to kill. These portions will be cooked in the garden and eaten by those present--the remainder of the carcasses will not be eaten here, but later on in the Telefolip. So saying, the youths are then instructed to leave the

*fofolam* and to kill and dress their pigs while the older men remain to cook the portions they have removed from the *kong amem*.

After the other pigs have been killed and the separate portions of them been cooked the youths are called back again into the *fofolam*. All the other *usong* have been put back into their stringbags, but the bones of Umoim remain. The *tenum abem* now takes two taro stalks, one an *iman tobaal* and the other an *iman dumeen*. These he puts together with Umoim and with the stalk of a *tobaa*, to which he also adds the small packet of things assembled the previous night in the Telefolip. All of these are then planted together in the floor of the *fofolam*, around which he also plants a circle of *ilub*, an asparagus-like garden green, called *pitpit* in Pidgin. When this has been done he then builds a small fence to enclose this planting, which is sometimes called the *ilang bubul*, the heart of the garden. The men then set about dismantling the *fofolam*.

When the *fofolam* has been dismantled, the new initiates then turn to planting the taro stalks throughout the garden. As each initiate thrusts a stalk into the ground, his forearm is grasped by one of the Taro men who helps him to plant the taro deeply in the earth and gives his hand the heaviness (*ilum*) necessary for successful taro gardening. While they do this, all the men take up their drums and sing songs of taro, in which the phrase *kwin buson*, *dan buson* is repeated over and over. When the garden has been entirely planted in this manner the men and the new initiates all assemble together to eat the innards of all the pigs that have been killed. Here they must eat until all of this is finished, even if they reach the point of vomiting. They must eat in haste as well, for they have to return to the village with the remainder of the carcasses before sunset.

In a formal sense the novices are no longer novices at this stage and are now grown men (*bisel*). From this point of the rite on the *ban* proceeds without the division between Mothers and Fathers, for the youths are

now men, no longer children, and they have no further need of 'parents'. From now on there will be gradations of seniority, knowledge, and experience, to be sure. But the only really significant division in formal terms is simply that between Taro and Arrow.

As soon as the men have finished eating they take up their *tobaa* and adzes that they have brought with them to the garden, gather up the carcasses of the pigs they have killed and set off once more for Telefolip. One old Taro man will follow behind the rest at the end of the line of men, and this man carries a special netbag lined with the red feathers of the *dufa'al* parrot. As he follows behind he dances, singing softly to himself, "*kwin buson, dan buson*". In this netbag he carries the netbag of Umoim, the Oolkupmen.

When the men arrive back in Telefolip the verandahs of all the houses are piled high with taro that the women have brought from other gardens. Some of the pigs that have been brought back from the *ilangok* are apportioned for the women and children of the village, which they eat. The remainder is eaten by the men in the Telefolip that evening, after which they sleep until morning. Then the men assemble behind the Telefolip once more, at the Kongboltil. There the pig has the *tobaa* stalks fastened to it--this is the *kong tobaayim*, the red cordyline pig. This pig is then tethered to the *tobaa* growing out of the Kongboltil, and it is shot and afterwards cooked. The men take this pork inside the Telefolip, along with their *tobaa*. They feast on this pig, and as they do so each man announces the name of the plot of land in which he will make a taro garden and plant his *tobaa*. Those who have brought *usong* and their *men amem* along from their home villages also announce the name of the gardens where these will be planted along with *tobaa* and taro. Such gardens will be the *ilangok* for their own villages as the men hold scaled-down versions of an *iman ban* at home. After the pork is finished, the men go outside to sit in the plaza, cradling their *tobaa* stalks in their arms. When sunset comes, they will return to the Telefolip to sleep. The following

morning they will leave the Telefolip and board up its door, after which they may take water and disperse to their own villages.

After the men have returned to their own villages they take the *tobaa* from Telefolip, supplemented by some from the fence of their own *yolam*, and these are planted in their gardens along with the two varieties of taro used in Telefolip. When they do this, they also plant the bones of their own *usong*, and this planting is also fenced in the same manner as the original garden of the *iman ban*. Such taro gardens, in which *tobaa* may be seen growing, are *amem*, and forbidden to women or children. They may only enter these gardens for the first weeding, and this may only be done under the supervision of the man who planted the *tobaa* and the *usong*'s bones there, lest harm befall both the crop and the women and children. Under no circumstances are any of the crops to be harvested from such gardens until the next phase of the *iman ban* has been completed.

After a period of four to six months from this time the men of Telefolip send word out once more to the other villages to collect pigs and the recent initiates of the *tap ban*, for they must return to Telefolip for the finishing of the *iman ban*. This takes place after the Taro men of Telefolip have gone to the *ilangok* and weeded around the area where Umoim and the *tobaa* were planted, and only if taro growth seems to have been sufficient. The men of each village go out to the gardens in their own land where they planted their *tobaa* and their own *men amem* and uproot these, returning them to their local *yolam*. This permits the taro from these gardens to be harvested, and this is done by the men with singing and dancing. When the taro, pigs, and men are all gathered they go back to Telefolip, trailing pigs behind them and staggering under the weight of the harvest.

Once again men converge on Telefolip from all directions, singing and dancing with their netbags full of taro. They assemble before the Telefolip, whose door is unboarded, and as the men sing outside, one old Taro



man goes inside to light the fire in the Taro hearth. When this has been done, the men enter the Telefolip and sit at the appropriate places. From this point on the ban on water is once more in effect, and the men bed down for the night to sleep. When morning comes they will return to the *ilangok*, taking with them their pigs, drums, and adzes.

When the party arrives at the garden they return to the fenced area around the garden heart (*ilang bubul*) and set about constructing a new *fofolam* with brush from the surrounding bush. While this is being done others are sent off to chop firewood while yet others tether the pigs they have brought with them. All the men gather briefly in the new *fofolam* around the *tobaa miton* ('principal red cordyline'), and then all are sent outside except for a handful of old Taro men expert in the *iman ban*; these men are called the *tenum abem kasel* ('sacred man people') and unlike the others will have abstained from eating taro in the morning. Presently they call out to one of the others to fetch a particularly fine pig--the *kong amem*--that has previously been designated for the *fofolam*.

Outside the *fofolam* the men decorate themselves with red *dufaal* feather crowns, strings of *bonang* cowries, and paint themselves with pig grease and ochre. Here the men are at their most resplendent, and they remark that when they have done this they become as *usong* themselves or as *salap*, men who may change form or appear and reappear at will. When all have been properly adorned they shoot the pigs they have tethered and prepare fires in which to heat the stones by which meat is to be cooked. As before, the pigs are not butchered, but instead have only their liver, bloody parts, and entrails removed: these portions will be cooked and eaten in the gardens, but this time the remainder of the carcasses are left uncooked. As all of this is going on there is the continual din of men drumming and singing taro songs.

After some time the portions which have been cooking are done, and many become impatient to eat. They must however, await the *tenum abem kasel*

in the *fofolam*, who must kill the *kong amem* before any may eat. From time to time those outside will make comments to the old men, asking them what is taking so long, but the old men merely reply, "we're old, not like you, and we have much work--you wait". So it goes for some time until all are summoned by the *tenum abem kasel* into the *fofolam*.

When they enter, they see that the *tobaa* has been uprooted and that Umoim has also been unearthed. He too is decorated, for the *tenum abem kasel* have washed him in the juice of the *suum aalab* banana and given him a fresh coating of red *bagan*. The *tenum abem kasel* then explain that the two taros that have been planted--*iman tobaal* and *iman dumeen*--may not be harvested by men. This poses a problem, since none of the taro in the garden may be harvested until one of these two taros is uprooted. The *iman tobaal* will remain in the ground to rot, and may not be touched. There is, however, a solution to the quandary, since there is a way to harvest the *iman dumeen*. While the others stand by to watch, the *tenum abem kasel* tether the *kong amem* to the stalk of the *iman dumeen*. Then one of these men will take up a bow and an arrow whose point is made from the thighbone of a lowland cassowary, *uunok*. All the men are told to be quiet, and as a hush settles over the *fofolam* he takes aim and looses his arrow into the *kong amem*. Before their eyes the taro is harvested as the pig's death throes pull the taro up out of the ground. At this the men rejoice, and then the *tenum abem kasel* tell them now to go out into the garden and to harvest the taro there with singing and drumming while they sing the *kong amem* and cook its innards. When all of this has been done the *fofolam* is dismantled, Umoim is returned to his netbag with a fresh lining of taro leaves and *suum aalab* leaves (for comfort), and the men then feast on the cooked portions of the pigs. Once more, they must consume all of this before leaving the garden.

As soon as the men have finished eating they take the still bloody carcasses of the slaughtered pigs and the freshly harvested taro and return to

Telefolip dancing and singing *imandet*, the songs of the *iman ban*. As before, a solitary old man brings up the rear, carrying Umoim and the Oolkupmen in a netbag decorated with red *dufa'al* feathers, singing to himself, "*kwiin buson, dan buson*".

Along the route to the village, those men of Telefolip who have planted *tobaa* in gardens nearby break off to uproot these and harvest some of their own taro and rejoin the procession further on. As they approach the village the party pauses to sing and dance at a place called Imankuptemin. Here one of the songs they sing simply contains the following phrase repeated over and over: "*nok ee, et ee, iman oo-oo!*" ("vagina ee, penis ee, taro oo-oo!"). Here many women will have come up from the village to look upon the men, and for some of them the sight of these beautiful men and their taro, with their long penis gourds bobbing as they dance is simply too much--they faint and must be revived with nettles. At such times young women who have resisted marriage may find their doubts overcome. Thus joined by the women, the men dance and sing back to the village while the women perform their own impromptu dances behind them.

The men make a dancing circuit of the plaza and then enter the Telefolip *yolabiip*. The *tenu abem kasel* and other senior Taro men go up once more into the Telefolip where they light the taro fire (*iman at*) in the Taro hearth. When this has been done they call out for the carcasses of the pigs to be carried up, and these are passed through the doorway to them. They then set about cooking the pigs inside the Telefolip while the others are told to go back to the village plaza where both the men and women dance to songs and drumming. The dancing carries on past dusk and through the evening.

Late in the evening the pigs have been cooked and the dancers are summoned back to the Telefolip to eat. Those men who have performed the *iman ban* before enter first and take their places. Then those who are completing the *ban* for the first time enter. As they come into the Telefolip they behold

two long heaps of taro running from the doorway to the back wall of the house, atop which lie piles of meat. When each new initiate enters he passes between these lines, and as he does so he is presented with cooked meat by each of the men from both the Taro and Arrow sides--there is little point in offering them taro at this time, for they are loaded down with more meat than they can carry. Eventually all of the men have their portions and are seated in their proper places, and they all begin to eat. The new men are told that they must finish all of this meat--if they are full they can lay it aside for the following day, but it must all be eventually consumed. They are also told that from now on they may eat *kuyacam* marsupials if given to them by an old man, and may enter the *katibam* after this if they wish. At this point too they are told the secret tale about Afek and the origins of taro.

After the narration of the story has been completed and the men have eaten at least some of their meal they take portions of the meat and cut them into fine little bits, which are then mashed and worked into cooked taro and formed into small cakes. It is important that this be done in such a way that the meat can barely be recognized as such. When they have done this, a man is sent out into the village to summon all the boys and youths who have passed through the *dagasal ban* but have not begun the sequence for the *iman ban*. These boys enter the Telefolip, where all of the meat has been concealed under piles of taro. They are told to come in and sit down, and each of them is given a small cake to eat--they are not told that there is meat in it, for this is *amem*, sacred and secret. Instead, the men tell them that this delicious taro is the result of their work in the *ban*, but that this is a secret which they must keep from the women. (The failure to detect the actual presence of meat by the boys is perhaps understandable, given the poor light inside the *yolam*.) Once the boys have eaten, they are shooed out of the *yolam* once again and told to join the women in the plaza down below--without, however, revealing anything of what they have seen.

When the boys have gone the last phase of the rite is concluded. The meat is placed once more atop the piles of taro, and each new man is in turn told to go over and lie atop this. As he does so, an old Taro man who enjoys the reputation of being a productive gardener lies on top of him, whispering unintelligible phrases. This is to impart heaviness (*ilum*) to these men to promote their taro planting abilities. Finally the *iman ban* draws to a close--the formula "*bogolok diip diip, misiok diip diip...*" is pronounced and all the men may take water as soon as they leave the Telefolip. The men are now released to go down below into the plaza where they dance again until daybreak.

At dawn the people who have come from other villages return home, where they sleep and hold small feasts of their own. Each of the men takes his own portion of pork from the Telefolip home with him, which he must finish on his own--he may not share this with anyone, and if he is unable to eat it, he must allow it to rot. In Telefolip, all the villagers return to the *ilangok*, taking a pig with them. This pig is shot in the garden, after which men, women, and children harvest more taro and have a party-like feast of their own. This garden is for all of Telefolip, and any may take of it freely, save the *iman tobaal* that remains where the *tobaa* was planted; this is still *amem*. Women and children should avoid this area of the garden, and the taro is left to rot there. The *iman ban* is finished. Some time afterwards the men go off into the bush once more to hunt, for, as their elders will remind them, taro isn't everything.

#### v. More about Initiations and Their Interpretation

The initiation *bans* so far described--*dagasal*, *om*, *tlalalep*, *mafuum*, *ot*, *tap*, *iman*--are the major rites through which all men must pass, but they are not, of course, the sum total of the Telefol repertoire of *bans*. There are, as mentioned elsewhere, others. There is the *kong ban* to promote the

prosperity of domestic pigs: women as well as men participate, a comprehensive imagery of prosperity is employed, emphasizing the colour white (taro and pig fat being the objects of such work) and the use of moisture-laden substances. There is also the nefarious *biit ban* by which men become sorcerers. The *tetil* rite is directed at controlling epidemic illness, and this makes use of wild pigs and wild dogs and the conquest of the colour red by the colour white.

More significant, perhaps, are the Arrow rites of the repertoire aimed at success in hunting and warfare. These are now largely moribund rituals, due mainly to the pacification of the Telefol region by colonial and later government administration. As such, few men of the active adult generation have participated in them, though it is possible to glean accounts from the memories of senior men. The general complement of the *iman ban* was the *un ban* or *un baal*, the arrow rite. Two subsidiary *bans* went to make up this rite, the *saaman ban* ('wild pig rite') and the *bogol ban* ('eagle rite'). Once again, such *bans* were in the main held at Telefolip, and were of a duration and complexity equalling that of the *iman ban*. Arrow men predominated in the *un baal*, and were part of a general sequence of activities that began with the hunting of marsupials, proceeding to collective wild pig hunts, and finally to raids on enemy groups, the success of each phase serving as an augury of success in subsequent phases. As with the *iman ban*, the *un baal* was full of metaphorically dense and complex references and held unexpected revelations for the novices. Among these was the performance of forbidden acts, including the killing of a black dog--the killing of dogs is one of the things that Telefolmin must not do, and this is partly tied to the prominence of dogs in the tales of Telefol origins. Nonetheless, in the *un baal* a black dog given the name Wisii must be killed without shedding its blood but seeing to it that all of its bones are broken, an act accomplished with characteristic ingenuity. Further, a special marsupial from the bush

must be captured live and brought into the Telefolip--another forbidden act, since it will be recalled that the mere mention of marsupials is strongly prohibited in the vicinity of *yolam* or *men amem*. Among other things, the men do not eat the marsupial but do eat the dog--Arrow men receive the upper portions while Taro men receive the lower part.

These rites are all highly *amem*, in particular the *un baal*. I will discuss them no further than to merely allude to them as an indication that the *bans* already described do not exhaust the Telefol repertoire of secret and sacred ritual: much more remains. For our purposes, however, the major initiatory *bans* are enough, since they in themselves provide material that promises to exhaust any conceivable form of analysis (rather than the reverse).

This may seem like a sweeping claim, but it seems to me that there can be little dispute about it: to borrow a metaphor from Burridge (1965:97), the world of men's ritual in Telefolmin has the character of an omnivorous chameleon that can crunch up anything the analyst tosses at it and still have spit for more. For example, if I have been doing my job properly, a peculiar sense ought to emerge from the description of the *bans*: there is a simultaneous clarification and befogging of what is going on, both in the context of Telefol culture at large and in the text of the rites themselves. It is possible of course that this may be the result of insufficient information or of insufficient application of thought, and in either case the prospect of fuller understanding is held out as a possibility. This is not an entirely vain hope, and I will try to make more sense of what Telefolmin are up to in their *bans*. Nonetheless, recalcitrant perplexities will remain.

Let me try to indicate what I mean by discussing some of the details of the *bans*. What are we to make, for instance, of the recurring prominence of apparently sexual or procreative themes in the *bans*? We know that, in addition to whatever else may be going on, the initiands themselves are the

chief objects of all this activity: it is said to grow them up. Now how is this to be understood?

Telefolmin speak of novices as either 'children' (*man*) or 'gardens' (*ilang*) of the rite through which they are passing. Further, to put a youth through an initiation is called *ban dupkamin*, and *dupkamin* is a verb which means either to give birth to a boy (given the masculine object prefix, *dup-*) or to plant small things (since the masculine gender is also applied to small rather than large objects). This is echoed in the organization of the initiators and their tasks, for some are Mothers (*ogeenal*) while others are Fathers (*aalabal*), and there are ample references throughout the sequence to acts that are required to make the novices grow and mature. This is reinforced by means of a comprehensive metaphor linking all the participants in initiation to *kabeel*, hornbills.

The first house which boys are permitted to sleep in during the initiation process is the *kabeelam*, the hornbill house. Here they stay in company with their *ogeenal*, their Mothers. Outside, the Fathers, the *aalabal*, see to it that sufficient food is gathered together, which they pass through to the Mothers inside to give to the children; in addition, they make various preparations for further activities in the initiations. Now then: why hornbills? It is tempting to say--perhaps too easily, it seems to me--that this is because hornbills are large, clever, impressive birds with phallic beaks. Why not hornbills? Indeed, they are particularly apposite in these terms, and we can find ample evidence at a readily accessible level: boys are supposed to acquire the gregariousness, the strength, and the wit of the hornbill, and they may be affectionately referred to as such. Further, we have already noted that hornbill beaks may serve as a dressy alternative to the gourds that men normally use as a penis covering. The problem, however, is that if we let it go at this the analysis has been short-circuited--there is more to learn about hornbills.



If the *kabeelam* is in some sense a hornbill house, what is a real hornbill house like? Hornbills, it turns out, have peculiar nesting habits which Telefolmin find interesting. Hornbills nest, like many other birds, in trees--but unlike others, they don't make their nests in the branches of trees, but in the trunks (*at tiim*; note that if a *kabeelam* is unavailable, a special house called a *tiiman* is built for them). They find a tree in which there is a hole, and this is where the female hornbill remains when she is about to lay her eggs--here it may be suggestive to recall that the doorways (*amitem*--'house hole') of Telefol houses are round or oval openings in the front wall. The female hornbill goes into the tree and stays there with her eggs. The male, on the other hand, remains outside and does not enter this nest; instead, he forages for the female and her chicks and returns periodically to the nest (or house, as Telefolmin put it) with food that he regurgitates and passes through the opening with his beak. The mother and children stay inside by themselves for quite some time, and with each subsequent visit by the father the opening of the hole grows smaller and smaller with the accumulation of debris from regurgitated food--as this builds up and dries, the entrance to the nest becomes very tiny. The mother and children are in effective seclusion. At some point the baby hornbills have become strong and the opening too small for food to be passed, and so the mother breaks open the 'doorway' with her beak and voila! The male and female hornbills rejoin, accompanied by a small flock of young ones. Here it should be noted that this is a wonderful model of the initiation process: hidden seclusion followed by a miraculous emergence (see Schodde and Hitchcock 1972).

To return to the point, it may indeed be the case that recurrent examples of phallic imagery can be found--here I will simply recall the striking with cucumbers, the chewing of sugar cane, the binding of boys' penes to the rafters of their house, the throwing of bananas at women (short

ones in the *dagasal ban*, long ones in the *mafuum ban*), the secret bamboo tubes filled with pig grease, the showering of youths with water from gourds akin to those used as penis coverings--all of this is fairly clear. But here we risk only repeating what we knew all along: long things and penes look alike, and men use such things in ritual as instruments in their collective task of reproducing men. At the same time, much has been missed if we fail to understand the fact that the beak of a male hornbill is not so much a reproductive organ as an instrument of nourishment, or that an essential part of the process of transformation seems to involve seclusion.

There is much in Telefol initiation that could be understood fairly readily in terms of themes touching upon the organization of the society. Thus it would be fair to say that one of the things the initiations accomplish is the alienation of boys from their mothers and the world of children and the enhancement of male solidarity. Or we could say that the initiations--especially at the senior levels--serve to integrate men of different villages into a society-wide congregation through their participation at Telefolip. Or it would be possible to interpret much of what goes on in terms that suggest the domination of juniors by seniors, enforced through the monopolization of ritual knowledge by older men. In the case of some of the rites, particularly the *iman ban*, it is clear that the organization of ritual activities tends to mobilize and coordinate productive efforts throughout the society as a whole, and further, that this tends to extract "surplus" from circulation and allocate it to men at the expense of women. And so on...

The problem with all of this is that none of these things are particularly interesting to know or say. Rather than tell us anything new, they reassure us that there is nothing new to learn. This seems a serious mistake, and impoverishes the possibilities held out to us by dismissing what is more difficult to understand: why is ritual invested with so much

elaboration in Telefolmin? If, as many including Barth (1975) and Leach (1975) have suggested, ritual is a matter of communication, what is it that is being communicated, and why is this done in the way that it is? Are there not simpler ways to go about it?

Telefolmin say that in the initiations they open the boys' eyes and teach them things which are sacred and secret (*amem*)--nowadays, men compare the initiation process to schooling. But while it is clear that many things are revealed to the initiands, many things are opaque, obscure, hidden.. Some examples pertaining to the rituals already described will provide some idea of how this works.

We can begin with the case of the missing cucumbers. When the boys enter the *yolam* for the first time in the *dagasal ban* they are struck over their hearts with cucumbers, and for this there is a ready explanation: it is to protect them from the heat of the *usong*, and serves to provide moisture when water is forbidden them; it soothes their skin, which has just been flogged with nettles; it enhances their future growth, recalling the quickness with which cucumbers grow. At a later stage in the *dagasal ban* these cucumbers are placed in their netbags, the *dagasal* themselves; these the boys must not touch or remove, but instead allow them to rot in the bags. Further, they must not tell the women about them. Cucumbers will before long become familiar in ritual contexts, since they are often used to protect those who will come into contact with *usong*. In addition, those who will eventually look after *usong* in their *men amem* will learn that this is a favourite form of food for *usong*, and gifts of cucumber are often placed in *men amem*. This is partly out of consideration for the *usong*, since their material existence is confined to that of bones which are dry. In addition, cucumbers have a cooling effect which will pacify and please an *usong* that is angry.

All this is, in the context of Telefol ritual, fairly straightforward stuff. There is, however, one perplexity when one considers the role of cucumbers in the *mafuum ban*. Here, at the outset, the youths are beaten with cucumbers as in the opening stages of the *dagasal ban*. And, as in the *dagasal ban* they receive cucumbers at a closing stage of the rite. The problem, however, is that these are not the same cucumbers--they are whole and ripe. In the general context of the *ban* this makes sense, for the novices are now whole and ripe as well, and when they are encouraged to throw these at nubile women rather than concealing them we can understand this as a reference to the maturing sexuality of the youths. Matters become more interesting, however, if we ask what has become of the original cucumbers, the ones with which they were struck when the *mafuum ban* first began.

These cucumbers, it develops, were not discarded or thrown away. Rather, they were turned over to one of the Fathers, who carefully collected them and took them elsewhere. In this other place there is the *men anem* of an *usong* called Unang Milip. Unang Milip is (was) not a man, like most other *usong*. Instead, she was a promiscuous woman, one who was insatiable for men. Here the bones kept are not the normal skull and forearm, but instead the pelvis. The youths' cucumbers are, one after the other, rubbed rapidly in and out of the pubic cavity, after which they are left in the netbag where the bones are kept. Nor is this all, for another man will have gone into the forest and harvested wild and inedible taro. The stalks of these plants are likewise rubbed in and out of the pubic cavity. All taro secretes a fluid which causes itching on contact with skin, and this is very strongly marked in wild (or, more probably, feral) varieties. Thus the rubbing with the wild taro causes the vagina of Unang Milip to itch, causing her to lust after men and incidentally disposing live women to do likewise. This has a further benefit, for it is also said that this act will help to attract taro which

has run away back to the gardens. Now all of this has gone on without the knowledge of the novices, and it is not explained to them unless and until they return to the *mafuum ban* as initiators rather than initiands. It should probably come as no surprise that Unang Milip is active in the *dagasal ban* as well. Perhaps it will also come as no surprise that the red face paint of the *mafuum ban* is metaphorically menstrual blood (*nok isak*)--this much is clear from the myths which are revealed to the novices, though it may not be clear that the menstrual blood of a living woman has also been added to their paint mixture. Again, they are not told this until they return to the *ban* as initiators....

So much for cucumbers.

By now it should be apparent that there is more to the *bans* than meets the eye. One is tempted to wonder, for example, what the Fathers are up to when they are out of sight. Are they just resting or lounging in the *yolam*, or is something else going on? When old men collect together the bones from pigs eaten in *bans*, what happens with these bones? What is the old fellow with the red-feathered netbag up to when he follows the procession singing to himself? What does the phrase "*kwin buson, dan buson*" mean? What are the *tenum abem kasel* doing in the *fofolam* that takes them so long when others are waiting for the *kong amem* to be killed?

Such questions may of course be empty, but then again they may not. Here we would do well to recall that everything concerned with *bans* and the affairs of the *yolam* is *amem*, both sacred and secret. From the point of view of the analyst, this poses a major problem since it is never clear whether or not one has sufficient material to perform an analysis that will allow one to understand what is going on. As we shall see later, this difficulty is not confined to the outsider wishing to make sense of things: the actors in the rites face similar problems.

At the risk of flogging a dead horse, I will try to shed some light on this by returning once more to one of the critical phases of the *iman ban*. Here I refer to the killing of the *kong amem* with a cassowary bone arrow. The figure Fitilkanip has already been introduced, an ancestress who was a cassowary of the lowland variety, i.e., an *uunok*, 'mother of birds'. The *uunok* is, it will be recalled, forbidden to all Telefolmin as food. Who is Fitilkanip? She is Afek, and when this arrow is loosed, Afek is kicking the pig, and in so doing, she harvests the first taro: the bone used for the arrow point is the same as that used as a dagger on other occasions, and this is not the bone of any ordinary *uunok*, but the thighbone of Afek herself. Thus it is that by this peculiar means of inaugurating the taro harvest in the *ilangok*, the mother of gardens, Afek herself leads the way and joins in with the men. In the process, the meaning of the rite has been transformed, but only for those who are aware that this is the case. The problem seems to be that the rituals of initiation construct a kind of sense by making (or revealing) new connections, but it is not always certain just what these connections are. How then to determine the "message(s)" of ritual? The task is daunting, and seems doomed to result either in certain broad but relatively impoverished generalizations, or else in a constellation of gem-like fragments whose relations to each other require an awesome amount of scaffold-building. Where, then, from here?

Rather than trying to feel our way through the labyrinth at present, we might do better to simply list some prominent features. Firstly, the rites exclude women and tend to be concerned with promoting the maturation of youths in both social and physiological senses. Here we may note that men acquire male Mothers (the *ogeenal*) and multiple Fathers (the *aalabal*--true fathers cannot participate directly in their sons' initiations)--one's "natural" parents are supplanted by "ritual" parents. Further, the rites are characterized by a continual statement and restatement of the division

between hunting and gardening, killing and nurturing. This is evidenced not only in the interplay between Fathers and Mothers of the initiands, nor simply in the Arrow and Taro division, but in the repeated emphasis of the colours red and white in varying contexts. One might say, then, that the rites embody a cryptic discourse on the relation between these themes, the dramatization of a dialectic between them that somehow remains obscure, more felt and sensed than clearly grasped. Somehow, somewhere within this maze there is something being said about the nature of life and death: white is the colour of taro, of pork fat, of the bones of *usong*, of the *bonang* with which men marry and found families, of the *bogung* with which Umoim is painted when he is buried in the garden to help the taro grow, and it is also the colour of maggots and of old men's hair; red is the colour of war and the hunt, of the blood of pigs and of menstrual women, but it is also the colour of the *tobaa* which surrounds the *yolam* and which is planted in the gardens, and of the *bagan* with which new initiands are painted. One has the sense of necessary antitheses here, which are for the most part distinct and must be kept so, but which are sometimes brought into conjunction.

Such things are almost never explicitly articulated but are manifest in a number of non-verbal contexts, and can be perhaps summed in two relatively commonplace uses of red and white outside major ritual: a lad having trouble killing marsupials at night will go to a renowned hunter and the latter will paint his forehead with ochre, *bagan*; a young woman who is having trouble rearing pigs will go to a well-known pig tender, who will paint the girl's right wrist and forehead with white clay, *bogung*. In both cases the simple act of being painted in this manner is thought to be efficacious in itself.

The rituals can be said to constitute an education in such matters in a form that is immediate, powerful but in many ways unclear. There is, however, one aspect of the process that I have only alluded to in an indirect

and peripheral manner so far: the initiands are told myths. It is in the sacred and secret myths concerning Afek that the ideas embodied in the rituals are most clearly presented; it is here that they are put to work, and it is here that men work upon them.

vi. Secret Narratives and the Afek Myths

Tales in Telefolmin are of many different kinds. There are tales of the old days (*sogaamiyok sang*) and tales of fighting (*waasi sang*); there are fairy tales, the *utuun sang*, which people tell for fun to pass an evening and perhaps convey a moral. And there are the tales of Afek, *Afek sang*--these are all *amem* and may not be told in the hearing of women or children, or of junior initiates who have not yet been properly introduced to them. Unlike other tales, *Afek sang* reveal truths and are powerful and potentially dangerous because of this.

There are a number of different tales about Afek, but in a sense they are all the same tale. This is not simply because they all have the same central character, but also because they are arranged in a cycle with a known sequence. This is one of the reasons that youths in the *dagasal ban* are taught Afek's itinerary first: this journey provides the temporal as well as spatial order for narratives that they will subsequently learn. *Weng amem* is secret/sacred/forbidden speech. This embraces talk concerning anything *amem*, say, the details of a *ban*. It also comprises secret phrases akin to what we would understand as spells, many of which contain veiled allusions to the esoteric names of actors or objects in the Afek narratives. The content of *Afek sang*--at the explicit level, anyway--is most often an account of origins, of how things came to be and why they are as they are. As we shall see later, one of the difficulties facing men is the contradiction they face between teaching and communicating these tales and safeguarding their secrecy.



Men say that *weng amem* always has two parts: the *kuuk* and the *magam*. The *kuuk* is the head or the 'tip' of the story, much like the tip of a growing plant: it is this which is visible and most readily grasped. The *magam*, however, is the source or the 'root' of the story--it is less well seen, but it is the source and meaning of all that grows out of it (*magam* has a range of meanings, including: 'source', 'base', 'basis', 'origin', 'root', and 'meaning'). While many men know the *kuuk* of all the tales about Afek, only a few men know the *magam*. Out of this all else flows, and men compare the tales and men's understanding of them to root crops in the gardens--the top is that which all see, but the nourishment comes from that which lies hidden below.

Whenever I asked men for the details surrounding what went on in the *bans*, those who shed the most light on what was taking place always did so by revealing the *magam*, and this was embodied in *Afek sang*. In an important sense then the *Afek sang* constitute an exegetical commentary on the world of men's ritual; perhaps more meaningfully, they are the *magam* of Telefol culture.

One of the striking characteristics of myths of the Afek cycle is that they are articulated to each other along two axes: the first is provided by the spatial and temporal order of Afek's itinerary, while the second is an axis of more or less esoteric and secret versions of the same episode (i.e., the difference between the *kuuk* and the *magam*). Here one of the means by which the import of myths is transformed is through the serial linkage of different episodes into more complex myths, a linkage that is often only made evident through the revelation of a more esoteric version which coalesces them. This can be understood as an organization in terms of levels and chaining, a phrase used by Phyllis Healey (1966) in her work on Telefol sentence structure. One result of this kind of linkage is a dense network of cross-references between component myths of the cycle which

amounts to a species of "meta-mythology" exploiting both metaphorical and metonymical relations for the production of meaning. An example may be afforded by the mythical treatment of the *dubung* prohibition which forbids the eating of one's own or one's children's pigs. This tale is called *dubung mit* or *dubung magam*.

The reason Telefolmin may never eat their own pigs is, in the *kuuk* version, quite simple. When Afek was at Telefolip she cooked a pig and fed it to her children and they became sick. As a result, she decreed that from that time on Telefolmin were to observe the *dubung* rule (unlike, for example, the Fegolmin to the south). At this point we have little more than a just-so story which does nothing other than to set the seal of Afek's authority on the prohibition. But, as it happens, there is a more esoteric version of the same tale which makes one important addition: before she fed this pig to her children her period came on, and she menstruated over this pig. It was this that made them sick, for Telefolmin hold menstrual blood to be dangerous. At this point things become really interesting, since it turns out that there is another myth also set in Telefolip in which Afek menstruates into an *igin* dish, and this is the origin of particular varieties of pandanus (blood-coloured and prepared in such a dish), especially *em ayaap*, forbidden to women. This tale is also simultaneously the story which accounts for the various birds which have the colour red--they flocked around and bathed in Afek's menstrual blood, and they are forbidden to women because if they were to eat such things it would be as though they were eating themselves. They are in fact the same narrative (*sang maagop*), but may be told piecemeal, depending on the context in which they are being told. There are, however, further layers to the story, since it is later revealed that the pig is not really a pig at all, but a man--and more than that, he is (via a cross-reference to the locale of a previous narrative) Afek's grandson. The series of aligned tales is by now quite dense, but there is a further one to be

added, for this also takes place at the same time as the tale that accounts for details of female physiology in which the *kayaa1*--prohibited as food to those of reproductive age--uses its long fingers to form parts of Afek's vagina.

What has happened here? A number of episodes which are narrated separately are revealed in the *magam* as being the same tale. From one point of view this concatenation produces a convergence upon a focal series of problems; viewed from a slightly different angle, this convergence manages to produce serial transformations of meaning within the same corpus of narratives by realigning the limits and contexts of the component texts so that they become refractions of one another. If we return to the substance of the various tales summed in this process we find the ideological assertion that the following things are of the same order:

	eating one's pig
	eating menstrual blood
	eating a relative
(women)	eating <i>ayaap</i> pandanus
(women)	eating red birds
(those of childbearing age)	eating <i>kayaa1</i> marsupials

Analytically it is worth noting that this myth is offered by men who are asked why they may not marry their sisters, and though it might be difficult to tell from the *kuuk* of the narrative why this is so, the *magam* makes it plain: one should not consume oneself. Or, in what is perhaps a more authentic Telefol idiom, nurturing and killing must be distinguished and kept apart: the failure to do so is ultimately a form of auto-cannibalism. And this, of course, is the explanation for why Afek's children became sick from the pig she fed them: they were eating their own substance. Perhaps it is this that accounts for the otherwise curious custom whereby men (almost always relatives) administer a mock beating to small boys who are given *ayaap* pandanus to eat, the 'enemy' pandanus: as small boys they are yet somewhat woman-like, but the risk of 'eating themselves' is avoided by turning it into a

sort of 'enemy'. In passing we should note that one feature of the logic underlying this myth series is that it is because of the connections and similarities between these various entities that they are kept apart, *amem*. This is a feature that will resurface from time to time in an examination of Telefol myth.

In the previous chapter I explored the themes of order and entropy as manifested at various levels of Telefol life. This dialectic takes on various forms, sometimes as a tension between centrifugal and centripetal forces, sometimes between death and life, sometimes between loss and recovery. This preoccupation constitutes one of the central refrains of *Afek sang*, and much of the cycle appears to be devoted to the development of an intricate and many-faceted discourse on this subject. Because of the richness of the series of narratives dealing with this topic, and because an integral part of what they communicate is the rather carefully controlled way in which they are communicated, I will devote some time to this and go through the series in roughly the order in which novices learn it, rather than the order provided by the narrative flow of the cycle itself: as we shall see, the sequence is different in each case. This portion of the cycle deals with the relations between Afek and her younger brother, Umoim; in the context of the overall cycle itself they are contiguous episodes and all pertain to the time period shortly after the founding of Telefolip. This is the time of Telefol culture on the threshold.

The first component of the series (and hence the least esoteric and furthest removed from the true *magam*) is taught to the boys in the *dagasal ban* and provides an account of why it is that men have the *yolam* which Afek--a woman--originally built; the topic is clearly germane to the business of the *ban* for the boys have been segregated from the women and have entered the *yolam* for the first time.

Long before the couple (*agam*: applies to brother and sister before marriage, but to husband and wife after marriage), Afek the elder sister and Umoim the younger brother, had built Telefolip. Umoim stayed in the *unangam* (family house, literally, 'woman house') and Afek stayed in the Telefolip (i.e., the *yolam*). They stayed like this, but at night the pigs and the children in the *unangam* didn't sleep--they squealed and cried out at night. All the time it was like this, every night. Afek thought to herself, "Bah! This is no good, things can't go on like this ". Then she decided that she and Umoim should exchange places--she would sleep in the *unangam* and Umoim would sleep in the Telefolip. She decided this and then told Umoim about this. She told him she'd left her feathers and decorations in the *yolam* for him. When the sun was about to come up, she explained, he should get up and go outside and wash himself with the dew she called 'stars' (*binigok*), then rub pig grease all over his body, paint himself, and put on her decorations. Afterwards Umoim was to return to the *yolam* and stand in the doorway in the light of daybreak where she might look at him. That night Afek slept in the *unangam* with the children and pigs while Umoim slept in the *yolam*. For once all had a good night's sleep--the pigs and the children did not stir and all was quiet, and Afek slept soundly too. In the morning Umoim did as he had been instructed, and had made himself beautiful, decorated in paint and feathers with a boar's tusk in his nasal septum. Afek took one look at him and was delighted. Clapping her hands together she said, "that's it! That's more like it, it's really good!". And so she decided that from then on men would have the *yolam* and women would stay in the *unangam* with the pigs and children.

Here we see an example of the very widespread and paradoxical assertion that an exclusive men's cult was originally founded by a woman, and the story explains how it is that it came into men's hands (cf. Bamberger 1974; Murphy and Murphy 1974; Newman 1965; Read 1952; Williams 1936). This is, quite literally, the dawn of men's control of the *yolam* to the exclusion of women. Like all other *Afek sang* this tale is secret, and men say that if a woman were to hear this tale her belly would swell up with a false pregnancy and she would die. But in addition, men also say that should women hear this, they would know that the *yolam* had originally been theirs and that they would all want to take it for themselves and stay there. To this they also add that it is because of this tale that women have most of the work of caring

for pigs and children, but that it is also because of this that the men must do the often arduous work of performing *bans*.

What else does the story have to tell? It is implied that Afek gave the *yolam* to Umoim because of some sort of deficiency--children and pigs kept crying, perhaps for their mother. It is as though Umoim was given the *yolam* and told to make himself pretty for his sister because he wasn't up to the job in the *unangam*: Afek had to go there to set things right. Umoim got the *yolam* and beauty at the expense of being removed from the children and pigs, the world of the *unangam*; from another angle, we might even see the *yolam* as a consolation prize in compensation for this eviction though (naturally enough) men never speak of things in this way. Here this is particularly apposite in the case of the boys who hear the tale for the first time in the *dagasal ban*, for they have just been forcibly taken from their mothers and will no longer be children in the same sense. In exchange for this, they will have the privileges of the *yolam* and become beautiful, ultimately the gift of Afek, the first woman; a gift whose source must be kept hidden lest women reclaim it.

Finally, it is possible to see how this tale is a relatively straightforward charter for the *dagasal ban* itself: the novices leave the *unangam* for the *yolam*, are instructed in the regimen of rising before dawn to wash with dew and paint themselves, and must learn to remain still and quiet--just as happened with the children and pigs once Afek and Umoim had exchanged. Here, in terms of the *dagasal ban*, we can also catch a glimpse of some underlying implications of the tale in structural terms: the separation between male and female is maintained, and in the narrative this is also the separation between brother and sister despite the incestuous implications of Afek's admiration of Umoim's beauty. Further, when Afek and Umoim change places, the control of the *yolam* passes not only from sister to brother or female to male; it also passes from senior to junior.

The next episode of the series of tales about Afek and Umoim is generally learned during the course of the *om ban* and is a tale relating how it is that Afek sent the wild animals away from Telefolip. Once again this applies to the period after the founding of the village, but in the order of the narrative cycle it takes place before the episode of Afek and Umoim changing places. The story goes like this:

Afek and Umoim the two of them stayed at Telefolip. One morning Afek told Umoim to take up his bow and arrows and go off into the bush to find game. Umoim did as he was told, and spent the day in the forest looking for wild animals. He looked and looked, but wherever he went he only found the tracks of animals--the animals themselves were nowhere to be seen. In the afternoon he returned to Telefolip where he found Afek cooking some wild pig and cassowary (both forbidden to women). This was for their meal, and as he sat down to join her Umoim was curious and asked her where she had found these things--he had been looking all day in the forest and had found nothing. "Oh, just nearby," she replied. The next morning Umoim went out again into the forest and came back again in the afternoon empty-handed. Again, when he returned, he found his elder sister cooking more meat. Once again he asked, but received the same reply. Finally, Umoim thought to himself that he would discover where his sister had found this game--he resented working hard and going through the bush all day and yet finding nothing himself. The next morning Umoim set off for the forest as usual, but he only went a little way, just up to Ilintigin (the hill just north of Telefolip where *mafum ban* initiates are beaten and painted). There he concealed himself in the bush and watched from a spot where he could see his sister in Telefolip. He watched and soon he could see his sister calling out. As she did so, all the animals from the bush--wild pigs and cassowaries--came near to her. She held out a cucumber and a cassowary came, she held out taro and a wild pig came. She called them and they came near and then she killed them by hitting them with a piece of firewood. This time, however, they were nervous and reluctant and came only hesitantly. The animals she killed this time were not large, they were bony. Then she knew her brother was spying on her. She told all the animals to run away and scatter into the bush. When Umoim returned he said nothing to Afek, but she knew. Then she told him that because of him men would have to go far into the bush and work hard to find meat. Then the two of them sat down and ate.

This is one of the key myths of Telefol culture, and in this brief plot it manages to weave together several central themes into a compact

statement. The male-female dichotomy is present in the interplay between elder sister and younger brother, a relation also implying differences in knowledge and maturity. We also find the theme of the separation of nature and culture embodied in the overt topic of the tale, the scattering of wild animals away from the village and into the bush--this is simultaneously part of the continuing discourse on entropy, here the loss of ready game and meat that will only be recovered through hard work. Significantly, this is a loss brought about through a transgression, a curiosity about things that should remain hidden (recalling that *amem* means secret and sacred, forbidden) and what may be perhaps too close an intimacy between brother and sister.

Finally--though the import is not immediately apparent--something is being said here about nurturing and killing, since Afek kills the wild animals by nurturing them--she holds out food to them and is able to kill them merely by striking them with firewood, a figurative "weapon of the hearth". This conjunction of nurturing and killing has almost the quality of a seduction, since even the details about the food offered carry sexual overtones: cucumbers, as we have already seen, have male associations, and Afek lures the symbolically feminine cassowary by holding out a cucumber; taro, by contrast, carries largely feminine associations, and it is with this that Afek lures the symbolically masculine wild pig to its death. Curiously, this embodies a formal transformation of white (the flesh of cucumbers and taro) to red (the flesh of cassowaries and wild pigs): Afek is performing a conversion of vegetables into meat by turning nurturing into killing. Here the tale raises the possibility--indeed, asserts it as a reality of the beginning of things--that the contradiction between nurturing and killing is more complicated than at first suspected. Here too the point will be underscored when youths subsequently learn that Afek was the cassowary Fitilkanip, for it is cassowaries that she kills.



Afek's exploitation of nurturing for the purposes of killing (and then the nurturing of her younger brother)--a kind of "closed cycle"--succeeds only under conditions of secrecy, only, that is, if it remains hidden and unsuspected by her younger brother. Here one might almost say that Umoim was only to see the *kuuk* while Afek knew the *magam*. *The success depends on the separation of elder sister and younger brother, the distancing of female and male, elder from junior.* The animals will only come to Afek to be killed if her brother is away, and *if he does not know*. Here, parenthetically, we might add that in Telefol to see--*utamamin*--is simultaneously to know, and also to know in the Biblical sense.

The initial situation between Umoim and Afek is a classic example of what Roy Wagner (1979) has called male contingency and female sufficiency: it is clear that Afek could manage quite well on her own, but Umoim would have more trouble making his way in the world. That this flies in the face of the overt ideology of male supremacy in Telefolmin is critical, but something about which I will not comment for now. In any event, here we find an echo of a situation only hinted at in the first narrative of the series: Umoim was the "weak sister" of the two.

The turning point of the plot is when Umoim chafes at his ineffectuality and his ignorance: he walks all day in the forest, but for all the game he sees, he may as well be without his arrows, for they have no use. Umoim wants to know. He spies on his sister, he wants to know how to get meat for himself. This is of course disobedience, and a species of hubris: Umoim wants to arrogate to himself that which belongs to Afek. Here it seems plain that he is motivated by jealousy, and what Telefolmin would regard as greed. And so he takes a peek, he wants in a sense to be grown up, he looks at his sister when he shouldn't--here we might recall that hunters are forbidden to have intercourse just prior to the hunt, nor are gardeners allowed to copulate with their wives before they plant taro.

Umoim gets his wish, but it is self-defeating. The cost is that he must now seriously work hard to find game, for once he has seen what is forbidden, the Eden-like state of affairs is disrupted. He knows too much, to his regret. Again, parenthetically it might be added that men say that Afek was not only angry when Umoim spied on her--she experienced shame (*fitom*), the classical Telefol response to which is distancing or avoidance, and here she sends the animals away. Umoim is no longer dependent upon Afek, but he is still dependent--now, upon himself. It was simple, one or the other: either Umoim stayed away from Afek and the animals came near, or else Umoim got (too) close to Afek and the animals had to leave.

If we compare this tale to the previous one about the gift of the *yolam* to Umoim, we can see that the youths who are told these stories are given a different understanding of how things were in the beginning. In the first tale the original arrangement--Afek in the Telefolip and Umoim in the *unangam* --didn't work out, and things were changed so that they became as they are now, and this was a satisfactory alteration of the situation. The most general message of the first myth, then, is that earlier things were askew, but now they've been put right. This is contradicted by the import of the second myth of the series, since in the beginning things were as men would like to have them today, if only they could. That is, of course, if they didn't have gardens to worry about, because now if wild pigs come close at hand it spells trouble for the taro crop....

As it is, the myth of Afek, Umoim, and the wild animals suggests that once men had things easy, and that this was negated by greed in the form of the desire to know that which was *amem*. It is a message that Telefolmin find worth repeating.

The next myth of the series is one that is revealed during the course of the *iman ban*. It is a tale that explains something of Umoim, who is the Oolkupmen, and also accounts for the origin of *bonang*, the small

cowrie shells used as bridewealth valuables, and of *fubi*, the stone adzes with which Telefolmin downed the forest to make their gardens. The context is appropriate since the major task of the *iman ban* is the enhancement of productivity. This is the story:

Afek got a piece of food that Umoim had left over from a meal and worked *tamoon* sorcery on him. She made a *tamoon* packet with this food and tightened the cord around it. Umoim fell sick for five nights, and on the sixth he died. Afek prepared an exposure platform for him while she left his body in the *unangam*. She made the platform in a spot down near the Ok Ifi. She put Umoim on this and left his flesh to rot. She waited until the twelfth day. Then she got some leaves and rubbish from *asop* (a garden green called *pitpit* in Pidgin) and brought it to where Umoim lay. She took this, broke it into pieces, and spread it out over his skin. Then she went back to the village to sleep, and when she returned to look at Umoim's corpse the maggots had really gotten into him, crawling all over and through him. She went back to the village to sleep and came back to have another look, and there were even more maggots. She did this again the next day, and when she returned there were more maggots still. His skin and flesh had all broken up and fallen to the earth, and only his bones (*kun* = strength, bones) remained. Then Afek took up her netbag and got a cucumber and rubbed her skin with it. She took a *suum aalab* banana and leaf, and lined this bag with the leaf. Then she killed a domestic pig and rendered its grease, and then made a fire and cooked some red ochre (*bagan*). When she had done all these things she went back to the exposure platform and took Umoim's bones--just his head and his right forearm. She rubbed them with pig grease and painted them with ochre and then put them in a netbag--this became a *men amem*, the Oolkupmen, and she took this back to their *unangam* in Telefolip (i.e., Bisanip's house, through which all Telefolmin pass en route to Bagelam, the land of the dead). She took this netbag to the house, and Umoim's *sinik* left--she had told him to go make the underground road for the dead, *bagelilep*. When Umoim left, he told Afek to wait for him until he returned. Afek waited for six nights, and on the sixth night one of Umoim's bones broke. On the seventh night she set off for Umoim's house in Bagelam. When she arrived at his house he wasn't there--the fire in the hearth was dead and he'd gone off into the bush. Afek looked around for something with which to cut wood to build a fire to warm herself. Inside there were many *fubi* blades lying around, and she took up one of these and went off to chop some wood. This blade, however, was a new one--Umoim hadn't cooked it yet and it was still soft, it hadn't hardened. When Afek tried to use it, it broke, and now elder sister became afraid. She took the blade back to Umoim's house and replaced it and then sat down to wait for her younger brother. When Umoim got back Afek told him what she had

done and how the adze broke. Umoim became angry and said, "I didn't call for you to come yet, but you came just the same! You came, and now you've ruined my work! You should have waited until I had finished first. Now the road is ruined and your children won't be able to come and visit me. When people die they'll come here--they'll rot and come here, and that will be that. You've spoiled the road, and the living won't be able to come and see them now."

When he spoke like this to Afek, there was nothing she could say, she was speechless (*weng binim*) and ashamed (*fitom tebesu*). The two of them slept in his house that night and the next day he sent her back to Telefolip. He told her to wait for him there, and on the sixth night he would return. And so Afek went to Telefolip to await him. The sixth day came, and Afek awaited Umoim in Telefolip, but he didn't come. She waited for him on the seventh day and he didn't come. Finally, on the ninth day, she decided to go to her garden in Mofumkot. When she left she neglected to tell her children that their mother's brother (3rd pers *ogot*, 1st pers *moom*) might come to visit them, and she forgot to warn them not to look at his skin. Umoim came that day, and when he arrived, he asked the children where their mother was. They told him that after waiting for a long time for him she went off to her garden in Mofumkot. Hearing this, Umoim decided that he would wait for his sister and sun himself in the plaza. When he sat down, he said to the children, "there's something on my skin--in my hair--that makes me itch. Will you come here and see what it is?". The children came and Umoim bent his head down for them to look, and when they did, they shouted, "ai! Uncle! there are maggots (*ilop*, *maam tun*) there in your hair, lots of them! Your skin is rotten with them!". When Umoim heard them say this he was angry and ashamed. He told Afek's children to close their eyes and when they opened them he had turned into a *bisan* bird with a long tail, and he perched on the eaves of Afek's *unangam*. "Afek oo-o! Your children said bad things to me oo-o!" he cried out shrilly. He called out like this, and Afek heard him in her garden. She came running up to Telefolip until she was out of breath, and when she arrived she saw Umoim perched on the rooftop. "Ai! You can't go," she said: "the children were lying to you--come down!". But Umoim refused. Afek pleaded with him, saying, "I thought it would be good if you were to come back to visit--we could sit down together and talk". But Umoim was unmoved. He told her that he had wanted to come back, but Afek's children shamed him and so he would have to leave. She pleaded and pleaded with him, but it was no use. Umoim flew up into the branches of the *yet* tree (wild fig) next to the village. Afek called to him again, but he flew up to the top of the *dli* (hoop pine) behind the

*yolam*, and she still called for him to come back. Then he simply cried out in his bird voice and flew off to the west beyond Ulapmin. He was gone. When he had gone, Afek turned to her children and said, "you said bad things to your uncle and now he has gone away because you shamed him. Now, when people die, they won't be able to come back to visit you. From now on, when people die, they will not have bodies, there will only be their *sinik*, this is all that will be left". And there was more she said: "When you looked at your uncle, all you saw were the maggots, but these weren't just maggots, they were *bonang*. Now the dead won't bring *bonang* back for you, and you can't go to Bagelam yourselves to get them. I myself have barred that road. Now you can only get *bonang* if you go off to Bullem and give things for them."

This is one of the richest narratives of the Telefol repertoire, it is the *magam* of many things, and is at once poignant in the failure of even Afek's entreaties to persuade her dead brother to remain. It is a tale not simply of mortality, but of the severance of the dead from the living (cf. Schieffelin 1976; Wagner 1979, 1972; see also the similar Telefol tale of the four brothers in the previous chapter). Entropy is summarized here, the series of losses which become man's lot are all engendered by the action of the plot.

The tale is so dense that it seems best to begin slowly and simply by listing, in turn, the various things for which it is the *magam*. Right at the beginning we have the introduction of *tamoon* sorcery, which comes into existence with Afek's decision to kill her brother. More detailed renderings of this narrative include a comprehensive "how-to-do-it" recipe for this form of sorcery. In this case, one of the things that Afek does is to take a packet of meat leavings from one of Umoim's meals and place it near a hearth, or, in another version, in her vagina. In this way she kills him, and this is accomplished both by transforming nurturing (a meal they shared) into death, and by introducing part of her brother's food into herself. Here *tamoon* becomes dangerous (if efficacious) not simply, as we might suspect, because Afek's vagina is in itself powerful and 'hot' (*mamiin-so*), though

this is true--it is also a matter of performing a figurative incest and cannibalism by proxy (see the discussion of *dubung magam* above). Thus she transforms two sources of life--food and her vagina--into instruments of death, and in a sense nurturing and killing have become the same thing. In the opening phases of the tale we thus have *tamoon magam*--the origin and meaning of this form of sorcery--and a commentary once more on the dialectic of nurturing and killing.

The next thing that happens is that Afek constructs a mortuary platform (*ilet*) for Umoim, and this is the *magam* of mortuary practices involving the exposure of the corpse. This Afek invents, and when Telefolmin dispose of the dead in this way they follow her. At first the corpse doesn't rot, and she must take steps to see that this occurs, for otherwise she will be unable to pursue her intentions, one of which is the retrieval of his bones to make a *men amem*--the tale is the *magam* of this as well. His meat rots and is gone, but his bones remain, and this is what becomes the Oolkupmen used in the *iman ban*. When this has taken place, Afek sends Umoim off to clear the underground track to the west, where he will establish Bagelam, the underworld land of the dead. Now the dead will have someplace to go when they die. But there is more to it than this, for Afek also intends for Umoim to go so that there will be *fubi* adzes and *bonang* cowries.

Up to this point all has gone according to Afek's plan. But she becomes impatient to visit Umoim in Bagelam, and her premature visit results in the breakage of one of the *fubi* that Umoim has made--it was *asit* (raw) and *kamaa* (new), it had not yet been cooked and hardened. This portion of the tale is both the *fubi magam* and the explanation (also *magam*) of why it is that *fubi* break and can only be acquired indirectly through exchange from the Opkeemin people (i.e., those around Bultem) to the west, who lie between Telefolmin and Bagelam. Here what might have been good--a direct supply of adzes--has been vitiated by Afek's premature visit to Umoim. She failed to

keep her distance, and here we find an echo of Umoim's spying on Afek in the tale of the wild animals. In both cases improper contact leads to the loss of that which is sought. The upshot of this passage is that Afek is sent back to Telefolip, and Umoim forbids the living to come to Bagelam to visit. Afek returns, and though it is not mentioned in this particular version, she comes back with the broken *fubi*--this *fubi*, which is huge despite being broken in two, is buried on either side of the entranceway to the track to Bagelam under the hearth of Afek and Umoim's *unangam*, the house which is inherited by Afek's daughters in Telefolip. This marks the path, and should any of the living be so foolish as to try to descend into Bagelam by this route they will be crushed between the two pieces of the blade.

When Afek returns to Telefolip she waits with her children for Umoim, but she is once again impatient. This time, instead of rushing off to see Umoim, she leaves for her Mofumkot gardens--this, incidentally, in violation of the conventional prohibition on gardening immediately following a death. The village is thus empty, except for Afek's children, who are ignorant of what is going on. When Umoim does return, Afek is not there to greet him but instead has allowed her interest in gardening to distract her and draw her away. Umoim comes and visits briefly with the children, and then mentions his itching. This is understood as an invitation to the children to delouse him, and normally would pass without comment. But instead of lice, the children find maggots (*ilop*). Unbeknownst to them, these maggots are really *bonang*, and Umoim's invitation to them was a kind of *weng doo*, a hint or a riddle. But they failed to see what he was saying, and so instead of removing the *bonang* as gifts for themselves--as was intended--they instead proclaim openly what their eyes see. Here parenthetically, is encapsulated a compact but profound commentary on the nature of knowledge. To hear in Telefol (*tinangkamin*) is also to understand, and to see (*utamamin*) is also to know, but these activities of one's *sinik* ought normally to be

accompanied by thinking (*aget fukunin*), which also means 'consideration' in the sense of considering the feelings of others. To be foolish or insensitive or thoughtless is to be deaf (*tolong binim*, 'no ears') or to be blind (*tiin binim*, 'no eyes', *tiin kubabesu*, 'covered eyes', *tiin suuk*, 'cross-eyed'). But in the tale we learn that to hear is not always to understand--Umoim's words are lost on them--and that to see is not always to know, for their eyes only see part of the truth. What they see are the tokens of death without realizing that this is the gift that Umoim's death brought them.

This is, in fact, the critical turning point of the narrative, it is *bonang magam*, the source and meaning of cowries, and it manages to speak volumes in a few words. At one level, all the children have done is to say what they saw. What they say is, "moom! Maam tun ee! Ilop kunesib ko ya!"--"uncle! Maggots, they eat you!". This is *weng mafak*, bad speech, and is one of the gravest insults in the Telefol repertoire, something like telling someone they are rotten, should drop dead, and go to hell, all at once. Husbands have been known to divorce or even kill wives who say this to them. This is not only insulting, but shaming--here doubly so, for in fact maggots do eat Umoim, and this thoughtless indiscretion--a proclamation of what was apparent but should have remained concealed--not only results in the loss of *bonang* but forces Umoim to leave. This departure--which encompasses the irrevocable separation of the dead from the living--is all the stronger, for Umoim becomes transformed, no longer a human like themselves. The estrangement is complete and--although this is nowhere commented upon in the narrative--all that remains is a bag with his bones. The *sinik* ('soul', 'personality', 'shadow', 'image', 'reflection', 'physiognomy, face') may linger, in the form of an *usong*--the person himself is gone, lost, and *magalo* ('hidden', 'unseen', 'unknown', 'invisible', 'dead', 'lost', 'disappeared').



The blindness and ignorance of the children and their failure to understand Umoim's words result in his refusal to listen to Afek and their permanent inability to see (also, to know, and to visit) Umoim. Here, certainly, their speech takes on the form of an untoward disclosure, reminiscent of the denouement of the tale of the youth who unsuccessfully tried to bring his brothers back to life. This recalls a delightful expression in German "*verschrei es nicht!*"--don't scream it away!--which is a caution against saying too much and thereby losing what one has or wishes to have. Here the theme of shame is evident, and shame (*fitom*) in Telefolmin ultimately turns upon the publicization of what should be kept hidden, a violation of integrity and the proper distance between people, restored only through separation or seclusion (compare Wagner's treatment of the "*azuna* conclusion" in Daribi myth, 1979:150, 166f). There is, however, an additional implication: their error in speaking was to articulate what they saw (knew) in words that both revealed and belied the truth of what they saw. By saying what they did, they denied the identity between *bonang* and maggots and the identity between (the dead) Umoim and his living relatives.

If we step back from the different fragments of the tale and try to assess it as a whole it is clear that aside from the various details which serve as charters or precedents we have an account which presents a statement of man's lot: there is death and mortality, a severance between the living and the dead. Flesh rots, ~~dead go and cowries~~ may only be obtained indirectly through exchange. This is entropy, the movement towards dissipation, decay and nothingness. This is the major implication of the tale, a sort of catalogue of life's problems. But there is a counter-current within it as well, for the tale also provides for the means that men have to work against this general flow--they have *men amem*, *fubi*, *bonang*. If in the far past entropy didn't pose problems, if things were or *might have been* otherwise, men aren't helpless. They have *men amem*, the tools for *bans* and the dead

who may, in this way, be recovered; they have *fubi*, the tools for clearing the forest and making gardens; they have *bonang*, the tools for making good the loss of sisters and the means of securing wives and producing the children who will replace one after one has died. Perhaps then it is appropriate that youths learn this in the *iman ban*, whose main emphasis is production, where they are given adzes and see Umoim revealed wearing *bonang*, where men dress in their finery and become like *usong*, and where they are showered with white ash that hastens their aging, where they become beautiful and attractive to women....

There is one part of the myth of Afek and Umoim and *bonang magam* that remains puzzling: why did Afek kill him? Here one of the answers provided is that she wanted to acquire his bones for a *men amem* to be used to help gardens; that she wanted him to make a place for the dead; that he should return from that place with *fubi* and *bonang* so that men might make gardens and marry. But none of these are truly satisfactory as answers, since they are in a sense *replies to the question posed by Umoim's death*. They do not seem really to account for the question in the first place, and in a sense none of these things might have been necessary if Afek hadn't killed him.

The question is the topic of the next and final myth in the Afek and Umoim series. This too is learned in the *iman ban* and concerns itself with the origin of taro, *iman magam*:

Afek and Umoim the two of them stayed together at Telefolip. Afek would send Umoim away from the village to look for game. He always went but found nothing, he only saw tracks; when he came back Afek always had meat to cook for them. She had sent him away because she was doing work that she didn't want him to see, it was *amem*. Afek bore several things: first she bore *tobaa*, the one we plant around the *yolam* and in the gardens. This came from her menstrual blood (*nok isak*) whose *amem* name is *tobaal*--women must never know what this name means. After that, she bore a human child. *Tobaa* is the elder brother and man is the younger brother, *tobaa* looks after men. Then she felt sorry that the child had nothing to eat, so she bore taro from her

urine and vaginal secretions (*imaan* and *nok kul*). She bore much taro, but the first two were daughters of hers. One we call *iman tobaal*, because it was mixed with her menstrual blood. This is the one we leave to remain in the garden, and her secret name is KwiinBuson, 'greens at dusk'--this is *amem*, and women and children must not know about her. Otherwise she would become ashamed and run away. This taro is *amem*, and is only for old men to eat. After she gave birth to KwiinBuson she gave birth to her younger sister, so men would have a clean taro to eat. She is DanBuson, 'greens at sunrise'. Her name too is *amem*--if women or children knew about her, she would run away and take all the other taro with her. DanBuson came from Afek's *nok kul* only, there was no blood. DanBuson already ran away once. Men would scrape her skin and put her in the fire and hurt her, they would eat her, their younger sister. She said to her sister KwiinBuson, "they hurt us so--let us run away and leave them". Kwiinbuson the elder said, "no--if we leave them they will die--what else will they eat?". But DanBuson ran away anyway. Afek wanted to bring her back, for she worried for her children. She asked all the animals to help, but none of them could find her. Then she asked *nuk kuyaam*, the clever one, to bring her back. *Kuyaam* agreed, and he found her hiding in the bush. But he didn't bring her back, he was a thief. He put her in his pouch and then went down deep into a hole in the ground, Nangalamtem, below Telefolip. There he kept her to himself. Afek knew what he had done, and she asked all the animals to go after him and bring DanBuson back. One after the other, they all went down into Nangalamtem to bring DanBuson back. But *kuyaam* was hard and hot with them. He was big, and many of the animals were afraid of him. He was fierce and would keep them away. Finally *kayaam*, Dog, said he would go and bring DanBuson back to Telefolip. He went down to Nangalamtem, and when he got there he spoke to *kuyaam*. He didn't try to get DanBuson back right away, he waited and tricked *kuyaam*. *Kayaam* said to *kuyaam*, "let us be friends--I didn't come down here to cause you trouble, I just came to visit you". He lied to *kuyaam* like this, and smiled and showed his teeth. They talked for some time, and eventually *kuyaam* was off guard. Then, quickly, *kayaam* seized *kuyaam* with his long teeth and grabbed DanBuson. Then he carried the two of them back to Afek in Telefolip. To *kayaam* she said, "men will eat other animals, but they will never eat you". Later, when she scattered the wild animals into the forest, she let *kayaam* peek so that he could find them in the bush. To *kuyaam* she said, "women will stay away from you", and so women may not eat *kuyaam*. Then they were all together again in Telefolip. Men, *tobaa*, and taro are all siblings, and this is why we plant them together in the gardens, so they may stay together and help each other. Afek kept all of these things hidden from Umoim. If he came close or saw them, they wouldn't work--they were *amem*. When Umoim went off into the bush, then she would do her work. After he left she would go underneath the Telefolip. At this time it wasn't fenced, it was open (*kem*). She went

there and then would crouch down and lift her skirt, revealing her vagina--she was naked (*nok kem*, 'open/visible vagina'). She would be there and then her *nok kul* would flow, and from this she got taro. Some of this she would form with her hands, and this would be taro for men to eat. Some of this remained soft, and this was like sago. This she held out for the wild animals to eat, and they came when she called. Wild pigs would come up and eat her *nok kul*. Then she would take a piece of firewood and hit them and they would die. Even huge ferocious wild pigs would come up--they weren't afraid, they came to get her *nok kul* and would hear when she called them. In this way Afek and Umoim and all of Afek's children had plenty to eat. But Umoim looked and saw Afek--he saw her vagina. Then the animals became afraid and Afek was shamed. She became angry and ashamed and told the animals to run away and taro no longer came from her vagina. Then men had to work hard to hunt and to plant taro gardens. The children and the pigs cried and cried because now they were hungry. Then Afek decided that she had to go to them to look after them. She could not stay in the Telefolip because she had a vagina and was ashamed. Then she gave this to Umoim. Later, she took some meat that he had eaten and killed him with this because he had spoiled her work.

Here, then, is the disclosure of the source of taro and the revelation of Afek's motivation in scattering the wild animals from Telefolip and in killing Umoim. This is the knowledge which is most sacred and must be kept secret--if it is revealed, taro, pigs, women, and children will run away; wild pigs will come and destroy the gardens, and enemies will come and kill men as though they were pigs.

This is the myth that contains the *magam*--the others of the Afek-Umoim series are the *kuuk*. It is in this sense--if a part may be taken for the whole--that all of the tales of the Afek cycle are one large tale. Each of the episodes reveals truths, but the truths they reveal are not always the same. Or rather, they are the same, but different. Here we should not be led astray and mistake the means for the end. Each of the myths, in one way or another, is a rather simple-minded charter in the Malinowskian sense. But it is a serious error or confusion--the sort of cross-eyedness suggested in the story of Umoim's encounter with Afek's children in Telefolip--to mistake this

as any but the most superficial of lessons embodied in the myths. Here we must not be deaf or blind to the fact that far from merely endorsing and authorizing the "realities" of the everyday world--especially as presented by overt ideology--the sacred and secret *Afek sang döomuchimore*. They are not simply distilled "reflections" or "models" or "representations" of the world as experienced or given. Rather, they are reflections in a more profound sense, a sense in which the given terms of experience are challenged and called into question. They are *commentaries* upon the terms of experience: they confront it, and in a sense they shape it, but they do not simply reproduce it.

Consider, for example, the implications of the tale of *iman magam* in terms of the understanding of all the previous tales of the series. In the tale first learned, Afek is the founder of the men's cult, but turns it over to her brother. This is so merely because the alternative arrangement was unsatisfactory--pigs and children kept crying. The second tale explains the dispersal of game in the bush--not altogether a bad thing, from the perspective of a gardener--because Afek's secret feeding and killing of the animals was discovered by her brother. Moving to the next narrative, Afek invents sorcery and kills her brother, resulting in death for all men. Umoim then produces the means indirectly (his bones) or directly (*bonang* and *fubi*) by which men might counter mortality and entropy, but these are compromised by the indiscretions of Afek (a woman) and small children. Here I am merely following one of the many threads of the myths, those that are implicitly related to an ideology of male supremacy. But look what happens then with the final revelation, the *magam* of this series: all the previous narratives are pre-empted and encompassed and their contents remain intact while their relation to each other becomes transformed. Now we can see that, among other things, the opening line of the plot is Umoim's spying on Afek, a desire for knowledge that has clearly incestuous overtones and results not only in the

flight of game but in the loss of Afek's ability to produce taro directly from her vagina. Now the hard work of both hunting and gardening are necessary, plenty is no longer assured. And this is why the children and pigs cry, because Umoim's transgression resulted in the loss of meat and taro. Shamed and hindered by Umoim, Afek turns over the Telefolip to him. But he (and all men) will be repaid, and Afek kills him, partly in retaliation, and partly because *men amem* will now be needed to help taro grow. Umoim must be sent off to make *fubi*, for gardens are now necessary. And he must make *bonang*, for once there is death, men will have to marry--and such marriages may not be incestuous, they will require the giving of *bonang*.

This is an admittedly partial and incomplete interpretation of what this series of narratives has to say, as any interpretation must be. From a slightly different perspective it is possible to see the series as a chain of important but improper connections and missed opportunities. An analyst of a structuralist bent might be drawn to the lovely complementarities and plot symmetries of the texts, e.g., Umoim draws too near to Afek resulting in the loss of natural products (meat and taro), Afek and her children draw too near to Umoim resulting in the loss of cultural products (*bonang* and *fubi*, both bridewealth valuables--here the conventions of marriage exchanges are implicated). And so on. These are all permissible readings of the texts, and there are many more, for the complexity of relations within and between the component narratives virtually assures a polyphony of messages.

Rather than try to exhaust the significance of the tales of Afek and Umoim, I would like to close my discussion of them with a few simple points. Firstly, we should understand them as part of the initiation process in the very broad sense of being didactic and instructive devices. As such, they instruct all initiands in a highly interesting way: they demonstrate connections that were previously unsuspected and withheld from them, and one of the ways in which this is done consists in bracketing and rewriting previous

understandings. They have a revelatory character rooted in the fact that they are secret and only made known in a specific sequence over a protracted period of time. This "serialization" or what I have called an organization of narrative in terms of levels and chaining has as a consequence the maintenance of several distinct but related narratives. This inhibits a "lumping" or homogenization of different texts so that their integrity as distinct texts remains intact. At the same time, the coalescence and encompassing of the *kuuk* variants in the *magam* or "root texts" not only allows but promotes self-reference--which is to say, it produces a myth which is capable of discussing itself. Here the finitude of the text gives way to an internal dialogue in a myth which contains myth, a feature Wagner has also discussed for Daribi narratives (1979). In other words, once something has been learned it may well be necessary to re-learn it: the myths themselves are inherently reflexive. It seems plain, then, that the learning of the myths is of at least two kinds. There is the fairly straightforward learning of the kind "Afex did X--that is why things are as they are...". But there is a second kind of learning, the kind Bateson (1972) has called deuterio-learning: a learning about learning. This is part of the import of the reflexivity of the myths, for those who learn them--who are, it will be recalled, forbidden to discuss them--learn "I learned that Afex did X, and that is why things are as they are, but then I also learned that Afex really did Y, and this too is why things are as they are...". In an important sense, then, I would argue that the initiands are not merely taught "knowledge", but are also taught something *about knowledge*.

We have come some distance since the opening of this section, and it is perhaps time to draw together some of the scattered threads. In trying to understand the meaning of the initiation sequence, I shifted the discussion to a consideration of myth. Now what one normally expects here is to find a series of charters, rationalizations that make manifest the sense and sensible

nature of what goes on in the initiations. To a certain extent this is true, and the myths do embody precedents that serve as parts for the scripts of the rites. Examples might be the dew washing and painting in the *dagasal ban* and their linkage to the episode of Afek and Umoim, or the repeated but cryptic reference to Afek's two daughters KwiinBuson and DanBuson, also the first two taro. Sometimes the references are more obscure. In the *iman ban*, for example, the planting of Umoim is *not* a burial in Telefol terms, since the dead are placed in elevated platforms or trees, not in the ground. Here, instead, there is an inverted burial, and a minor detail of the rite makes this plain: the planting of the *ilub* (a variety of *pitpit*) obliquely refers to the *asop* (another variety of *pitpit*) that Afek scattered on Umoim's corpse to draw maggots, the *ilop*, which are the source of *bonang*. The planting of the *ilub* is thought (by the initiators, it never being explained to the initiands in the course of the rite) to attract *bonang* to Telefolip from Bagelam along the trading routes to the west. It is the case, then, that much of the activity of the rites is informed by the meanings articulated in myth.

Given this articulation and the fact that meaningful details are generally meaningful because of the mutual relations between the texts of the rites and the texts of the myths, it would be tempting to try to piece together an analysis based on an exhaustive concordance of the two. This I do not do. One reason has already been suggested, namely, that to do so would imply a closure of the system of meanings that may be ill-founded, given the general Telefol predilection for secrecy--there is always the risk that some undisclosed piece of information would radically alter the sense of the rest of the corpus, not only making new connections but also breaking or shifting old ones. We have already seen how the self-referential quality of myths of the Afek cycle enriches (which is to say, complicates) the interpretive possibilities. Here it must be remembered that I have only included a portion of the total cycle, using a part to point towards the whole. The same



problem appears in two different ways in the rites. Firstly, we have seen that there are *at least* three different rites going on simultaneously in each case: there is the rite which the novices experience, and there is the rite that the initiators perform, and for those who are doing so for the first time, they are novices to whom much is new; finally, there is the total rite, the ensemble of these components. This is a Rashomon-like difficulty. In some sense there is a theoretically definable set of acts which make up the whole rite, but it seems practically speaking impossible to discover them all, especially since one and the same act will be understood differently by the participants depending upon their awareness of esoteric references and implications. The second difficulty is that the rites of the series seem to refer to each other. The clearest example is in the relation of the *dagasal ban* to the *mafuum ban*. But there are other such relations as well--in some ways the *om ban* seems to be a foreshadowing of the *iman ban* sequence, and the *tlalalep ban* seems also to hint at the *un baal* which comes later. The problem, then, is that serious difficulties arise when trying to bound conceptually either rites or myths, let alone relations between them. In a sense this is reminiscent of Telefol kinship, where the involuted nature of cognatic links following on endogamy makes the definition of discrete clustering of kin problematic, if not downright impossible.

For such reasons I do not even attempt a comprehensive analysis, though I would of course invite others to do so if they wished. Instead, I will merely summarize a few things which are by now fairly clear. The *dagasal* through *mafuum* portion of the sequence is preoccupied with the maturation of the novices in the broadest possible sense: they cease to be children. Their sexuality seems implicitly to be of concern, and some of the underlying themes of the myths they learn concern the differentiation between male and female, junior and elder, brother and sister. The division between

nurturing and killing is highlighted, but at the end this seems to be resolved as a complementarity, and somehow this seems to relate to sexuality--this must surely be one of the messages apprehended in the *mafuun ban* itself and in the construction of the *mafuun* headdress with its juxtaposition of male/female, red/white. The rite ends with the pelting of women with bananas by the initiands, but not--as in the *dagasal ban*--to drive them away, but to *attract* them. Aside from the obvious passage from carefully restrained and husbanded sexuality to its endorsement, there is also a qualification of the statement of sexual opposition. In perhaps overly simple terms, youths are removed from the realm of women and children in order to become men, whereupon they are once again brought into relation with women and children--but the new relation is not one of incorporation, but rather one of complementarity. They are not fully men, however, until the completion of the *ot/tap/iman ban* part of the sequence. Here the work of the *ban* is not only to advance the development of the initiands but also to perform tasks which promote the prosperity of gardens. Although all of the rites in fact have portions which are esoteric and removed from the ken of novices, this is most evidently so--and even to the novices themselves--in the case of the *iman ban*. The *iman ban* involves the most dramatic revelations thus far experienced by the novices. It not only qualifies and revises much of what they have already been taught, but it introduces them for the first time to what can only be described as a mystery: the emergence of life from death (the killing of the pig in the garden, the death of Umoim and the planting of his bones in the garden, etc.). Here the division between nurturing and killing is shown to be problematic and somewhat other than previously understood, and the rite may be seen as saying that not only can life come from death, but that death is a necessary precondition of life. At this time they are also instructed in the myths that account for and conjoin the origins of mortality, the loss of self-sustaining plenty, the necessity for hard work, and the means by which to combat entropy. Finally,

they will be introduced to the *un baal*, which seems to turn upon the complementary mystery of death out of life, since it is the rite concerned with killing but necessitates the capture--without killing--of a live marsupial and bringing it into the Telefolip.

Finally, while all of this is going on, other lessons are being taught. These are the lessons about knowledge. The rites have the character of offering serial revelations, things that may be revealed precisely because they have been kept secret, apart, and sacred--*amem*. The world as presented in the *bans* is not the same as the world seen from outside them--if it were, there would be nothing to be revealed. In the next section I take up what seems to be central to our understanding of the point of all the rites and the myths combined, a commentary on human knowledge. Though I do not discuss it directly, this question is of theoretical importance in the anthropology of religion and of symbols, for it seems that many understand the task of religion and its attendant symbolic forms to be the construction of a secure universe, one in which man's position is certain, his way clear, and one in which various powerful (if ill-defined, please note) "supernatural forces" may be enlisted in his aid. As we shall see, Telefol religion--and this is really what I have been getting at all along--does quite the opposite, though it may in fact serve to orient men in the world and aid them in understanding what it and they are about.

#### vii. On Not Knowing in Telefolmin

Georg Simmel once wrote, "the secret... the hiding of realities by negative or positive means, is one of man's great achievements (1950:330)." The Bambara of the Sudan have some sayings on the notion of secrets and silence, and they say:

One does not know what the silent man thinks, but one  
 knows the thought of the chatterer.  
 The secret belongs to he who keeps quiet...  
 Silence pondered; speech did not want to think.  
 (Zahan 1979:117)

The secret--that which is known, and perhaps shared among some, but not revealed--has a central place in Telefol culture, for this is *anem*, sacred.

The day after I arrived at the Telefolmin airstrip I decided to set out to find a likely village in which to begin work. I spent the morning walking a circuit from village to village along the government road and occasionally branched off timidly on some of the local foot tracks. I managed to get a look at several villages that morning, but they were all virtually deserted and I met none of the Local Government Councillors to whom I had been introduced the previous day. At a loss, I sat along one of the tracks connecting two villages and waited to see if any of the local people would approach me. I felt odd, and started rolling cigarette after cigarette while wondering what I would do if anyone noticed me. Most of the time I practiced a litany of Pidgin phrases that I hoped would guide me through the perils of greetings, questions, and answers that were sure to come. By mid-afternoon men, women, and children loaded with bulging netbags appeared along the tracks as they made for their villages. My anticipation rose--and they passed silently by. Though there were odd bits of unintelligible conversation among themselves and occasional giggles among the children, they passed by for the most part quietly, rarely acknowledging my presence with a glance. I was soon dejected and disappointed--their apparent lack of inquisitiveness struck me as perverse, since I was counting on their curiosity to precipitate the first encounter.

Eventually I was saved by Yemis, a pastor for the Baptist mission. Attired in the less than picturesque cotton shorts and white shirt that mark men of new ways, he approached me, sat down, and gave me my first opportunity to try out my Pidgin in Telefolmin. We chatted for some time, during which

I tried to explain my presence, my need for a village in which to stay, and my desire to hire a villager to interpret and help with learning the language. Gradually, we were joined by a growing knot of other men. Yemis introduced me to each of them as I tried (and failed) to keep track of their names. Two men in particular stood out--Wesani and Dakasim, both brothers of Yemis. Wesani offered to rent out a section of his house to me, and Dakasim was recommended as an excellent interpreter since he had previously worked for another European (B.A.L. Cranstone) who had come to study material culture in the area. I soon learned that Wesani was a man of some prominence (the previous, and--at the time of writing, current--Member of Parliament for the area), and I was therefore especially attentive to what he began to tell me. He said that Dakasim, his elder brother, was very knowledgeable, and would be ideally suited to help me in my work. He added that I could learn a lot from Dakasim, but there were some things I could never know. There were, he explained, two kinds of talk: *tok pablik* or *tok klia* (Pidgin: "public talk"), and *tok hait* or *tok tambu* ('hidden talk, or tabu talk'). While I would be assured of learning all there was to know of the public talk, the hidden talk would remain unknown to me because it was secret and contained stories that were tabu (Pidgin: *tambu*, Telefol: *amem*). Daunted, I replied that this arrangement was agreeable to me, since I had come to find out how men made names for themselves and achieved prominence: I was looking for big men, and had come to study local-level politics.

Our conversation continued for some time as I tried to negotiate the circumstances of my presence in the village where I was to settle. Though much had been left far too unresolved for my liking--I later learned that Telefol styles of negotiation followed circuitous routes--arrangements were made and it was agreed that I would move into the village that evening, and that I would

hire Dakasim on a trial basis. At that, the men began slowly to go their way in *small clusters*. Dakasim, however, remained behind, and when the others were out of earshot, he began to talk in a low hushed voice: "There was an old woman...".

Thus began my first introduction into the paradoxical and seductive world of secrecy in Telefolmin. There is nothing novel, of course, in the discovery of esotericism in New Guinea cultures. Men's cults are widespread, and almost always embrace some degree of secrecy as part of their constitutive framework (cf. van Baal 1966; Barth 1975; Bateson 1958; Errington 1974; Kamma 1975; Forge 1965; Gell 1975; Lawrence and Meggitt 1965; Jones 1976; Read 1952; Poole 1976; Wheatcroft 1976; Williams 1940; Watson 1972). What is striking about the Telefol case is the almost awesome pervasiveness of secrecy throughout the culture.

This was quickly brought home to me as the result of the constraints secrecy imposed on the conditions of my work in the field. In the early stages I professed a (genuine) disinterest in matters that came under Wesani's heading of *tok hait*. Anxious not to transgress the bounds of my hosts' good will, I studiously avoided lines of questioning that threatened to stray into forbidden terrain. This, however, proved more difficult to accomplish than I had imagined. If, for example, I pressed informants for the rationale underlying particular details of custom, a characteristic sequence began to emerge. Occasionally there would be a reply that corresponds to our notions of explanation. More often, however, the standard response would be something to the effect that this was simply the way things had always been. If I persisted beyond this point, I would be told that this was the way Afek had said things should be, and this was almost always followed by brief and cryptic statements to the effect that this was *amem*. This wasn't the only context in which secrecy and my work confronted each other. A preliminary analysis of Telefol social structure revealed that the village was the crucial level of

organization, and that the village in turn was defined by the presence of a *yolam*. But, as we have already seen, the *yolam* and everything about it was *amem* and hence not open to probing questions. I found the collection of genealogies complicated by the fact that the names of most forebears beyond a couple of generations were also *amem*--men would tell me these names, but only with a stern and emphatic caution that I must not reveal them to women, children, or younger men. This, they explained, was *amem*, and if I revealed the names I would be endangering not so much myself as those for whom such knowledge was hazardous and therefore proscribed. It soon became clear to me that it would be difficult to pursue my work without at one point or another venturing into areas that were behind the veils of secrecy. But it also became clear that some things were more secret than others, and that I would be permitted to learn some secrets if I were willing to abide by certain strictures concerning my communication of information to others--that is, if I were to respect and participate in conventions of secrecy myself.

Within a matter of months the situation rapidly became more complicated than I had anticipated, achieving an almost labyrinthine character. My preliminary work was aimed at establishing the background of Telefol life, and I spent a great deal of time making maps, drawing village plans, enumerating households, collecting kinship terms, finding out about the system of gardening, and so on. Telefolmin are keen and able gardeners, and I had no trouble getting them to tell me about this side of their lives. But discussions of hunting or gardening invariably led to a consideration of the foods that were prohibited (again *amem*) for certain people--this is the system of food tabus cross-cutting the entire society. Once again--it almost goes without saying--any understanding of these tabus hinged upon an understanding of what was *amem*, and the regulations themselves were once again shrouded in an aura of secrecy. It was easy to learn who could eat what, but not so easy

to find out what meaning people attached to this. Secrecy, it seemed, was determined to block the way at every turn.

This is not the sort of situation most fieldworkers like, and I began to chafe every time I was told that the answer to one of my questions was *amem*. The apparent impasse was resolved one morning when Dakasim came to me. We had been going over the crop inventory, and I had been attempting to list food prohibitions without delving too far into areas of indiscretion. On this particular morning Dakasim, who had up until now been patient (though sometimes bored) with my questions, opened the conversation with "*maski rabis toktok*"--"forget this rubbish (trivial talk)". He then sat me down, and after assuring himself that there was no one else about, explained that I should be learning big things, not simply who lived where or what women couldn't eat. He then launched into the narration of myths about Afek, which he had cursorily begun on our first meeting. This first relatively full account was always conducted in privacy, sometimes in the darkened confines of my house when others were away in the gardens, sometimes in a clearing on a nearby hillock where he could be certain that we would have ample warning of the approach of others. In all cases, he was adamant that I give no indication to others of the knowledge he had revealed. Before too long I found myself engaged in similar conversations with other men, sometimes with Dakasim present, sometimes with him absent. In all cases, a precondition of the discussions was that I admit knowledge of these things to no one--not to women, children, and youths, nor to other adult men. I was soon enmeshed in a network of clandestine conversations whose contents could only be discussed with those who were privy to the initial conversations. The injunction to remain silent beyond the confines of particular relationships effectively insulated such discussions from each other and from the realm of everyday discourse.

These constraints had profound implications for the nature of the material I collected, and also led to a keen appreciation of some aspects of



secrecy that have, with a few noteworthy exceptions (van Baal 1966; Barth 1975; Bateson 1958; Jones 1976), been neglected in New Guinea ethnography. In the case of my own work, it is possible to outline some of the most significant points. (1) One of the recurring preoccupations of fieldworkers is the difficulty of assessing the "reliability" of data collected. It is generally assumed that the accounts provided by single informants cannot represent the "full" and "true" picture, and it is thus necessary to draw upon accounts from several different informants to flesh out the scheme of things. There are two standard techniques employed to do this: (a) interviewing several knowledgeable informants simultaneously, with the aim of arriving at a consensus on the questions posed; (b) cross-checking particular points with several different informants over time, making repeated use of the same eliciting frames. In either case, the general aim is to verify one's information on the basis of agreement or correspondence between individual accounts--in this sense homogeneity and consensus are seen as indices of veracity and reliability. This has the consequence of defining epistemological questions in statistical terms. One difference that consistently marked the contrast between secret (*amem*) material and non-secret information that I collected was the ability or inability to subject such data to the "normal" techniques of verification. Cross-checking was *by the very nature of the information and its modes of communication* impossible. Parenthetically, I might add that this applies for the most part to Telefolmin themselves and calls the very idea of a single unified belief system into question. (2) Because it was impossible for me to admit to knowledge beyond the context of my conversations with particular individuals, elicitation was confined to the history of our previous discussions. I could not, for example, question a man about a detail of the *iman ban* unless he himself had spoken to me of it in the first place. This had the result of restricting my initiative in questioning and placed me in a position where I was largely dependent upon my informants

for the direction that my inquiries followed. (3) Whenever my informants questioned me in turn about what I had learned, I had always to be circumspect and careful not to reveal anything that they themselves had not taught me. If they questioned me about areas that had only been covered in conversations with others--as they did from time to time--I had to feign ignorance. Thus, whenever their questions passed beyond the bounds of what they had taught me, there was only *one* possible answer I could give them, regardless of the actual state of my knowledge: "I don't know". (Such responses were occasionally transparent, and in these instances I often received what appeared to be knowing and approving smiles from my mentors.) Dissimulation (*migik bagamin*, *tituleng bagamin*) thus became an integral part of the process. (4) In a like manner, whenever I pursued questions about esoteric material and received an answer of "I don't know" ("*muu kwa; tolongoli binim; utamami binim*"), it was difficult to judge whether my companion truly did not know or was simply guarding areas of secrecy from further exploration; the possibilities of evasion and concealment thus framed a number of conversations. (5) As an increasing amount of esoteric lore came to my attention, less and less of what I already "knew" could be taken for granted. (6) Because of the precautions and circumspection required of all discussions of esoteric knowledge, each such conversation had the aura of the *mysterium* (cf. Otto 1958), a certain numinous and set-apart quality. Here, one example may stand for many. Old Utuumbaanengim suspected that I had been given deliberate misinformation on a particular point (or so he said), and had through a devious route sent word to me--through a trusted junior relative--that the two of us should meet to discuss matters. His sister's son was sent to fetch me about mid-day, when he was sure that most people would be off in the bush in their gardens. I was taken to his village, and we went into the *yolam* to talk while Utuumbaanengim's nephew--himself a grown man with children--stood watch outside from the verandah. Soon he whispered that someone was coming. Quickly and quietly

Utuumbaanengim got up and went out of the *yolam*, boarding the door behind him and incidentally sealing me inside. Thus, while I remained silent in the darkness of the *yolam*, Utuumbaaneng greeted his friend and chatted. Then, offering his apologies, he explained that he and his sister's son were on the point of going off to a distant garden to check the fences and do some planting. They took up taro stalks--which I later learned they had set aside for just such a deception--and struck off into the bush while accompanying their friend back to his home village. There I sat for the better part of an hour, wondering what to do when eventually I heard Utuumbaanengim whispering outside. After making sure that I was still there, he unboarded the door, placed his nephew once more on watch, and came in once again, where he finally told me what he wanted to say. Such are the lengths to which one goes when conveying *weng amem*, and I soon became accustomed to such procedures as normal whenever anything esoteric was to be discussed. In such circumstances it was hard not to believe that something serious was afoot, and I found myself listening with heightened anticipation for whatever new revelations were offered. If what was revealed conformed to what I knew from other contexts, I found myself experiencing a vague sense of let-down and disappointment tinged with a quietly insistent suspicion that I was being presented with a deception, an esoteric "cover story" (*weng migik*) meant to mask the truth rather than reveal it. If, on the other hand, the revelation offered a novel--or even contradictory--version of what I had been previously told, this in itself tended to vouchsafe its authenticity for me. The obvious became trivial while the improbable acquired significance. (7) As my discussions with particular men broadened, deepened, and progressed, the history of this exploration formed a bond between us akin to that of commensality, for we had shared secrets with each other. In this way a range of relationships became differentiated from each other on the basis of the particular ranges of knowledge and conversation peculiar to each. There were thus those with whom

certain topics of conversation were permissible and those with whom I could only discuss the "externals" (the *kuuk*) of Telefol life,

As most ethnographers know, the frustrations and difficulties of fieldwork are often highly instructive, and I can say without reservation that the *fact* of secrecy in Telefolmin was a supreme source of frustration. But this obstacle was in fact a highly significant vehicle for my understanding of just what *weng amem*--secret/sacred speech--is about. Though I was long in appreciating it, the circumstances under which I learned *weng amem* shed light on the fact that in the realm of esoteric lore the *how* of knowing is as important (if not more so) as the *what* of knowing--the two are inextricably bound together. And this is so not just for the ethnographer from an exotic place--this is all the more true for Telefolmin themselves. As I found when learning about the initiation process, the rather peculiar ways in which I learned *weng amem* reproduced--though in less dramatic ways--the experience of Telefolmin themselves when they encountered and partook of that which is *amem*, both secret and sacred. To comprehend this is to comprehend something about the meaning of secrecy as it distinguishes between the knowledgeable and the ignorant, between those with two eyes (*tiin aloop*) and those who are cross-eyed (*tiin suuk*), between that which is obvious and insignificant (*kuuk*) and that which is less evident but more fundamental (*magam*).

If we consider the initiation process as a whole, it is clear that men's experience in the realm of things *amem* is full of surprises. Things are revealed to be rarely what they seem: the red ochre (*bagan*) with which men adorn themselves is in fact Afek's menstrual blood, the white cowries (*bonang*) used as decorations and as bridewealth valuables are in fact maggots from Umoim's corpse, the *yolam* belongs to men but was given to them by a woman, and so on. Interwoven with this is the repeated message that secrets must be kept, that knowledge can be dangerous, and that to claim too much knowledge is a mistake. Here we can recall the piecemeal revelation of *Afek sang*, in which

initial disclosures of the *kuuk* are only partial expositions rather than final and definitive explanations. The point is reiterated in the content of the myths themselves, as when Umoim's desire for knowledge has the consequences of nullifying that which he sought: wanting to control his sister's powers, he ends by destroying them and bringing about a world where men know scarcity and death. Anxious to visit her brother in Bagelam, Afek goes to see him too soon, with the result that men's tools--the *fubi* adzes that come from Bagelam--are flawed and the living are unable to visit the dead. Careless and too hasty with their words, seeing only the appearance and not the substance of things, Afek's children shame their mother's brother and thus drive him and the source of *bonang* away, forever sundering the worlds of the living and the dead.

Here too we should recall that there is a division of knowledge among the men of the *yolam*. Not only is there a graded stratification of knowledge in which progressively more esoteric information is gradually revealed, but there is also the division between Taro and Arrow men in which the innermost core (*magam*) of the *weng amem* of one side is prohibited to the other. Thus while all men have some knowledge and experience of the full range of rites by the time they have completed their initiation sequence, their knowledge of the *magam* of *weng amem* is confined to that of their own sphere. Should they gain access to *weng amem* of the opposite sphere, its efficacy would be vitiated and the success of their projects imperiled. This is a point that is nicely developed in a non-secret *utuum sang* concerning two men, one a gardener and the other a hunter:

There were two cross-cousins who lived together, one who gardened and one who hunted. The gardener went to his garden one day and was clearing bush when the blade of his stone adze broke. He went down to a nearby stream to polish and resharpen the blade in the river sand. As he was sharpening his adze, he saw a bunch of sweet ripe bananas come floating downstream. He caught and ate these, and a little later some cooked pork came floating downstream. This he also ate. Curious, he went upstream to find out where these things came from. After he followed the stream into the hills he came to a steep

slope which he couldn't climb. He looked for a way to get to the top, but found none. At the top, however, was an old woman who let down her long pubic hair as a rope for him to climb. He was afraid it might break, but she told him not to worry and simply climb, which he did. When he got to the top, she asked him to help her with her taro garden. He did this, and afterwards they went to her house, where she gave him tobacco to smoke. Then she cooked some food for him. She cooked some meat and cut off a portion of her genitals and cooked this too. This she gave to him to eat, but while he took the meat, he refused the portion of her genitals, saying he had eaten enough. After he had eaten, the old woman got up and spoke: "I'm going to take a torch and go to look for frogs tonight. You stay here, and if you hear any rats or cockroaches making noise in the house, do not disturb them, but toss them scraps of food instead". Saying this, she went out into the night. He stayed behind and waited. He heard some rats and insects making noise, just as she had said, and he tossed bits of food to where he heard the noise. At dawn the old woman returned, saying that she had failed to find any frogs. She told the young man to take some tobacco, and then he could leave. She instructed him that after he left he should go to a certain place and pick some *ilub* and then go to another place and pick two long ripe pandanus fruits. When he picked these fruits he would have to take special care to climb up the tree to cut them and carry them down, as they were very ripe. After that, he should go down to a small stream to drink, and then return home. The young man smoked and then left as he had been told. When he came upon the spot where the *ilub* grew, a large and fat domestic pig appeared, which he shot and cooked in a leaf oven with stones. He then filled up his netbag with cooked pork and walked until he came upon the pandanus tree. He climbed up as he had been told and carefully cut the fruits and carried them to the ground. These he laid down as he went to drink at the small stream. When he finished drinking, he turned around to see two beautiful young women standing where he had left the pandanus fruits. "Where did you come from?" he asked. They replied that they were none other than the fruits that he had cut down, and that they would be his wives. The three then set off for his home, carrying the pork with them. When they arrived, the young man's cross-cousin, the hunter, was waiting. He was impatient because he had been left home alone, and was also curious to know where his cross-cousin had found the two women and the pork. The gardener told him that he must take his stone adze and break the blade in the garden. Then he must take it down to the stream to sharpen it. When he did so, he would see something--then he would find out. The hunter went to the garden, broke his adze blade, and went down to the stream. He went down, but he didn't really repair the blade--he only pretended to do so.

Soon some ripe bananas came floating downstream, which he ate. Then some cooked pork came downstream, which he also ate. Then he set off upstream to see where these things came from. When he arrived at the steep slope he called out, asking how to get to the top. The old woman answered him, saying that she was letting down her pubic hair for him to climb up. He was afraid this might break, so he tested it several times by pulling it sharply. Then he climbed up. When he got to the top, the old woman asked him to help her with her garden. But instead of helping her, he told her to shut up and then knocked her down and had intercourse with her. Afterwards, she prepared some meat for him, and as before, cut off a portion of her genitals and cooked it with the meat. She gave this to him, and he ate it all, including the portion of her genitals. When he finished he said he was still hungry and asked for more. The old woman refused, saying he had had enough already. Then she told him she was going to look for frogs, and left him instructions to toss bits of food to rats or cockroaches if they made any noise. She left, and the young man got up and tried to follow her--but the path was blocked. He came back, and when he heard the rats and cockroaches rustling he tried to shoo them away with a long stick, instead of throwing them food. At dawn the old woman came back, saying she had failed to find any frogs. But the young man accused her of lying, saying that he knew she hadn't gone to find frogs at all but had instead been performing a *ban*, pointing to a tiny bit of red ochre that remained on her face. The woman said nothing of this, but told him to leave and go gather *ilub* and then to go on and carefully cut down the two pandanus fruits, just as she had told his cross-cousin. Then he was to go and drink from a small stream nearby. He left and came to the place where he was to gather *ilub*. There a domestic pig appeared, but it was scrawny and sick. This he shot and cooked. Then he went to the pandanus tree, but rather than climbing up as he was told, he took a long stick and knocked the two fruits to the ground. As they fell, one of them broke. Then he went down to the stream to drink, and when he turned around there were two women standing in place of the pandanus fruits. One of these women was lame--she was the one that had broken when it struck the ground. Then the three of them set off for home. When they arrived, the man met his cross-cousin, the gardener. The latter was wearing a fine wild boar's tusk in his nose and had a beautiful *mafuum* headdress. The hunter asked him where he got all these fine things, and the gardener answered that he made his *mafuum* from strands of domestic pandanus (*em*) and that he got his tusk simply by plucking it from the mouth of a wild boar. Believing this, the hunter went and watched by a wild pig run. A huge sow went by, but he didn't shoot it because he was only interested in getting tusks. After a while a wild boar with huge curved tusks came down the track. Tossing his bow and arrows aside, he sprang onto the pig's back and tried to pull out the

tusks with his hand. But instead of getting the tusks he was carried off into the bush by the boar. The pig was moving so fast that he dare not leap off, and instead he yelled for his cross-cousin to save him. He kept yelling for him to intercept the pig at a stream crossing so that he might be saved. But the pig was running so fast that the gardener could never catch up with it in time. This went on for a month or so, and finally the gardener returned to his clearing, tired of chasing after the pig. One day, while he was rolling a smoke in his garden, he once again heard the voice of his cross-cousin calling out for rescue. The latter's voice was very faint and weak, since he had been riding all this time on the pig's back and had not eaten. He was nearly dead. The gardener grabbed his bow and arrows and raced off in pursuit--this time he shot the pig. The hunter was now nothing but skin and bone, he had been on the pig's back for so long--in fact, he had been there so long that he had to be cut away from the pig, for the boar's bristles had grown into his chest. His cross-cousin then carried him to a nearby spot and laid him down--he was too weak to walk or stand. The gardener butchered the wild pig and killed a domestic pig as well. These he cooked and gave the meat to his cross-cousin to eat, along with some bananas and sugar cane. There was so much food that the starved man was unable to finish it all. But the gardener kept feeding him, insisting that he eat. Eventually the hunter's strength returned, he grew fat, and they were able to remove the pig's bristles from his chest. And so the two remained....

Here we can see the fundamental disjunction between gardening and hunting used to polarize the protagonists of the narrative. But beyond this, we can also see how the themes of secrecy, deception, masking, and indiscretion are used consistently to build the framework of the tale. The gardener and hunter are, as signalled at the outset, fundamentally different characters, the former being appropriately discrete in his dealings with the old woman, while the latter's seeming determination to transgress all the proper guidelines is linked to his blindness. He refuses to respect the limits of things that are not his to know, things that are *amem*, and instead attempts to gain secret knowledge by force. This leads to failure in all he attempts, and even when he is told what to do to secure the benefits the old woman offers, he cannot but fail to follow her instructions. Wishing to arrogate all to himself, he fails in everything. When he returns to see his cousin, he is likewise unable



to perceive obvious deception (*mafuum* are made from strips of wild pandanus, not the domesticated variety). He thus pursues lies and illusion while failing to see what truths he is offered. This failure of "seeing" is underscored when he ignores the first wild pig to come down the track: his single-minded self-willedness befogs his vision. In the end he becomes, like the wild pig whose being becomes fused with his own, completely devoid of the ability to discriminate that characterizes the cultural realm.

In our terms, this tale is clearly a homily on greed and its self-defeating consequences. But we must also understand that this "greed" includes the insistence upon knowing all, the refusal to respect the boundaries and constraints of secrecy entailed in that which is *amem*. The story also suggests an implicit connection with the initiation context, marked by the first cross-cousin's *mafuum* headdress. The journey to the old woman's house serves as an analogue for the journey that all youths make through the initiation system, through an intimate, forceful, and mysterious confrontation with the realm of the *amem*. The opening of the eyes of youths in initiation is not simply instruction in the content of various secrets--it is first and foremost an elaborate instruction in the nature, power, and value of secrecy and sacredness itself--the opening of the eyes takes the form of successive introductions into a graded range of secrets and, as Barth (1975) has noted for the Baktaman, each secret revealed (and kept) by the initiates points to a subsequent series of secrets as yet unknown. Perhaps the ultimate folly of the hunter in the tale is not only his greed, but his blind faith in his ability to see, his arrogance consisting in his presumption that he can see (and comprehend) everything. Not content to remain a hunter and yet knowing nothing of gardening, he believes that he can usurp for himself all there is to know--he ends as the victim of his erstwhile prey and must depend on the gardener's skill with bow and arrow to save him.

In this tale, as with the story of Umoim spying on Afek, the self-willed desire to know is equated with greed and ends in futility. The knowledge thus gained is of no avail, it might as well never have been. Here we approach an important aspect of secrecy in Telefolmin, namely, that secrets are powerful *as secrets*, and here lies an important paradox of secrecy: to tell a secret is to reveal and destroy it, but to preserve the knowledge embodied in secrets, they must be told. Thus the value of secret knowledge depends upon continued secrecy, and in a like manner, that which is secret is by virtue of secrecy valuable while that which is common currency is devalued. A couple of concrete examples will illustrate these points.

When Europeans first arrived on the Telefol scene as patrol officers and missionaries, Telefol dealings with them bore the imprint of what Barth has called the epistemology of secrecy. According to several informants, when the first patrol officers--outsiders of obvious power but with unknown bases for that power--arrived, Telefolmin took them into their *yolam* and showed them the relics housed there. The hope was that Europeans would similarly reveal the basis of their power, but this did not take place and many older men still trace their dissatisfaction with the non-reciprocal character of Telefolmin-European relations to this point. Since that time the opening of an administration school with instruction in English literacy has been seen by some as a tardy act of reciprocity to redress the original imbalance. Now there are many families that send their boys to school to learn the Europeans' knowledge. These boys, however, are rarely initiated into the traditional lore of *weng amem*, while other boys are retained in the villages and inducted into the cult. This is partly because schoolboys are themselves reluctant to undergo the rigours of initiation, and partly because their parents fear that the presence of girls and many uninitiated boys in the classroom would jeopardize the secrecy upon which *weng amem* is based. But in addition, it reflects a fundamental Telefol attitude that knowledge has value as a result

of the degree of secrecy surrounding it, and that the benefits of such knowledge can be widely shared only through a division of labour which enjoins some *not to know* the knowledge of others. Telefol reactions to missionization reflect these premises in a rather striking way. Although the Australian Baptist Missionary Society has been operating in Telefolmin for over twenty-five years, the majority of Telefolmin remain pagans. Though there are many reasons for this, one of them is the Telefol attitude towards knowledge and the ways in which valuable knowledge is managed. The missionaries are proselytizers, a fact which Telefolmin find perplexing. Since missionaries are concerned to disseminate their gospel as widely as possible, Telefol men take this as self-evident proof that the message of the missionaries is either false, or valueless, or both. For, as men often remark, they tell even women and children openly about the Bible! If not a tissue of esoteric deception, such knowledge must be of little consequence to be treated so lightly.

This leads us to other aspects of secrecy and revelation, particularly with respect to dreams (perhaps the prototypical secrets). Dreams are held to be the activity of a person's *sinik* while sleeping. As such, dreams are felt to have a reality of their own and represent experience rather than mere imaginings. But it is also known that while dreams represent real experience and often have import for the waking world, things in dreams are "turned" so that their import is almost never a direct reflection of their content (cf. Wagner 1972; Landtman 1927). If, for example, one dreams of a friend or a kinsman suffering harm, it is taken as a sign that a stranger or a member of a distant village will die. On the other hand, if dreams about the death of strangers are experienced, this betokens harm to someone nearby. Since dreams are often tangled and confused, their meaning is very difficult to determine. But since they are real, they cannot be treated lightly. It is known that occasionally dreams are revelations of power, so that people tend

in fact to treat their dreams as a variety of *weng amem*. Thus, to reveal a dream may be to destroy its potential power—to "give away a secret" is also to give away its import and efficacy, to lose it. For example, Dakasim told me shortly after I arrived that he had had a dream foretelling my coming. Not knowing the meaning of what he saw (he dreamt of a European coming to talk to him), he told this dream to a man from another village. One part of the dream dealt with the discovery of wealth in the ground. Dakasim told me that had he not revealed this dream to another man, the two of us might have made our fortunes. But having revealed the dream, all such hopes were lost. Similarly, Robinok, one of the younger men in Derolengam, told me that when he worked in a mining camp he was in the habit of playing *laki*, a card game. One night he had had a dream in which he saw a piece of gold, and he later found this piece. This he carefully tucked away, and he began to win regularly at cards. One day he told a friend about his dream and later found that his piece of gold was lost--and with it, his ability to win. There was no suspicion of theft here, and the friend whom he told remained a friend. The fault was rather his own, for he had destroyed the basis of his power by revealing it.

Here we come to an important feature of Telefol initiations, namely, that while *weng amem* is revealed to the novices, the revelations are partial and sometimes have the character of deception. One of the main burdens of the initiatory process is the progressive disclosure of *weng amem*, the legacy of sacred/secret knowledge that Afek left for the Telefolmin. But here the seniors are in a double-bind: if they fail to transmit such knowledge, the legacy is lost, but if such knowledge loses its secret character and becomes public, it is thereby destroyed and becomes valueless. For their own part, novices soon become aware of the same dilemma, and tend to view their own knowledge as well with suspicion and skepticism (cf. Jones 1976).

The pervasive themes of ignorance, knowledge, and deception are highlighted in the initiation system, and these themes are all tied to secrecy. Sometimes, especially in earlier initiations, *weng doo* in the form of riddles are posed, and some of these contain apparently insoluble paradoxes. Returning to the riddle of the bird in the *dagasal ban* (iv.(a). above), there is no apparent answer to the question of whether the bird in the old man's hand is dead or alive. The problem is visible enough, for it is clear that if the boys answer that the bird is dead, the old man may release it and let it fly free simply by relaxing his grip. If, on the other hand, they answer that the bird is alive, he can extinguish its life merely by tightening his fingers. The correct answer is that the bird's life is in the old man's hand--*kalapmi sagal diim alba ko*--but very few boys ever see this answer. In a sense, however, the "correct" answer is irrelevant, for the lesson is also about not knowing and applies to all: to speak incautiously belies knowledge, just as to divulge a secret is to destroy it (cf. the episode of Umoim and Afek's children).

We have seen that secrecy has many dimensions in Telefol society. On one level, secrecy serves as a fundamental ordering principle, operating in the realm of words and knowledge as a series of tabus or disjunctions that define and in a sense underwrite the dimensions of human order embodied in all prohibitions. Here we might view secrecy in the same light as prescriptions dealing with commensality or even marriage regulations. That is, the boundaries created with secrecy define the population and partition it into categories in terms of the passage of words in much the same way that Telefol food tabus (with which much of the domain of *weng amem* concerns itself) partition the population in terms of food sharing. As a system of differentiation and exchange, the outlines of the system of restrictions on knowledge and speech generate a division of labour between men and women, seniors and juniors, and between Taro and Arrow sides. In these terms we can

say that much of the structure of Telefol society is the consequence of the general principle that all members of the community--including even senior adepts, excluded from total possession of knowledge by the divisions between Taro side and Arrow side--are, relative to others, in some state of "not knowing". Further, this differentiation represents and in a sense generates the ordering which serves as the ideological underpinnings for wider realms of experience, ultimately underwriting the necessity of reciprocity and mutual dependence between self and other.

On another level, we can see that the ordering power of secrecy is an essentially conservative one, preventing and forestalling dissolution and entropy, in much the same way in which the other tabus serve the same end. Here a peculiarity of the nature of secrets--their dependence on both sharing and non-communication for their existence--makes them particularly suitable for such a role, since secrets themselves dissolve in the telling. They thus serve admirably as vehicles for the enactment of the role of men as guardians of a fragile order dependent on their conduct.

Finally, secrecy as a process has a creative aspect, one that seems particularly vital in Telefol culture. Here I would argue that the separation between the world of everyday experience and the *amem* world serves not simply to insulate these worlds from each other, but in fact calls them into being as distinct worlds, related through secrecy as *kuuk* is to *magam*. This must surely be one of the implications of Simmel's observation that the secret "offers the possibility of a second world alongside the manifest world" (1950:330). And of course, this much should be clear from what we have seen of the whole initiation process, and here the "set apartness" of the secret, so intimately tied to notions of the sacred, carries with it a hint of the numinous, pointing beyond the apparent and everyday world (cf. Otto 1958). The transparency of truth in the everyday world is called into question by the opacity of the secret, and here lies what I feel must be the key to the

extraordinary richness of that domain of Telefol culture embodied in the category of *weng amem*.

The predilection towards esotericism in Telefol ritual and myth is an arrangement of successive versions of rites and narratives in which each subsequent variant encompasses and obviates (cf. Wagner 1979) those that went before. For example, one of the themes underlying much of the ritual system and the organization of cult activities is the separation of nurturing and killing, village and bush, men and women. These provide the oppositional axes in terms of which a range of experience is ordered and made intelligible. But we have already seen how at various stages of either myth or ritual these discriminations become re-sorted (e.g., the wild animals being fed by Afek in Telefolip) or turned on their heads--here the killing of the *kong amem* in the middle of the garden during the *iman ban* is a particularly striking example. Up until the time that this takes place the novices have been carefully warned that killing and taro gardening must be segregated and that blood and taro are incompatible. And now, when the secrets of taro fertility are to be revealed to them, the very act which they have been cautioned against takes centre stage in the conduct of the rite. Nor is this all. Those who later become experts in the Taro side will learn that while every one else is excluded from the *fofolam* the taro experts (*tenum abem kasel*) are having a secret meal of marsupials that they hunted at night while they were supposedly dozing off in the *katibam*. They will further learn--to their shock--that the favoured marsupials for this secret meal are the ones prohibited to men and permitted only to women. This, from the point of view of the old men privy to this rite, is the essential act of the entire *ban*, the one that is most meaningful. They will also learn later how this is explained in an even more secret myth of the Afek-Umoim series in which Afek castrates and commits incest with her brother, and how Umoim's penis was buried to become the Taro Vine, and how the Taro Vine is intimately tied to the origins of both the *katibam* and the *dungam*, as

well as the hunting of marsupials. Finally, they will learn on their entry to the *katibam*--from whose rafters will hang scores of marsupials--that it is different from all the other *yolam* in one striking way: it has only a single hearth, and within the *katibam* the division between Taro hearths and Arrow hearths is no longer present. Some of these will later learn that this is so because the *katibam* is the men's *dungam* (also known as *am katib*), after which it is copied. This will later be linked to a number of other contexts, particularly the birth feast of marsupials held at the *dungam* from which men are excluded. But all of these new revelations, which imply a totally different conception of the work of the *iman ban*, will only be made available to men after their formal initiations have been completed, and even then will only be revealed in their fullest sense to the men of Taro side.

Here I would like to point out that it is secrecy which enables a single rite to be several different rites simultaneously. Further, it is clear that much of the force of each successive revelation is that it controverts expectations: in the case of the truly *amem* aspects of the *iman ban* killing has been turned into nurturing, the bush has been brought into the village, and the most sacred of men's houses is shown to be a surrogate menstrual hut. Ritual reversal is of course commonplace, and it might be tempting to view the secrecy surrounding such practices as an attempt to insulate the mundane order from the contradictions of the sacred/secret performance. Such a view finds support in much of the Telefol material, but does not go far enough. Instead, I would argue that this ritual negation is announced and entailed in the logic of *amem*, the logic of the sacred that is also the secret. Secrecy sets the stage for revelation, and revelation generates a metaphorization of the given (see Wagner 1972; Turner 1962; Ricoeur 1977). Through secrecy the dialectic of known and not-known is engaged and set in motion.



If we view the notion of secrecy from the perspective of epistemology and schemes of knowledge, the position can perhaps be made clearer. Speaking of the Iatmul, Bateson (1958:230-6) has remarked upon their fondness for paradox and the multitude of contradictions within a highly elaborated esoteric tradition, and van Baal (1966:929-31) had made similar observations about Marind-anim culture. Writing of the Baktaman, Barth has given considerable treatment to similar schemes of knowledge and finds the analogy of Chinese boxes, each inside the other, helpful. Here the boxes represent successive esoteric levels, with the walls of the boxes being constituted by the barriers of secrecy. The logic of this is, I believe, akin to the logic of gift-wrapping in our own culture. Just as coloured paper, ribbons, and bows announce to the recipient that he is about to receive a gift whose nature is unknown to him, so the opacity of the secret announces to others that there is "something else" but that it is something of which one is ignorant. For Telefolmin, secrecy gives rise--particularly in the initiation context--to the notion that reality's obvious layer masks other and *different* realities. This actively shapes--and indeed calls forth--the process of revelation. Disputing the claims of the given to exhaustive truth, secrets and their revelation not only enlarge upon the world as given but call it into question as well. For revelation to carry force and conviction it must expose one's prior knowledge as incomplete and in some sense defective. In common-sense terms, secrets could not be secrets if they were obvious. This was a point well appreciated by my mentors whose most surprising, improbable, and wonderful revelations were accompanied by wide-eyed whispers of *afeen ko*, *afeen ko ya!* (True, true!) All of this attended by clicks, whistles, nods, and sage chuckles. For the Iatmul it is clear that the case is much the same:

Among the Iatmul the dialecticians and theologians are not a class apart but are, as we have seen, the chief contributors to the culture. Thus it comes about that many of the complications of the culture can be seen as

*tours-de-force* played upon... paradox, devices which stress the contradiction between emotional and cognitive reality or between different aspects of emotional truth (Bateson 1958:232).

The particular force of this logic in relation to apparent reality is dramatically demonstrated in one incident that took place while I was living in Derolengam:

Dagayok and Beksep (father and son) went into the forest at night to hunt marsupials. Dagayok climbed a tree to shoot at a possum and when he got near the top of the tree it gave way and broke, throwing him to the ground. He was knocked unconscious and his back was injured. When he regained consciousness Beksep angrily berated him, saying that his injury was his own fault. Beksep said that had Dagayok revealed to him the *weng amem* that enables men to fly, he could have broken his father's fall with a few words. But as it was, he couldn't save Dagayok's back, all because of Dagayok's secretiveness and selfishness...

In such a situation, what could Dagayok do? If he denied he had any such knowledge, Beksep would simply have been more resolute in his condemnation. Instead, Dagayok adopted the course of hinting that perhaps when Beksep completed all of his *bans* he might teach him this *weng amem*. I later heard privately that Dagayok himself was trying to locate such *weng amem*. The only certainty he himself had was that he didn't know.

This is one of the important corollaries of the logic of Telefol secrecy, and is implicit in the assumption that the truest and fullest possible knowledge is that which one does not possess. If my understanding of the Telefol view is correct, conventions of secrecy carry their own logic about the nature of knowledge *per se*, and this logic contains an intrinsic paradox: *that which you know is not true knowledge*. Knowing, in any ultimate sense, becomes a definitional impossibility. This is the meta-message of secrets and secrecy with the continually receding horizon of certainty and the apparently endless series of veils behind veils. Something learned at one stage is almost certain to be superseded by what is learned next. What has been presented as truth may later be exposed as incomplete, its import re-juggled.

And the process continues. Reality is thus parcelled out in several alternate versions, some more authoritative than others, but none of them certain to have the truth within its grasp. In this sense, then, the greatest single aspect of *weng amem's* import is the realization articulated by some old men that *they don't really know*. The greatest secret of all is that *nobody* knows the *real* secret.

#### viii. Magalim and the Meaning of Meaninglessness

The chief figure in Telefol cosmology is Afek, and men come to know of her through their introduction into the world of the *yolam*. In addition to Afek herself, there are other actors who have roles to play in the Afek cycle, among them Umoim, her younger brother, Kwiinagim, a wild man who raped Afek and was killed by her, and Ataanim, the Sun. Of all these subsidiary characters, Umoim is the most significant while the others serve mainly as foils for the development of the plot of the narratives. There is, however, one other figure whose place in Telefol cosmology is radically different from that of any others so far mentioned. His name is Magalim.

Afek is the ancestress and culture heroine of the Telefol people, the one who established the cultural order of the Telefolmin. Magalim is a bush spirit. Afek is most significant to Telefolmin in her legacy of *weng amem* and the details of the rites of the men's cult, as well as the series of elaborately articulated tales about her. Magalim, by contrast, intervenes and impinges upon Telefolmin frequently in the course of their lives. Curiously, he is the subject of only a single and isolated myth, one unrelated to the Afek cycle. He is something of an enigma, and in this section I will try to explicate his significance in the Telefol scheme of things.

Magalim was first introduced to me by the Pidgin term *masalai*. *Masalais* are a general category of bush spirits familiar to many New Guinea peoples (cf. Mead 1970). One of the things that struck me when I began to

elicit the Telefol names and words for the Pidgin *masalai* was that there seemed to be a plethora of them, and the bush seemed crowded with *masalai* lurking here and there. A landslide at a place called Samantemkot was attributed to a being called Samantem Kayaak ('Samantem Owner'); a man who got sick near a place called Ilimtem blamed this on Ilimtem Kayaak, another *masalai*. When I got sores after fording the Abung River I was told that this was due to a female *masalai*, an *aanangen*, who frequented the area. *Aanangen* are female beings with holes under their armpits and who have only one breast on their lefthand side; they look after and tend wild pigs, occasionally seduce men in the forest, and sometimes exchange their own children for those of careless mothers in the bush. And they cause accidents: another *aanangen* caused a tree to fall on Dlibal as he was clearing a new garden in the bush. In addition to *aanangen*, who almost always are a source of trouble, there are others in the bush, also called *masalai* in Pidgin, such as *uunungang* ('bird women') who look after birds, or *nukamin* ('marsupial people') and *nukunang* ('marsupial women') who watch over the marsupials. When discussing Bagelam, the land of the dead, I was told of the huge dog whose secret name is Bisiilki and guards the road there--he too is a *masalai*. In a myth about a huge snake, Ungkigingim, I was told that he was a *masalai* as well. Finally I began to ask how many *masalai* there were.

There were many names, my informants explained, but in fact there was only one *masalai* whose true and secret name is Magalim. In the words of one man,

Magalim is also called Bagan Kayaak or Aanang Kayaak. This means that he 'bosses' the ground. The things of the ground are his. He causes landslides and sometimes ruins gardens. He is around pools and places where the ground is opened up or is broken, or where there are caves (*tem*). He can turn himself into a snake, or a man, or a wild pig, or other things. He can turn himself into all kinds of things. Men may see many things, but there is truly only one, Magalim. He has always been here, even before Afek came.

According to another,

Sometimes they call him Aanang Kayaak or Tenum Misim or Magalim. They believe in him, they still believe in him yet. He's not a man. This snake [Ungkigingim] was Magalim. It was like a child of his, that's all, and this thing came up and they saw it. He was around a long time before, before Afek came. He has no origin (*magam*--also means 'meaning' or 'explanation'). And so it went--they believed in him and this snake child came up. They see lots of things, but there is only one Magalim. He bosses birds and lizards and marsupials and wild pigs--all the things of the bush.

Again,

Magalim is only one, but he can turn himself into many things, you may see many things, but they are not truly Magalim. He just turns himself into things. We don't know what he will do. When men see him, he lies and deceives them. We don't know what he will do--he can be both friend (*dup*) and enemy (*waasi*). He's a bad one. He's *magalo*, we don't know about him.

And:

*Nukamin* and *nukunang* look after marsupials. *Aanangen* look after wild pigs. Magalim himself looks after snakes and eels. All these things are just names. The true thing is Magalim--it is really just Magalim who looks after these things. It has always been this way, since before Afek came. All the things of the bush are Magalim's children, *Magalim man*. If you finish these things, Magalim is their father and he will repay it with sickness, or he will send bad dreams and you will die. His small names are Bagan Kayaak or Aanang Kayaak because he bosses the ground. They call him Tenum Miitim because he looks after all the men. But his big name is just Magalim. Bisiilki is another name, because he is quick and greedy like a dog, but Bisiilki is Magalim.

This is the familiar problem of "the one and the many" (cf. Evans-Pritchard 1954), for Magalim is both ubiquitous in the bush and localized. He is a "shape shifter" (cf. Campbell 1972), presenting many manifestations which are visible and can be described (including spirit beings such as *aanangen* or *nukunang*), but none of these are truly him. He is both immanent and transcendent.

He is also a deceiver, though not quite the same as a Trickster. (cf. Radin 1956). His being pertains to that which is hidden and invisible. Occasionally, men encounter Magalim in the bush and have visions, but what

they see is never truly him and never precisely what it seems, though it may be full of significance for men's affairs. He may drive people mad, either temporarily or permanently, but he can also bestow powers on individuals. For example, Kenusep's mother was mad, and this was the result of her intercourse with Magalim in the bush. She refused to marry and was in the habit of wandering from place to place in the bush, harvesting taro from the gardens of others; the stalks that she thus gained were carried to yet other gardens, where she planted them and harvested yet more taro and so on. Eventually, she was shot by one of the men of her village, who had become exasperated with her behaviour, leaving Kenusep as an orphan. Though many people looked after him, they still felt him to be at a disadvantage--his mother had cleared no land herself, and nobody knew whether Magalim had set land aside for him or not. But from an early age he showed outstanding initiative and strength, and this was attributed to the fact that Magalim was his father. In 1974 he demonstrated his strength and stamina by winning a five-mile cross country race in a strong field, as he has done many times since. Though an orphan, Kenusep is preternaturally powerful, for he is a son of Magalim.

Though Magalim deceives, encounters with him can also lift the veil that normally stands between what men may see and what they may not; the seers (*usong*) who have the ability to see in reflections the spirits causing illness acquire their vision as the result of an encounter with Magalim in the bush. To yet others he has given the ability to see into Bagelam, the land of the dead which he guards. And as Magalim is the master of all the things of the bush, so he is the one to whom men turn for success in hunting. Telefolmin know that when a man goes hunting his success does not depend on whether or not there is actually any game present, for game is always in the bush. The successful hunter is the one who is able to *see* game, and though this may be aided by various cult spirits, it ultimately depends upon Magalim's willingness to let the game be seen. It is for this reason,

regardless of what other measures may be taken, that hunters are in the habit of asking Magalim for his assistance in the forest, and it is for the same reason that they take a leaf or two of tobacco or some sweet ripe bananas and hang them in the branches of trees as offerings to him. But this is no guarantee of success, for Magalim cannot be coerced, and men are uncertain whether he takes these offerings or not: sometimes the offering is gone, sometimes it remains; sometimes men see game, and sometimes it remains hidden. They don't know whether or not Magalim listens to their requests, for in the end it is *his* affair.

Magalim is essentially capricious, for his nature is non-reciprocal (cf. Burridge 1969). Men who go about alone in the forest--particularly at night to hunt marsupials--may be tossed from mountaintop to mountaintop and left stranded high up in the forest canopy for no other reason than this is what Magalim does. Hillsides crumble and slip down slopes, carrying the forest and whatever gardens there are into the streams below. Streams which can normally be waded may rise suddenly, sweeping gardens with them in their rush to the Sepil. Sinkholes and cave entrances in the limestone occasionally well up with water, the trickles issuing from their mouths instantaneously transformed into torrents that uproot and toss about the trees of the bush. Occasionally men view what appear to be garden clearings on distant mountain flanks, only to find that they comprise vast stretches of forest felled in a tangle without the mark of a single axe. All these things are the actions of Magalim.

Magalim is autonomous, *a priori*, and non-reciprocal, and we learn something of his nature from the sole myth Telefolmin tell about him:

Before, at Telefolip, there were a man and a woman, Dununagim and his wife Biyalomen. These two were married and they went out to Dugunbil to make *yol* salt. They made salt and then slept in the bush, and that night Dugunagim had intercourse with Biyalomen. He had intercourse with Biyalomen, but some one else's penis went into her at the same time--this was

Magalim, he was having intercourse with her too, but they didn't know. They went back to Telefolip and Biyalomen was pregnant. Dugunagim heard word that his friends in Bultem had some things for him, so he went out over the mountains to the source of adzes (*fubi mit*) and *bonang* and bows (*uunuk mit*). He went to get a *fubi* and bring it back. After he had gone Biyalomen was in her garden one day and her husband came up to her. She saw him and then the two had intercourse there in the garden. But this wasn't her husband--she thought so, but it was really the bad man, Tenum Mafagim. This was Magalim. They had intercourse and then he disappeared and she went home to Telefolip, and thought to herself, "ai! My husband's in Bultem, and the next day it was time for her to bear her child. She went out into her garden in Metambil and when she was there her waters broke and she gave birth. She gave birth to a child, but it was no child, it was a snake child, Ungkigingim. His face was strange, it was different (*sinik migik*). This Ungkigingim was the bad snake, Inap Mafagim. He was Magalim. She saw him and said "oo! I've borne a snake child!". He was there, but she didn't give him her breast. She put him in a small shelter made of dry sugar stalks (*kwet fubuuk am*), and then she split some large bananas and arranged them around him, like a fence, and then under him she placed some banana leaves. When she did this, she left him there and went back to Telefolip. He ate all kinds of insects and spiders around the place, and when Biyalomen came back the next day to see him, he was huge, as thick around as the base of a tall hoop vine. When she came, he wanted to eat her, but she said, "no! You can't eat me--I'm not some other woman, I'm your mother!". Later, Biyalomen's brother Biyalengim came to see the child and Ungkigingim too wanted to eat him. But Biyalengim said, "no! You can't eat me--I'm not some other man, I'm your mother's brother!". And so it went. Biyalomen would go out to make her gardens in the bush and sometimes Ungkigingim would go with her, sometimes he would just roam around the bush eating spiders, and all the while he grew larger and larger. When Biyalomen went back to Telefolip, Ungkigingim would go up to Metamtibin and watch along the fork in the path there. He waited there. One day Dugunagim came back along this track from Bultem with the *fubi* he had got. He came up and he saw this Ungkigingim, and Ungkigingim saw him too. Ungkigingim asked him who he was, and Dugunagim didn't recognize him and was getting ready to fight him, so he answered "I have just come back from *fubi mit*!". Ungkigingim didn't think about his father, he just swallowed him whole. He swallowed him whole and then he became really huge, his father was inside his belly. When dark came, he climbed up into the branches of a *filim* tree to sleep. That night there was rain and thunder. Biyalomen had been looking for Ungkigingim all night until dawn, and when dawn came she went to the fork in the track at Metamtibin. She looked around, and she saw Ungkigingim up in the tree, and she saw her husband's



*fubi* and penis gourd and cane waist loops lying on the ground. And she saw Ungkikingim's belly. She saw all this, and then she said to Ungkikingim, "what did you do?". He made no answer but instead stuck his tongue out at her and waved it from side to side, "Did you eat your father?" Again he waved his tongue at her, and Biyalomen knew. She ran off to Telefolip and gathered the men together there and said to them, "my son just ate his father!". The men were all angry, and took up their adzes and their bows and set off to kill Ungkikingim. One man only, Biyalengim, tried to stop them, saying, "he's my child, you can't kill him". But Biyalengim wasn't a good man, he was a bad man (*temum mafak*) and was small and ugly and they didn't listen to him. All the men went up to Metamtibin and surrounded the *filim* tree where Ungkikingim was. They tried to shoot arrows at him, but this didn't work and the arrows fell harmlessly to the ground. Then they began hacking at the base of the *filim* tree with their adzes. When they did this, Ungkikingim said to them, "all my father's brothers (*aaningal*) should line up on one side, and all my mother's brothers (*ogosal*) should line up on the other side--that way it will be easier to kill me". He said this, and they believed him and did what he said. They chopped and they chopped and the tree began to sway back and forth, first to this side, then to that side. When it leaned one way, Ungkikingim would lean the other way and make it swing back, each time glaring down at the men below and frightening them. They chopped and they chopped, and finally the tree was about to fall. It swayed over towards Ungkikingim's mother's brothers, but as it was about to collapse Ungkikingim leapt across to the other side and fell on his father's brothers and killed them. He killed many--Dolapnok was killed, Isanbagayap was killed, Mitammak was killed--many men. The other men wanted to kill him, but he chased them, chased them back across the Ok Ifi, chased them up towards Ilintigin. Then he went up and into the swamp called Kulinipkumun, between Ilintigin and Mimtigin. He went there and then the men followed with their bows and arrows. They tried to shoot at him, but it didn't work. They took long sticks and tried to poke around in the water for him, but they didn't get him, and instead fished out the taro called *kuliim*. They kept up at this, but they couldn't get him. Then he came out of the water and was huge and began to chase them. They were frightened and shot their arrows at him and then ran back towards Telefolip. Ungkikingim came and stayed a while at Mofumtulumdiim among the stones there. There was a crocodile there (*maatup*) that was so frightened when he came up that it ran away down the Sepik. All the men came back to Telefolip, they were going to run away and prepared to leave. There they saw Biyalengim. Biyalengim had just come back from gardening, and his penis gourd had broken, so he had gotten a *boolkum* vine to tie it back together. There all the strong and handsome men

(*tenum kasak*) told Biyalengim, the ugly one (*tenum mafak*), what had happened. They told him this Ungkigingim was going to kill them all and was headed for the village, and they said he should run away with them while there was time. Biyalengim paid them no attention, and merely put his netbag and firewood and taro leaves in his house. He told them, "it's all right, if my child wants to kill me, he can". Then he took up his bow and a small *biyal bilil* arrow (normally used for hunting marsupials) and went through the hoop pines behind Telefolip and waited at the junction of the men's and women's paths for his sister's child to appear. Ungkigingim came up, and when he saw Biyalengim he stuck out his tongue and waved it from side to side. Then he came down into the hoop pine grove, turned his head, and bared his heart to Biyalengim so he might shoot him. Ungkigingim told Biyalengim to shoot him in the heart; and as Biyalengim drew his bow he called his sister's name, saying, "Biyalomen bubul waaga!" [Biyalomen's heart is it!]. Ungkigingim died on the spot, and his tail thrashed around and broke up the earth in the grove and broke up the land around the women's path. His skin shed itself and rotted and his blood and flesh fell off and rotted too--some of this can be seen in the bamboo thicket growing near the hoop pine grove. Then Biyalengim took a bamboo knife and cut up what remained of Ungkigingim. Men came from all over and they distributed his bones to them for arrow work, for the work of *un mit*. These bones are hot for the fight. Biyalengim's bamboo knife is still here now in Telefolip, in the house of Suumengim. This story is *weng amem*. This snake child was Ungkigingim, and he was like Magalim's son--but he was Magalim himself. They killed this snake, but Magalim didn't die--he lives still.

Through a ruse and by intruding unseen Magalim is the author of his own birth, and as the snake Ungkigingim he grows to huge proportions overnight, though his human 'mother' refuses to suckle him. He swallows his human father whole, and when the man's kin come to avenge the death it is he--through trickery as well as through his awesome strength--who kills them. He then leads his pursuers a merry chase, and when they try to kill him in the swamp of Kulinipkumun ("Kulinip is pregnant"), they come up with a new variety of taro instead. Finally, he goes to Telefolip where his mother's brother, who had tried to protect him, is shown how to kill him, even though Biyalengim has nothing but a poor *biyal* arrow to use. Ungkigingim leaves his bones behind as relics for warfare and hunting, and though Ungkigingim (who was both

Magalim and like his child) died, Magalim himself remains. This tale of course has many different implications--I was told by an audience of senior initiates that when I narrated our Oedipus story I had actually stolen the tale of Ungkigingim, or else our ancestors had forgotten that we had brought it with us when we left Telefolip. They followed this with a point by point analysis, showing how in our Oedipus tale cross-roads and thunder go together, how sons kill fathers, and so on; how we had forgotten that the Sphinx and Oedipus were one and the same person, how a father's neglect and failure to acknowledge a son leads to disaster. All of this is present in the tale. But what is more important is that it conveys in words a sense of who Magalim is, a difficult task, since Magalim defies definition.

Magalim is without origin, without *magam*; he was around before Afek arrived; he is present now, long after Afek ceased to be active in human affairs; he will always be, even after Telefolmin pass out of existence. He is the world. Like the ground with which he is associated, Magalim is eternal, without beginning or end.

Magalim is paradoxical and puzzling, and not only for the ethnographer, for--as Telefolmin say--he is unknown and hidden to them. But before we go further in trying to determine just what Magalim's significance is for Telefolmin, let's review what Telefolmin know and how they come to know it.

The progress of a Telefol youth to manhood is charted by his passage through the successive stages of initiation. In all, this is a process covering perhaps fifteen years or more and participation in a half dozen different rites. Though, as we have seen, there is a great deal of variation from one rite to the next, there are certain features that characterize them as a whole. In most of them the initiands are removed at one stage or another from the village proper and undergo various privations and trials in the bush, including beatings with switches and firebands, sleeping motionless

and exposed in the forest without fire, being showered with hot coals. In many of the *bans* beatings follow assurances that all will be well, and threats are sometimes shown to be shams. Deception and trickery play a large part here.

There are numerous rationales for such treatment of initiands. Often there is an esoteric explanation unknown to the initiands which is couched in terms of folk physiology, as when beatings are thought necessary to loosen the novices' skin so that further growth may take place, or when flogging with nettles and showering with hot coals is thought to impart 'heat' to them in the interests of ritual efficacy. Side by side with these accounts are more public rationales, as when the initiands are being made to "pay" for previous bad behaviour or are "paying" for future privileges, or when men say that the whole process simply toughens up the youths so that they will become hardy, strong, able to endure hardship and fearless in the face of danger.

But while each of these rationales has some reality for those who make them, it is also clear that something else is involved. Men who speak of their experience as initiands stress not only their fear and apprehension, but also their confusion and uncertainty during the course of the initiations. Conventional expectations and certainties no longer hold and the initiands are, in Turner's phrase (1969:86) "beside themselves". Here we can recall the words of one of the *mafuumdet*: "I sit here at the base of the wild pandanus, the cold makes me shiver, I hear something down below, but I don't know what it is...".

Here too we should recall the youths' instruction in the *weng amem* of the *Afek sang*, in their progressive introduction to the various myths of the cycle and the serial revelations it embodies. Here, at some point, it becomes clear to the novices that the more they learn the less they know, for there is always a secret beyond what they have learned, always something that remains. One of the consequences is a certain amount of skepticism and uncertainty,

especially among younger initiates: when questioned on the details of the myth cycle, they express doubt that their knowledge is complete and harbour suspicions that their seniors have withheld information from them in the interests of protecting secrecy or for reasons that remain hidden. This is consistent with a theory of esoteric knowledge that maintains that such knowledge is true and valuable in inverse proportion to the number of those who share it (see Jones 1976, Barth 1975).

This view of the contingency of revelations of hidden realities is consonant with experience, for what youths are told at one stage is revised and in some senses contradicted in subsequent stages. Not only that, but the process of revelation and revision continues well beyond the formal initiation sequence. Thus, it is only *after* a man has completed his series of initiations that he is allowed to participate in--or even be explicitly aware of--the secret *iman dung* ceremony. *Iman dung* is basically a first-fruits rite deemed essential to the continued prosperity of taro gardens. The ceremony is cloaked in secrecy--key phrases are performed silently at night and in the bush--and its very existence is carefully concealed. The myth which serves as a charter for *iman dung* links the *Afek sang* concerning the origin of taro with the narratives concerning the origins of the *katibam* and *dungam* and impresses upon the men the fact that, among other things, when they are eating taro they eat Afek's vaginal secretions (ordinarily regarded with revulsion). In addition, the rite involves the secret consumption of birds, marsupials, snakes, and frogs in the *yolam*, a violation of one of the first of the tabus surrounding the *yolam* that youths are taught on their first entry into the system. In this, the *iman dung* is merely the latest of a long series of instances in which men are required to do what they were previously taught was forbidden (*amem*).

Taken as a whole, a man's entry into the world of the *yolam* and his participation in the esoteric world of the cult can be viewed as a series of

shocks (cf. Schutz 1970:254-5) followed by a revision of his previous understandings of the world, to be followed by more shocks and subsequent reshaping. If part of the project of initiations is to make revelations--to give knowledge and open their eyes--it also seems that part of the process is a matter of producing disorientation, confusion, and ambiguity. Perhaps then it is not so mysterious that the novices are expressly told *not* to think about what they are told, but merely to listen and allow it to "sink in".

This raises the question of what esoteric knowledge is "about". On one level it is possible to detect a trajectory of movement from outer to inner layers of knowledge. The general message of the earlier and outer layer is that significant aspects of the cultural order were ordained by Afek, and most important among Afek's works was the establishment of the precedents for the rituals upon which Telefolmin depend for success in their enterprises. At a deeper and subsequent level, myth becomes more than a patent for instrumental usages and provides a rationale for these usages and indeed for why things are as they are. Beyond this, however, they also show that the way things came about was through a series of errors and transgressions so that the present world is an impoverished and flawed successor to the world of Afek, one that was ruined by man's greed for knowledge and his attempts to assert control. Along with this goes the general message about knowledge: knowledge has a relative and tentative quality, and the knowledge that is most secret is that which is fullest.

The overall message of the cult is therefore ambiguous, and this is expressed in attitudes about the relation of Afek and Magalim. Afek is the source, the origin of all that is meaningful in the Telefol world. Both meaning and origin are conveyed by a single word, *magam*. Whenever I asked for the definition of a word, I asked for the *weng gamam*, the 'speech origin/meaning'. When a man tells his genealogy, he is giving his *tenum gamam*, which is both explanation of who he is and an account of his origins. Indeed,

explanations for Telefolmin very often become a matter of accounting for the origins of something, or how it came to be, and it is in this sense that the myths of the Afek cycle comprise the *magam* of Telefol culture as a whole. If meaning is figured by the word *magam*, its denial is encompassed in that which is *magalo*, that which is unknown, opaque, without discernible origin or meaning. In this sense, *magalo* is the negation of *magam*.<sup>3</sup> Thus, stories and narratives are generally called *sang*, but rumours whose factual basis and meaning are unknown are called *magalo sang*. Things which are unseen and of which no direct knowledge is possible are *magalo*, just as men use the word *magalo* to say "I don't know". The name Magalim is the personification of *magalo*, through the addition of *-im*, a masculine name suffix. Magalim is the hidden one, the unknown one, the meaningless one.

When we compare Afek and Magalim as figures, a number of contrasts become evident: Afek is associated with the village and the prototypical cultural pursuit, taro gardening, while Magalim is of the bush and has associations with hunting; Afek came and founded Telefolip and then died, leaving a legacy of knowledge which men transmit to successive generations; Magalim is ever-present and largely unknown, except by the unpredictable encounters initiated by him. Afek can thus be taken to betoken the determinacy of rationalization and human order, while Magalim signifies--among other things--the indeterminacy of events in the world. And this accords nicely with the implicit ambiguity of knowledge and ritual in the men's cult, for initiates say that regardless of the performances of ritual, all enterprises ultimately depend upon Magalim--not upon their *weng amem* or their spells. For is it not true, they reason, that Afek and all men ever since "sit down on top of the ground", that is, rest ultimately upon Magalim?

That Magalim stands somehow in opposition to the cultural order is evident in a number of ways. In discussing Magalim, men often remark that he "works against Afek", "always ruins Afek's work", "or that he breaks her

'law'"--for example, by tricking men into killing their friends,<sup>4</sup> The relation between Magalim and human order can be approached in other ways. Awareness and rationality are conveyed by the word *sinik*. *Sinik* is that portion of a person which comprises his soul, shadow, reflection, image, vitality, personality, and awareness (cf. Barth 1975:101). After death it is the *sinik* which becomes a *bagel* and travels to Bagelam. Trauma of any sort, especially surprise or fear, can lead to a flight of *sinik*, causing a loss of awareness. Sometimes this is only momentary, as when a person is startled or awakened suddenly. If the absence of the *sinik* is of longer duration, the result is a faint or loss of consciousness; if the loss is permanent, the result is death, and ultimately death may be defined as the permanent separation of one's *sinik* and body. Many of Magalim's activities and associations can be shown to be inimical to *sinik*. One instance is the belief that encounters with Magalim can result in temporary or permanent madness, being the confusion of *sinik*. "Bad dreams" are another case in point. Even the activities of seers and mediums (*usong*), whose power is derived from encounters with Magalim, depend on the temporary separation of *sinik* and the body as their awareness enters the hidden world.

Magalim is intimately associated with water and coldness, which also pose dangers to *sinik*. When enemies were killed an occasional alternative to eating the body was to toss it into a stream. In so doing the *sinik* was extinguished so that the victim could not even become a *momoyok*--"he ended with his name".

Though Magalim may be the cause of sores or illness for many, he rarely kills except through accidents (e.g., falls). The one exception to this is that infants are particularly vulnerable to him. This seems to be partly because their *sinik* does not seem firmly bound to them, and small children are indeed often startled, afraid, or surprised; there is a common action performed by mothers to bind their children's *sinik* to them in such



instances.<sup>5</sup> Further, a mother will be sure to anoint her baby with red ochre on its first and perhaps subsequent sojourns to the bush, and this is done to protect the child from Magalim (see Brongersma and Venema 1962: plate 12).

Finally, we should recall that *sinik* is an attribute not only of men, but of all domestic crops and animals as opposed to those of the wild. These are all things which come from Afek, which men nurture and look after. But the wild things of the bush have no *sinik*--they are Magalim's children. Here we may once again contrast the domestic pig (*kong*) with the wild pig (*saaman*). One of the evidences that *kong* have *sinik* is their awareness of the moral terms of relationships, their ability to feel shame, their engagement in human relationships; the *saaman* of Magalim's domain are without *sinik*, are amoral, predatory, and antagonistic. To all the things of *sinik* Magalim stands opposed.

In all this we must be careful, however, for we err if we view the significance of Magalim in purely negative terms, or if we relegate him to a mere residual category of experience. Indeed, Magalim's role in Telefol religion is essentially positive and creative.

Magalim is transcendent in many senses: he eludes form, is a shape-shifter, refuses to be contained within conventional categories and rationalizations. As Bisiilki he is the Greedy One that devours travelers on their way to Bagelam; as Tenum Misim he is the Generous One who makes game visible and permits access to the unseen world. He is without origin (*magam*) or end, he is eternal and indeterminate. Most of all, he is beyond knowledge: the meaningless, hidden, unknown. In all of these respects he transcends the limits of human knowledge, is always just beyond the field of vision. It is this which Telefolmin try to articulate when they say they don't know him. He is inexplicable: *Magalim imi magam be magalo kwa*. Magalim's *magam* is *magalo*. The Meaningless One's meaning is meaningless.

Turner has written of how the Ndembu attempt to articulate what cannot be put into words or even be conceived in Chihamba--through the use of paradox the Ndembu try to approach "the act of being" beyond the appearances of existence, and in so doing they go beyond the necessarily discontinuous character of systems of articulate thought (1969:83-7); 1975:18-9). For Telefolmin, Magalim is beyond the boundaries of the conceivable, but as "being" and event he is continually manifest in experience, for Magalim subsumes all experience which eludes the framework of rationalization.

If we view human experience from the perspective of a tension between event and rationalization (Burridge, pers. comm.) we can see how both poles are recognized in Telefol thought with recourse to Magalim and Afek respectively. As event, Magalim constantly prods awareness with new and singular experience. That much of this is untoward is undeniable and explicit in Telefol thought. But the creative side is recognized as well.

Magalim often comes to mind whenever things go wrong, and he offers an implicit critique of the technological aspects of Telefol religion. The recognition that success depends upon Magalim is a recognition that reality will often take its own course and refuse to fit or be coerced, regardless of what ritual measures are adopted (cf. Douglas 1966:200ff). In the process, Magalim offers an invitation to Telefolmin to consider reality from new perspectives, and though this may be adumbrated in the madness which he sometimes inflicts on others, the invitation is sometimes taken up with innovative results.

In pre-contact times Magalim's gift of vision with two eyes (*tiin aloop*) permitted seers to grope with the problems posed by illness, often diagnosed as transgressions against *usong* and sometimes located in *tamoon* sorcery with which neighbours might redress grievances against each other. More recently, twenty-five years of contact had culminated in 1974 in a crisis in the *yolam* cult. The inroads of missions and the establishment of a

government school proved to be events to which Afek's legacy was vulnerable. A prohibition on exposure burial precluded the possibility of acquiring the bones of outstanding men as the *men amem* of the *yolam*. The breach between living and dead was widened and completely beyond men's reach, and now the number of *usong* in a *yolam* could only dwindle and be reduced by attrition. Besides this, young boys eager to become men in the world beyond Telefolmin's ranges wanted to become literate and were reluctant about undergoing initiation--the presence of an alien administration prohibited compulsion, and they were allowed to go their own way. The overall result of these developments was the complete loss of the dead to the living and an ever-growing gap between Telefol men and the younger generation of boys: a rupture of the cult system in particular and in the society as a whole.

In 1973 there arose a handful of new seers (*usong*), all of whom were men in their twenties, all of whom acquired their vision through encounters with Magalim, and all of whom presented the innovative possibility of establishing contact with the recently dead, who were forced to depart immediately for Bagelam because they were buried in the ground. In 1974 their ranks were joined by a thirteen year old schoolboy who had also had an encounter with Magalim. The boy was unique in this and also in the fact that he had been hurried through several initiations by Femsep, a senior kinsman who feared that his stock of esoteric lore would soon be lost (his sons had left for work on the coast). What emerged from this was a movement, called Ok Bembem, and misleadingly called *kako kals* ('cargo cult') in Pidgin. The issues to which the cult was addressed, however, had 'cargo' as only a peripheral element.<sup>6</sup> Seances were held in numerous locations during which the boy's *sinik* would go to Bagelam while that of a dead person would come and speak through him. This was a significant innovation in several ways. The boy insisted that the seances could include women and children in the audience (departing from cult practice but incorporating features of both the classroom

and church services), and he was particularly adept as a medium between deceased *children* and their living parents (thus reversing the normal direction of communication between spirits and the living). In addition, he was able to report that Bagelam was not like a Christian heaven (nobody there had seen Jesus Christ), but was not very different from the land of the living: the dead had to work hard too, and they also had the new things that Telefolmin had come to regard as part of their lives, such as clothing and tinned food.

Ok Bembem was not widely accepted, at least not without question. Mission adherents (who are still a minority of Telefolmin) were strongly opposed, and a great many others were skeptical. For some it had an appeal, particularly in the case of those who had lost children whom they wished to contact. By the time I left in late 1975, the fate of Ok Bembem was still uncertain: the novelty had worn off for many, but it continued to hold the interest of others. What the cult does indicate is that Magalim provides the open door through which the possibilities of new awareness may be approached.

## CHAPTER 5

## CONCLUSION--TELEFOL RELIGION AND WHAT IT MEANS

"If there is one belief (however the facts resist it) that unites us all, from the evangelists to those who argue away inconvenient portions of their texts, and those who spin large plots to accommodate the discrepancies and dissonances into some larger scheme, it is this conviction that somehow, in some occult fashion, if we could only detect it, everything will be found to hang together" (Kermode 1979:72).

It is an anthropological commonplace that religion operates in human society to foster a sense of the wholeness of things, establish coherence, promote integration, tie together the strands of experience, underwrite a sense of security, minimize anxiety, and so on (cf. Geertz 1966; Malinowski 1948; Spiro 1968). It is also the case that there is a fairly widespread notion that religion offers illusory solutions to real problems, that it masks the world (a "false consciousness" theory), and that it engenders a specifically conservative ideology whose roots are in fantasy and irrationality. Thus it is that religion can be painted as the tool of the powerful who may use "supernatural sanctions" to mask their real power (or stand in its stead), while at the same time offering imaginary hope to the weak, who are kept meek in its service.

If we look at the men's cult in Telefolmin from any of these perspectives we will find evidence in support of all of them. For example, it is clear that the cult is organizationally important and provides not only the nucleus of men in community at the village level but also serves--through the Telefolip--to integrate all the Telefol villages together in collective rituals. We can thus say that the cult, as the organizational dimension of Telefol religion, is critical as the fundamental bonding component of Telefol

social structure, and this is ideologically reflected in the role of the cult in the struggle against entropy. Here too we find that the thrust of the broadest-scale rites (*mafuum ban*, *iman ban*, *un baal*) is to promote success in the projects of producing men, growing taro, hunting, and warfare. In all of these respects the *yolam* and its cult serve to promote security, integration, and the order of Telefol society: it provides the hub around which both the social structure and men's most immediate concerns turn. From the point of view of social structural analysis, the cult engenders solidarities (Telefolmin vs. others, men vs. women) and shapes the divisions of the society--it is the means whereby Telefol society becomes more than an abstraction, where the world of ritual and religion carry the functional load taken up by the political maneuverings of big men and the mobilization of massive exchange relations in other New Guinea societies (particularly those of the Highlands, e.g., the Melpa [Strathern 1971], the Enga [Bulmer 1960; Meggitt 1967, 1974], and Chimbu [Brown 1970]).

If we shift our focus to the concerns of individuals rather than the constitution of the society as a whole, we find the cult can be seen to play a similar role. Thus it is that with the activities of the cult--especially those rites concerning taro production--men may be said to foster confidence in their actions in the mundane world, and (following Malinowski's line of reasoning) this is the socially organized use of magic to lend security to men in their attempts at what can be a risky and insecure business, the production of subsistence crops in an environment which is not always amenable to man's efforts. Thus we can say that the rituals of the cult confer the illusion of control over processes that are basically outside the realm of human mastery. It is also possible to say that the intensive instruction given initiands in the cult serves to perpetuate and inculcate the accumulated articulations of the Telefol world view as embodied in myth. Here we can say, then, that in a

general way the cult imbues experience with meaning and establishes a frame of reference whose coherence makes the world intelligible.

Turning to the negative side of the ledger, it is also possible to argue that Telefol religion promotes the mystification of some of the central contradictions of the society, especially with regard to the fundamental issue of the arrangement of relations between men and women. The strict exclusion of women from cult activities makes the world of ritual and religion an entirely male domain over which they exercise a thoroughgoing monopoly. With recourse to the illusory and carefully stage-managed dramatization of men's asserted control over higher powers, they not only enforce their hegemony over hunting and warfare, but pre-empt the role of women in the domains of childbirth and gardening by asserting control over the maturation of men (their transformation from boys to full initiates, both a physiological and cultural reconstruction seen in terms of metaphors of birth) and over the growth of gardens. Here, then, the two most significant spheres of female productivity--childbirth and gardening--are denied their status as authentic feminine contributions because men usurp the essential roles of controlling, directing, and ultimately guaranteeing the fruition of these contributions. Thus the world of the cult functions at an ideological level to negate men's *de facto* dependence upon women as the source of children and taro (and sustenance in general) by interposing the illusion of ritual control between women and their consciousness of the realities of the case. It thus serves to enhance men's power by concealing or screening off those aspects of reality which threaten male hegemony. As a result, a situation in which the sexual division of labour could only under the most generous terms be viewed as complementary (since women provide the largest increments of labour in gardening and are the ones who physically produce children and run the risks--very real--of childbirth) is transformed into one in which men are ideologically--if not *really*--the senior partners, the ones whose role is decisive. Thus, while women are

only tacitly acknowledged as the source of all that men value, the cult both in theory and practice counters this by placing men at centre stage as the culturally defined controllers of the fate of all. Thus the final and fundamental contradiction--at least, when viewed from the outside--the fact that women are indeed the basis of power, is masked by the ideology of the men's cult which argues that the ultimate control of such power forever lies in men's hands and, further, that men exercise such power as a service to the community as a whole.

From this point of view the peripheral and almost invisible position of the *dungam*--the house in which women are confined and in which they give birth--can be seen as a clear expression of ideological masking. Here it is possible to detect an underlying assertion of complementarity between the sexes--women are forbidden access to the *yolam*, men must not approach the *dungam*--that is all the more telling because of the illusion upon which it rests. In the *dungam* women bring forth life to the exclusion of men--it is, as men say, the road by which all men enter the world. But women confined in the *dungam* are in effect invisible and socially "off-limits"--what takes place in the *dungam* takes place beyond the circle of houses in the village, behind everyone's back, and out of sight and awareness. This is where live people--all Telefolmin--originate, but is swept under the carpet, as it were. Thus it is that while there are certain similarities between the *yolam* and the *dungam*--those that make for a sense of complementarity--there are also quite dramatic differences, with the combined effect of asserting the priority of the *yolam* over the *dungam*. In this manner the men, with their exclusive access and control in the realm of the occult and the world of spirits (*usong*) first share the stage with women and then upstage them. Thus while it is possible to see the *yolam* as being analogous to the *dungam*--in the former the men are intimately connected with the dead who are asserted to be powerful in promoting life, in the latter the women are the source of children and bring



forth new life--the striking differences between the two are all the more instructive. The *dungam* is invisible to anyone standing inside the village, inside the part of the world accorded precedence and value in the scheme of things; the *yolam*, the mother house, is not, however, tucked out of sight--it virtually dominates the village, both physically and ideologically.

This understanding of the relation of the *yolam* and *dungam* is confirmed by some of the details of Telefol conception theory. Here one finds two peculiarities: men are extremely reluctant to discuss the details of conception, protesting that such things are "dirty stories" (*sang mafak*), that the entire matter is disgusting, that men should not even *think* about such things--and some argue that this is *anem* to men and is properly known only to women. At the same time, it develops that the men and the women hold different but systematically related theories of conception. With regard to the first matter, it was only with some difficulty that I managed to get men to speak to me about conception, and those who did explained that they were telling me such things only as an act of friendship. According to the men, a foetus is formed by the combination of sexual fluids of men and women as a result of intercourse. Thus the mother's vaginal secretions (*nok kul*, 'vagina *kul*'--in other contexts *kul* simply denotes white viscous bodily fluids, in particular pus) and the father's semen (*et ok*, 'penis water') together make up the body of the growing child. It is for this reason that one act of intercourse is deemed insufficient for conception, since there must be some accumulation of semen for the foetus to form; at the same time, once pregnancy has advanced beyond the cessation of menstruation, intercourse should cease, lest the additional semen go to produce a second foetus and twins be made, making for a dangerous and difficult birth. Here is where the men's theory of conception ends, a fairly simple and thoroughly cognatic version of how children come into being.

The women are aware of this theory and they confirm it. But in addition they say that this is an incomplete account of the facts at issue.

According to the women, this only accounts for the formation of the flesh and blood of the foetus. The bones of the child, however, have another source not mentioned by the men: the bones are formed by an accumulation of womb blood (i.e., menstrual blood, *nok isak*). It is this that accounts for the cessation of menstruation with pregnancy, and thus it is--according to the women's version--that a person's bones (*kun* = also 'strength') are derived exclusively from his or her mother without any corresponding male contribution. The ideological implication is relatively straightforward: it is the women, and not the men, who have the predominant role in producing children, and the men's reluctance to discuss the "dirty" (*mafak*, *ninak-so*) details of the process--along with their professed ignorance--serves to mask this and suppress a public acknowledgement of the issue. At the same time, it is the case that the bones of the dead are retrieved and brought into the *yolam*--appropriated, we might say. These are the major relics of the men's cult which, it will be recalled, must be isolated from sexuality (recent intercourse) and feminine procreative powers. So it is that through the various tabus and other mechanisms of the cult that men can have their cake and eat it too: menstruation and childbirth are both bloody messes that are dangerous and are exorcised from the arena of public life, while men gain control of the bones (formed of *precisely* the substance held in such ill repute, menstrual blood) which play a central role in men's cult life. And so the *dungam* (signifying women's natural and "real" productivity) is both exploited and brushed aside in favour of the *yolam* (signifying men's ritual and "illusory" productivity).

By now it should be clear, then, that it is indeed possible to see that much of Telefol religion serves to perpetuate male supremacy through ideological sleight-of-hand, one of the most potent means of which is the masking and concealment of contradictions in the society at large. All of this is readily apparent to the outside observer and may be confirmed with recourse to different kinds of evidence. But here caution in interpretation

seems required. We have already seen how it is equally possible to see Telefol religion as a source of integration and coherence and as an ideological system that serves to prevent people from understanding what is going on. While it is possible to reconcile these interpretations (particularly if we subordinate one to the other) it seems to me that they both raise problems that neither of them is capable of resolving. The Telefol men's cult may both be a device for stabilizing what men see as a precarious world and at the same time serve as an elaborate instrument of male hegemony enhanced by secrecy and carefully managed illusions. But such interpretations--while valid--do not really go far enough and are flawed by their failure to consider some critical questions posed by the character of the initiation process. Further, though this may be more difficult to demonstrate, it seems to be a serious misreading of the case to presume that Telefol religion is founded upon falsehood, convenient (i.e., socially useful) fictions, or necessary illusions--let alone out-and-out flights from reality.

What escapes these various interpretive courses is an appreciation not simply of what Telefol religion means in terms of the society as a whole, but what it means to its practitioners. We can legitimately and fruitfully view Telefol (or any other) religion in the context of social relations, but this may well tell us more about the latter than the former. Rather than pursue the sociological dimension of Telefol religion, I choose instead to consider a problem posed by the material that can only be grasped if we understand Telefol religion as it informs men about their position in the world.

The problem, most simply put, is this: Telefol religion is riddled with paradox and contradiction (cf. Barth 1975:235-8) and rather than evading contradiction (which might be assumed to be ideologically convenient) it *dramatizes and elaborates* the discrepancies and dissonances of Telefol culture. This is a point of overriding importance, and a failure to come to

terms with it precludes any serious understanding of what Telefol religion is about. Indeed, it is only by recognizing and according due weight to this problem that the content of the elaborate initiation scheme and the layers of esoteric knowledge make sense. I will try to demonstrate this by a review of what we have seen so far.

I began this account with a consideration of the background of Telefol life in terms of polarities that approximate the Levi-Straussian notion of "oppositions" and are the salient features of the backdrop against which Telefolmin play out their lives. Each polarity comprises a pair of poles that are in some sense in a contradictory relation to each other, e.g., gardening and hunting, the village and the bush, friends and enemies, men and women, and so on. In my rendering of these polarities I attempted to inform them with the content of Telefol experience while conveying a sense of the ambivalence inherent in men's attitudes concerning these dimensions of experience. Underlying this is a general problem about the nature of continuity and discontinuity in the Telefol world. That is, while each of the poles of a given polarity may at the extremes be clearly distinct from and antithetical to its opposite number, there are various ways in which it becomes problematic to practically differentiate them because at some point the discontinuity becomes muddled and ambiguous: in the course of their lives men are in one way or another continually traversing the divides between one pole and the other. Thus it is that the extremes are relatively easily kept distinct--planting taro is different from hunting wild pigs--but they may in practice become jumbled up--a man may surprise a wild boar and kill it in his garden, domestic pigs are fed, but only so that they may be killed. The village is one's home, but one's work is carried out in the bush. And so on. Here, albeit quietly, we can see the outlines of a general problem implicit in Telefol culture, and one to which Telefol religion addresses itself, the tension between order and its opposite.

In Chapter 3 I tackle the relation between order and entropy in Telefolmin. The problem has two dimensions, since we--as aliens to the Telefol world--must construct some notion of the Telefol order of things while at the same time Telefolmin themselves are faced with the problem of establishing a world in which it is possible to live sensibly. The Telefol sense of the world is that it is a place in which all their aims and projects are in jeopardy. This is manifest in a number of different ways. We may begin with what Telefolmin take as given, the assumption that the world at large is at best indifferent to men's will and that it is more commonly arrayed in opposition to it. This is evident throughout the gamut of the Telefol experience of the world. Misfortune abounds, not as an exceptional state, but as a condition of existence. Here we enter upon the domain of religion, for this is what in other idioms is cast as the problem of suffering. This is the problem of entropy, the Telefol sense that in the end all they do will come to naught--*biniman*, 'becoming nothing'.

Entropy in Telefolmin amounts to loss, diminution, dissipation, and decay. Seen temporally, this is the irreversible trend towards decline: pigs and men are fewer and smaller, the ranks of the dead in Bagelam grow while the numbers of the living dwindle and old age besets men at a quicker and quicker pace. This is accompanied by the continual threat of loss in other senses: wives, children, pigs, and taro may run away while garden raiders (wild pigs, fruit bats, marsupials) and enemies menace men and what they care for. On an organizational level the issue of entropy is manifest in the centrifugal scattering of households in bush gardens and in the efforts men make to enforce village endogamy and ensure the reciprocation of women in marriage. In all of these ways men's world is precarious and fragile, and it is taken for granted that this is indeed the nature of the world at large: the drift toward entropy is inevitable, things are bound to fall apart.

This is the context in which Telefol society is situated, and it is possible to interpret much of the Telefol social order in terms of the confrontation with entropy. This is particularly evident in the comprehensive system of tabus that provide the clearest set of guides for conduct. Most prominent among these are the food tabus, which serve to keep antithetical qualities and potentials distinct. Here order is introduced through a differentiation serving to regulate and forestall entropy. Through these essentially negative means (prohibitions) men engender the discreteness upon which the integrity of the social order depends. The overall strategy seems to be to strive towards a clarification and structuring of the cosmos by insulating antagonistic and antithetical realms from one another. It is by such means that discontinuity is established between the various polarities of Telefol life, and here we can say that Telefol culture promotes coherence through disjunction.

Lest it be thought that this discussion has strayed from the real world and into the realm of speculative abstraction, we should recall that all of these issues are for Telefolmin matters of immediate relevance. Entropy is not merely contemplated, it is experienced. It is the experience of gardens ravaged by wild pigs, of daughters eloped to other villages, of children dead before their time, of wives absconded and enemies preying upon those one loves. Entropy is abandonment and deprivation, the wresting from men of all they work and live for. Order, then, is not merely an aesthetic preoccupation but a vital necessity--it is the means whereby men achieve some measure of control over their own lives: this is what order means.

The most powerful way in which order is established in Telefol culture is through *amem*, the absolute modifier. To say that something is *amem* is to say it is apart, separate, forbidden, tabu, and sacred. It is also a way of saying that something is secret. *Amem* is a relational term, not a thing in itself but a specification of a relation between things. First and

foremost, *amem* specifies *difference*. That is to say, differentiation and disjunction are critical entailments of "*amem*-ness". Here tabu-as-difference helps to inhibit the flow of entropy by interdiction (cf. Wagner 1977).

Ordering through interdiction and restraining entropy by this means are manifest in a number of dimensions of Telefol cosmology. Perhaps the most pervasive and meaningful of these is the prohibition on contact between processes and forces of life-giving versus those of life-taking (see Rosaldo and Atkinson 1975). The former is associated with taro and gardening, with pig husbandry, with women, the colour white, etc.; the latter has connections with hunting and warfare, with men, and the colour red. It is in terms of such a distinction that a number of prohibitions--especially those concerning taro gardening and the regulation of certain aspects of the relation between the sexes--become intelligible as a means of partitioning and arranging what is taken to be an essentially disorderly cosmos. The segregation of these antithetical dimensions of the world is manifest in a number of other features of the Telefol social order, including the prohibitions on incest and the consumption of one's own pigs. Such differentiation ultimately defines the differences between nurturing and killing, self and other, giving and taking.

The most striking instrumentality of order is the men's cult centring on the *yolam*. It is here that one enters the world of Telefol religion, and it is in and through the *yolam* and its cult that the world of men in Telefolmin is anchored, both concretely (i.e., organizationally) and ideologically: here men join their efforts to combat entropy. The *yolam* is the repository of relics and the home of *usong*, by means of which men rescue the past and themselves from the oblivion, from the nothingness of entropy. Within the community of the *yolam* the informal but pragmatically problematic divisions between households are neutralized and transcended in the interests of the society as a whole. Instead, men are now grouped together and distinguished from one another on the basis of the overriding division

between nurturing and killing--Taro and Arrow--which specifies the individual and collective identities within the *yolam*.

Here we can see that the *yolam* is at once the focal point of Telefol society and Telefol religion: it is the guarantor of order in the Telefol world, an indispensable adjunct for the success of men's enterprises, and offers the clearest expression of the fundamental division that underwrites Telefol conceptions of order. The *yolam* is the Telefol reply to the questions posed by entropy and disorder. It is the home of sacredness--*amem* in itself, the embodiment and apotheosis of order through disjunction.

Up to this point the discussion has led us to the threshold of Telefol religion, but we have not yet entered inside. Seen from the outside in this manner, it is possible to understand the overall context in which Telefol religion is situated. Should we leave the discussion at this point, we would remain in a position to say that what Telefol religion does is to foster security and coherence in the Telefol world, that it is the chief instrument of the social and cosmological order, and that--in short--it functions as a sort of crutch or support for an otherwise shaky society and system of belief. But aside from such time-honoured if threadbare generalizations, we have done little to actually understand Telefol religion itself: its content remains opaque or without apparent relevance, and we have (in a spirit which may be consistent with Telefol attitudes towards sacredness and secrecy) turned it into a "black box". Given rationalistic presuppositions, all we can really say about Telefol religion at this point is that through some sort of mumbo-jumbo tied up with the *yolam*, Telefolmin try to allay their fears and persuade themselves that they are powerful in the world and that men have some "secrets" which give them some leverage on the world.

Such a view recommends itself on several different grounds. It is in the first place consistent with popular and scholarly views of the nature and



purpose of religion. Further, it accords with much that Telefolmin themselves say about the significance of the *yolam* and its rites. It fits, and it would be possible, I think, to conclude at this point, satisfied in our verification that--once again--religion underwrites the social order and equips men with the illusion of a meaningful world so that they can get on with the rest of their lives without undue fuss. And in the meantime, we manage to reassure ourselves of the correctness of our understanding of the world....

Peering into the "black box" becomes superfluous from this perspective, and remains entirely incidental to the understanding already arrived at. A no-nonsense approach to the study of religion has little to gain from an examination of the intricate confusions embedded in the niceties of ritual or the details of myth. At best, this would only serve to flesh out the conventional affirmation of values, underwriting and reiterating what we already know from other contexts. To the extent that this is not so, a certain amount of conventional wisdom is on the side of suspicion (cf. Ricoeur 1978: 213f) which recommends a prudent renunciation. To refer to Douglas once again,

Since we are centrally interested in how meanings are constituted, we would do well to avoid mythical material. Apart from being notoriously pliant to the interpreter's whim, it is thought in relatively free play. Myth sits above and athwart the exigencies of social life. It is capable of presenting one picture and then its opposite. We are on much more solid ground by concentrating on beliefs which are invoked explicitly to justify behaviour (1975:289).

Curiously, this exhortation has the by-product of confirming the two most common variants of the Durkheimian thesis about the relation between religion and society: in the weak form, religion is the reflection of social relations, the symbolic condensation of social experience in collective representations; in the stronger form, religion is the encoding of the structural principles which may themselves be manifested in more contingent forms "on the ground". In either case, however, we are obliged to view religion as a reflex of something else--social relations, or their more

abstract underlying principles. To the extent that religion speaks to men's existential conditions, it is in order to fit them to their job as members of society, to make them good citizens, devout and untroubled in the well-worn paths of rightness, confident that the authorized picture of the world is the correct one. So the drift seems to go, and the implication that goes with this is that in religion we find redundancy. This being the case, there is patently no need to pursue matters further, and if our net fails to catch thought in free play, or if it lets that which is "above and athwart" fall through its mesh, we can rest comfortably in the knowledge that this residue cannot really matter much anyway.

Or, perhaps as Brongersma and Venema remarked about the Kofelmin *iwool*: there is probably not a great deal to be seen (Brongersma and Venema 1962:89).

On the whole, anthropology displays a shyness or reluctance--perhaps timidity--about the "theological" aspects of other people's religions.<sup>1</sup> We are much more at home with the patient and often ingenious delineation of the ways beliefs and practices document our faith that culture is coherence. Perhaps best trained in picking out the form of social relations from an embarrassing wealth of details, we have a keen eye for the social system implicit in day-to-day life. This is our baseline, our measure of what is "real" in a given culture. Allowing for all the specializations and the various frames of pertinence, it is still generally the case that this is where the ethnographic account must begin and often enough where it ends.<sup>2</sup>

Kant coined the term that later became the name for our discipline. But his view, necessarily without benefit of any knowledge of what anthropology was to be, placed what might be termed theological concerns at the heart of anthropology. This clearly different understanding of what anthropology might be about is explored by Buber (1973:148-252), who posits Kant's four questions

succinctly: what can I (man) know; what ought I (man) do; what may I (man) hope; what is man (i.e., what am I)? Among other things, Buber argues that the answer to the last question is contingent on the previous three, and depends first upon the understanding that man is a being who *can know*, *ought to do*, and *may hope*.

My own feeling is that these are questions which are not peripheral to anthropology as we know it, but in fact underlie it. And to return once more to Telefol ethnography, we must delve into the "black box" of Telefol religion in order to discover what it has to say about such things. Over and above whatever Telefol religion may have to tell us about the shape of social relations or how to grow taro, it addresses itself to *precisely* the kinds of questions that Buber poses. And this is why I want to take the reader through what I understand to be the import of the "black box" and its content.

So what goes on inside the *yolam*? What goes on inside Telefol religion? Or, to put matters somewhat differently, what does all of this have to do with what goes on inside Telefol men? Men say that they "bear" or "give birth to" men in the course of the initiations. They also say that things are revealed to the initiands and that they open their eyes during the lengthy course of such rites. And yet we know already that all of this is embedded in a praxis of secrecy, ploys of concealment, tricks of deception. What kind of sense does this make?

The first of the questions that Buber raises concerns the issue of knowledge. What can men know? It is clear that knowledge is a dominant preoccupation of the men's cult, which is to say that it is a concern of Telefol religion. In a basic sense to know is to see in Telefol culture (*utamamin*), and this is to be awake, to be alive (*kafan-so* or *kafan-so sinik*, 'awake/alive [spirit]'). If we extend our understanding of this a bit, we can see that knowledge and understanding are life. Now when we tackle the question of what men know in the Telefol context, a number of problems arise.

To begin with, what men at various stages of their lives think they know is revised by revelations of hitherto secret information. They didn't know what they thought they knew. This process is part of a dialectic of concealment and exposition, set about with such rigour and thoroughgoing care that we must consider it central to the project of initiation, that is, the production of men. Now here there is a paradoxical interplay between knowledge and ignorance, certainty and doubt, clarity and obscurity. For each harmony there is antiphony, for each consistency a dissonance. Why? Is it sheer perversity, or one of many means whereby seniors may dominate or exploit juniors, a clever way of pulling the wool over the eyes of the powerless but potentially powerful? Is revelation merely a pretext for the befuddlement of women and youths, an elaborate hazing meant to enhance the position of old men bent on extracting advantage in the face of their own relative uselessness?

This line of analysis is tempting. The temptation, of course, resides in the appeal to simplicity. It is the simplicity of a false understanding, however, and for that reason must be rejected. One aspect of the falsity is the assumption we are led to make about the relative power of different categories of people in Telefol society, namely that prominence in ritual corresponds to influence--if not outright power--in affairs beyond the cult. According to what we should expect from this, the older seniors--the ones in the fullest possession of esoteric knowledge--ought to be the most powerful members of the society.

There is no evidence for any such power differentials or stratification in Telefol society. It is egalitarian in the thoroughgoing sort of manner that is a constant source of frustration for administrative officials: it is only by government *fiat* that councillors are empowered to speak for others, and they still show a marked reluctance to do so. No man may decide for another in Telefolmin. Older men are sometimes accorded what we might interpret as respect, some are affectionately regarded, some are

neglected and ignored. In this they are no different from anyone else in the society. Few old men keep pigs, some have modest stocks of *bonang*, other have more. None of this is related to their status within the *yolam* and its cult. In short, we cannot account for the differentials of knowledge between seniors and juniors in the cult by suggesting that this serves as a sanction for power differentials elsewhere in the social system: differentials in esoteric knowledge simply cannot be understood as encoding political relations, and such knowledge confers no tangible advantage outside the confines of the cult itself.

Rather than trying to seek an "explanation" of Telefol schemes of knowledge by searching for some set of social, political, or economic "facts" with which esoteric knowledge may be linked, let's return to the content of such knowledge and the way it is structured. Secrets are revealed during the course of initiations, and each initiation has an appropriate range of revelations or expositions that accompanies it. On virtually all of these occasions the initiands are in a rather peculiar state, both physically and psychologically. They have been or will be taxed heavily, being subject to a number of restrictions and hardships. When reminiscing about their initiations, men stress this aspect, speaking--with some relish and pride, I might add--about the exhaustion, pain, thirst, and fear that they endured. Many say, with only some hyperbole, that they feared they would die, others speak of light-headedness or giddiness as they feared their *sinik* would leave them. These are, of course, the personal experiences of what Turner has elsewhere analyzed as liminality (Turner 1967). Now during all of this time they have been tried and tested in another and, in my estimation, more far-reaching way. Here I am referring to the relation between expectation and event in the course of the initiations. If there is any overall guide as to what will take place in the initiations, it is that the initiands will consistently have their expectations violated. Here again men recall their confusion, uncertainty, and shock in initiations. In the words of one man, "they turn things turn things, keep

turning them, they confuse us until our eyes roll (*tiin buul*, also means 'to faint')." Initiations are long on surprises and short on anticipations confirmed.

This is the setting in which men are first exposed to the various bits of esoteric knowledge. Here the praxis of secrecy is manipulated to permit a dialectical engagement of revelation and ignorance, and here the initiands are systematically disoriented at the very time they are being given what they are told are the most meaningful--and true--formulations of their culture. At the risk of stretching the point, it seems that what happens during the initiation process is that men resort to elaborate ploys to create nonsense--or perhaps, following Turner's lead on the notion of "anti-structure" (1969), "anti-sense"--in order to make sense.

It might be possible to understand this merely as a rather theatrical didactic device. There are certainly enough analogues available--e.g., conversion processes in messianic cults, "brain-washing" techniques, and so on--to suggest that this may be the case. The impact of hearing myths under such circumstances must doubtlessly be surrounded by an aura of what Kermode has called "radiant obscurity" (1979:47). There is, however, much more in this confrontation between expectation and revelation. This becomes evident when the actual content of such expositions is considered in context.

I said above that Telefol religion, through the men's cult, dramatizes and elaborates the discrepancies and dissonances of Telefol culture. This, it seems to me, is one of the main burdens of the corpus of myths concerning Afek. At one level it is possible to see in many of them charters of one sort or another, texts which serve to affirm the shape of the world as given to the initiands in the first place. Thus, in response to questions arising concerning the exclusion of women from the *yolam*, the episode in which Afek and Umoim exchange places deals with the problem of suggesting--in the remote and mythological past--the alternate solution (i.e., Afek in the

Telefolip) and then demonstrates (or asserts) its inadequacy. Hence the alternative to the present arrangement--its inverse--is no solution at all, but a false alternative replaced by the current situation. Similar lines of analysis can be developed for other myths of the cycle.

This, within the restricted frame of component myths themselves, may suggest one way in which sense is created through "anti-sense". An affirmation is achieved by positing its inverse and then negating it. There are, however, problems with ending the analysis at this stage. One of these has already been explored in my analysis of the interrelation of component texts in Chapter 4. Here the difficulty is that the reading of the texts themselves shifts with each subsequent narrative addition to the cycle. One of the ways to understand this is to realize that the texts are problematic for Telefol men themselves. In the context of secrecy this means that the myths call for interpretation on their part: that the myths contain meaning and significance is taken for granted and has the whole weight of the Telefol preoccupation with knowledge behind it. But that this significance is not transparent is also taken for granted: the *kuuk* is visible, but where is the *magam*? For example, the tale about Umoim's return from the land of the dead may be understood as part of an elaborate rationale of the significance of bridewealth valuables--this much seems clear. But while offering this answer to the question posed by mortality it also raises the issue of the consequences of men's attempts to know and control the world (i.e., Umoim's spying upon Afek).

It is too facile to assert that the myths simply provide the answers to questions concerning the dissonances of Telefol life. More correctly, the myths pose the questions, show them to be problematic, and bring them into awareness. The myths--and the esoteric knowledge embedded in the initiation context--do not dispose of questions, they propose them. Here we might gain some insight into this by considering the words of one of Poole's informants

among the Bimin-Kuskusmin (n.d.). The Bimin-Kuskusmin are neighbours of the Telefolmin and participate in similar traditions of esoteric knowledge. The Bimin-Kuskusmin keep quartz crystals under their *yolam*, and they refer to these crystals as the eyes of their ancestors, who can see and understand more than ordinary men:

You put the crystal in strong sunlight. The sunlight comes back to you. You cannot see inside. Put your eye by the crystal. Look at the sun. The light is inside. But you see only the light. By the fire [in the cult house] the light is different. You can see inside the crystal. Turn the crystal. It is different. Again. It is different. But there is only one crystal.... It is like many eyes... like the great ancestors' eyes.... We cannot see [as] clearly.... We cannot see [as] quickly...the sacred things are inside... (Poole n.d.:30).

Here Poole's informant is, of course, talking about crystals. But it seems to me that it does no violence to the sense of his words to suggest that this is an ideal metaphor for myth among the Telefolmin. Telefol myths, like the crystals of the Bimin-Kuskusmin, contain many things which men may apprehend in a refractory and incomplete manner if they peer inside.

What is to be seen if men peer inside? The question can be approached by considering the relation between early and later revelations dealing with the general theme of opposition and differentiation. For example, we have noted how the general ordering and structuring of Telefol culture is predicated on separation of antithetical qualities, many of which may be summarized in the division between nurturing and killing. This is the main axis upon which the order of men's world turns. It is on this basis that hunting and gardening are kept apart from each other, and it is also for this reason that women are to be segregated from bloodshed and the colour red. But in myth it is revealed that the origin of red things--ranging from red birds to varieties of pandanus fruit and other red crops, as well as the red *tobaa* with which the *yolam* is fenced--is Afek's menstrual blood, i.e., the menstrual blood of a woman. The basis of the differentiation has now gone from the



segregation of inherently distinct entities (women and blood) to the separation of things which are fundamentally linked. In other words, the opposition is shown to rest on a discontinuity that is rooted not in the nature of things, but in men's acts. The same point can be made more forcefully with reference to the *katibam*, the senior men's cult house.

In the *katibam*, it will be recalled, there is only a single hearth. It is in this hearth that the bones of animals killed in *yolam* rites are secretly burned by the senior men, and it is this act--not necessarily what takes place in the *yolam*--that is deemed efficacious in ritual. When men enter into the community of the *katibam* the division between Arrow hearths and Taro hearths is dissolved--it no longer exists and is in fact exposed as a convention of the cult at the more junior levels. Which is to say, the more fundamental reality underlying the apparent reality of the cult centring on the *yolam* rests upon overriding the opposition between Taro and Arrow. Further, the periodic feasts held secretly in the *katibam* are the structural duplicates of the birth feast held exclusively by women when a child and mother emerge from the *dungam*, the menstrual and birth hut; this is one of the explanations offered for the predominance of marsupials and women's foods in general in the *katibam*. This is accompanied by an explanation that the *katibam*--the final and true *yolam*--is in fact the men's *dungam*, an alternate name for which is *am katib*. Thus two of the fundamental dualities of the men's cult--the opposition between nurturing (gardening) and killing (hunting) and between female and male--are transcended with the revelation that this reflects human convention, not innate truth.

What kind of sense does this make? Clearly it overturns some of the basic premises of the men's cult, which is to say that this is something that the cult itself does. This implication is inescapable and clearly perceived by the seniors privy to such knowledge. It was brought dramatically home to me when I made a second field trip to Telefomin in 1979. I had come to

Telefolip at the request of the Telefolip people to record their corpus of sacred myths concerning Afek (Jorgensen 1980). Because of the special nature of the project there was a great deal of concern on the part of seniors that I collect *all* of their myths (an impossible task), and so privileged access was accorded to me and to two men who worked as my assistants in the project. This meant that, among other things, my assistants (Uunsep and Sandayok) were, like myself, hearing some of the myths for the first time. During most of this stay I was pleased to learn that much of what I had learned during my first field trip was confirmed--many of the details of rite and myth collected during 1974 and 1975 were echoed by what I was told in 1979. There was, of course, much new material as well, but it all tended to confirm what I had already pieced together. One problem area, however, concerned the interpretation of the very secret and sacred *iman dung* first fruits rite. The problem basically turned on why it was that marsupials rather than pigs (either domestic or wild) played such a prominent role. In 1979 I learned that secret marsupial hunts also accompanied virtually all rites, but that this was only known to seniors. And so the problem deepened.

It became clear on the basis of material gathered in Telefolip that all of this was somehow tied to the *katibam*. Part of this connection was explicated in the myth accounting for the origin of the *katibam*, which also accounts for the origins of the Taro Vine (*iman sok*) which is like an umbilical cord connecting the Telefolip with the surrounding countryside. In this myth marsupial hunting plays a key role. In company with Uunsep, variants had been revealed by different seniors. This was a myth that Uunsep had not previously been allowed to hear, and he spent some time with me trying to unravel its significance. We were aided in this one afternoon by two seniors who had previously been helpful with this particular narrative, and certain problematic details (e.g., the transformation of Umoim's umbilical cord into a penis) were cleared up. I began to ask why there was only a single hearth in the *katibam*,

and here men reiterated that there were simply no Taro and Arrow Sides in the house.

Some time later in the day I asked about something that had bothered me earlier, namely, why I had been unable to locate any but the most superficial accounts for the origin of the *dungam*. At this point, Weesimnok (one of the seniors) broke into a grin and told me that I had already heard the story of the origins of the *dungam*: it was the same story they had discussed with us earlier in the day--the origins of the *katibam*. My first reaction was skepticism--Unsep's first reaction was stronger, approaching shocked disbelief. And that was when Weesimnok and Atenok good naturedly, amid chuckles, explained in detail that the *dungam* and the *katibam* were the same. This is very *amem*, and should not be told to men until they have been inmates in the *katibam* for some time. Unsep was firmly cautioned not to tell others about this. As it was, the likelihood of this happening was slim--Unsep spent the next several days quietly frowning about the village.

It's now time to return to some of our original questions. This example--a rather small but telling one--gives some indication of how it is that Telefol religion highlights dissonance and discrepancy rather than evading them. To put the matter more strongly, it emphasizes "seeing" and "knowing" by systematically confronting men with their ignorance. The alternate constructions of reality with which they are presented are transformed by those which follow. I have already spoken of this in the previous section, but I now want to develop the implications further. In answer to Buber's question of what men can know, Telefol religion offers a sophisticated and wise reply: men cannot be certain of what they know except for the certainty that their knowledge will always be incomplete and perhaps mistaken.

Juniors in the cult expect that it will provide them with the knowledge to understand and manipulate the world. The view of the seniors is

different. When questioned on the efficacy of their ritual they express doubts about how or whether such ritual actually works; and can point out instances in which projects succeeded in the absence of rites and failed when rites were performed. All of the senior men with whom I spoke were acutely aware that they themselves did not possess all of the sacred knowledge that might be presumed to reveal everything. All they know is what they were told and what they see with their own eyes; they add that men's knowledge dwindles with the passage of each generation and that, in any event, "Afek closed men's eyes" so that they could not see (know) everything. What they *do* know is that men must be ready for whatever happens and be prepared to see whatever is revealed to them. The aim of Telefol religion is less to produce a systematic and air-tight view of the world than it is to produce men who are capable of dealing with the world.

Rather than produce the illusion of a world in which men's mastery is assured, in which ideology provides a comprehensive guide to all that can and will happen, Telefol religion takes the opposite tack; instead of emphasizing consistency and coherence at the expense of contradiction or ambiguity, Telefol religion does the reverse. When all is said and done, men are reminded that behind and beneath everything is Magalim, and that, in the end, reality must be confronted and not evaded.

If we ask what men may hope, Telefol religion tells them that ultimately everything will come to an end, that the world offers little hope. Men have Afek's legacy, and this they may put to work in their service. They have the *yolam* and the *usong*, and they can try to protect what they have from loss. But the Meaningless One, the Unknowable One--Magalim--is the antithesis of Afek and of man's sovereignty in the world, and Magalim is the only one who will endure and outlast their world. They will learn that he may sometimes be their friend, and will be alert for him. They will know him as the world stripped of the illusion of transparency, the world without the order that

men impose, the basis of everything and the context in which men will always move and work.

What should men do? Telefol religion first of all invites them to grasp the truth of their being in a world that eludes precept and expectation. In the Second World War Femsep was asked to board a military aircraft on the spur of the moment; he handed his bow and arrows to a friend and went aboard, landed in Hollandia during an air raid, returned home with tales to tell. When the Australian patrol officers arrived, Telefolmin welcomed them; when they abused their authority, Telefolmin killed them. At night, in the darkness, in the secret chamber under the Telefolip, men go down to face Afek; a possum darts forth from her bones, an omen perhaps, and men catch their breaths until Waakumnok seizes the chance, takes up her jawbone, prancing and waving it in men's faces proclaiming with glee, "here she is--a bone!". Walking in the bush, Dakasim hears a woman's moans, she is bleeding, it is a premature birth; he carries her on his shoulders, covered in womb-blood, to the hospital where she is saved. These are the sorts of men Telefolmin produce in their initiations, this is what their religion invites them to do.

Men face entropy and the ascendancy of Magalim. There are no long-term gains, nothing remains, no guarantees, save that in the end all will become nothing. With this awareness men do what men everywhere must do--make their living, raise their families. But this is not the awareness of despair, the gloom of desolation; rather, it is the means by which life acquires its own heroism. It is because of this awareness that men bring a keenness and vitality to the business of living. Given what their religion tells them, to hunt and to make gardens is to enter Magalim's domain, to leave behind the sanctuary of the village. In any other setting, Telefolmin would seem to be workaholics; the work is never-ending, and men go out of their way to work hard. To do so is to meet Magalim squarely on his own ground, each successful garden is more than food for the belly--it is a confirmation of

being, an unequal challenge accepted and (for now) won. If the ultimate outcome is loss, men may--with effort and strength--win many victories along the way. Perhaps this is why, after felling the trees for a new garden, men break into improvised song, dancing in the forest and twirling their axes over their heads: their audience is the world and themselves, Magalim and a man with an axe.

*Die Bejahung ist erst die Verneinung einer Verneinung*

(Mauthner in Burke 1966:419).

## APPENDIX I: GLOSSARY

Note: While I have made use of the Healey's excellent Telefol dictionary (1977), in some cases I depart from their transcriptions and glosses. Telefol orthography still seems somewhat unsettled (op. cit., p. xvi), and such discrepancies are to be understood in terms of differences in aims as well as differences in judgment. Though Telefol is a tonal language, I have made no attempt to indicate this in my orthography since, with one exception (*yól/* lizard arrow/; *yol/salt/*), tone is not contrastively significant in the present corpus.

## A

- aal*: grass or weed  
*aaltem*: grassy place, place full of weeds  
*weng aal*: insulting speech or talk
- aalab*: father (3rd pers.)  
*aalabal*: 'fathers' in initiations (beat novices)  
*kwet aalab*: sugar cane forbidden to women and children  
*suum aalab*: banana variety forbidden to women and children  
*waan aalab*: yam variety forbidden to women and children
- aamin*: to kill or strike or shoot  
*magalo aamin*: to kill secretly, i.e., with *biit* sorcery
- aanang*: the earth or ground (in a general sense)  
*Aanang Kayaak*: 'earth person' or 'earth owner' (one of Magalim's names)
- aanangen*: female bush spirit, believed to steal children and look after wild pigs  
*aanang man*: an unruly or wild child
- aaning*: father's younger brother (1st and 3rd pers.)  
*aaningal*: father's brothers; senior patrilineal male relatives
- aaningok*: large eels (eaten only by initiated men)
- aatum*: father (1st pers.)
- abeen*: mother (1st pers.)

*abiim*: a variety of large pigeon (forbidden to women and youths)

*abin*: floor; ally (i.e., one with whom one sits)

*kong abin*: outermost section of floor, reserved for domestic pigs

*digim*: women and children's floor

*miliil*: men's floor, occupying centre of house

*abiip*: village; clearing; outside (of house), i.e., in public

*abiip kasel*: village people, fellow villagers

*abiip kayaak*: fellow villager, native of a village

*abiip mat*: central plaza of a village (literally, 'village stomach')

*abiip miton*: main or principal village, e.g., Telefolip ('capital')

*abiip tenum*: fellow villager

*unangabiip*: women's village, i.e., the portion of a village excluding  
*yolabiip*

*yolabiip*: the fenced area surrounding the *yolam*, only initiates may enter

*abin*: umbilical cord

*afaalik*: big or old (masc.); male ancestor; great-grandfather; term of address for *men anem* or *usong*; important; respectful term for old man (not, however, appreciated because of connotations of great age!)

*afek*: big or huge, old or ancient (fem.); ancestress; great-grandmother; important or numerous; respectful term for old woman

*Afek*: The Ancestress of all Telefolmin and other Mountain Ok peoples

*Afek sang*: secret myths about Afek

*afeen*: true or correct; real; expression of agreement (from *kekfeen*, to look or witness; means roughly 'it is seen')

*tenum afeen*: a real man; a Telefolmin

*agalal*: a variety of *nuk* (actually a rat) forbidden to men

*agam*: a brother-and-sister (before marriage); a husband-and-wife; couple

*aget*: thought, idea

*aget fukunin*: to think or consider

*am*: house; day

*am dekota*: ceremonial rebuilding of the Telefolip (*yolam*)

*am katib* (*am katip*): see *dungam* (literally, 'small house')

*am kun*: housepost (literally, 'house bone' or 'house strength')

*am mafak*: bad house; a bad (rainy) day

*am tambal*: good house; a good (sunny) day

*am utuu*: split wall timbers

*amitem*: doorway (literally, 'house hole')

*amitung*: carved doorboard

*amogeen*: see *yolam* (literally, 'house mother'); especially the Telefolip

*dungam*: women's menstrual and birth hut, forbidden to men

*dungamtem*: menstruation; idiom for filth

*elam*: a large fortress house, formerly made in gardens near enemy land

*fofolam*: a small shelter to shade young seedlings; bush enclosure in initiations

*kabeelam*: youths or junior initiates' house (literally, 'hornbill house')

*katibam*: senior initiates' cult house (literally, 'small house')

*man am*: womb (literally, 'child house')



*milam*: shelter built for novices in *dagasal ban*  
*sebam*: a bush house or garden house  
*yolam*: men's spirit house, forbidden to non-initiates

*anem* (*abem*): sacred, forbidden, apart; tabu; secret  
*abemtem*: a sacred or dangerous place where Magalim is likely to be;  
 often caves or stream sources; vagina (idiom)  
*at anem*: a sacred fire, as in initiations or other rites  
*kong anem*: a pig to be sacrificed in a rite  
*tenum anem* (*tenum abem*): an expert in ritual matters  
*tenum anem kasel* (*tenum abem kasel*): the men who direct rituals  
*unankalin anem*: forbidden or tabu food  
*weng anem*: sacred or secret speech; the esoteric lore of the men's cult,  
 particularly *Afek sang*; a secret spell

*amwaasi*: feuding enemies, enemies who are Telefolmin (literally, 'house  
 enemies')  
*amwaasi iiban*: a rot or sickness (pollution) incurred as the result of  
 killing fellow Telefolmin

*aseng*: a song (? *at* + *weng*, 'fire talk')

*asit*: green (both colour and state); raw, moisture-laden; foreign, strange,  
 alien; undeveloped; antagonistic or opposed; distant  
*asittem*: far away, a foreign place; home of the Europeans  
*tenum asit*: a stranger or foreigner; an odd man ('half-baked')

*asop*: large 'pitpit', a garden vegetable

*at*: tree; wood; fire  
*at anem*: a sacred fire, as in initiations and other rites  
*at bong*: an acacia-like tree  
*at deli* (*at dli*): a hoop pine (*Araucaria* sp.), prominent near village  
 sites  
*at falam*: ?*Ficus* sp.  
*at falom*: tree resembling large rubber tree (*Ficus* sp.)  
*at filim*: a tree  
*at igim*: a tree with large blue fruits favoured by wild pigs  
*at igin*: tree used to make axe handles, shields, pandanus dishes  
*at kom*: a war shield (carved and painted)  
*at kulu*: a rotting log (idiom for corpse)  
*at mafak*: firewood (literally, 'bad wood')  
*at miyaam*: an oak (*Castanopsis* sp.), fruit eaten by wild pigs  
*at telap* (*tlap*): mountain beech (*Nothofagus* sp.), used in housebuilding  
*at telom*: black palm variety, used for bows (not found in Telefolmin)  
*at tenim*: black palm variety, used for bows (not found in Telefolmin)  
*at tetip*: a variety of *Casuarina*, planted as garden fallow cover  
*at ulap*: a tree (*Ficus* sp.), indicates good taro soil  
*at yet*: wild fig tree

*atem*: a variety of edible frog

*atiim*: lizard (generic)

*atok*: part; half  
*atok atok keemin*: to do things half-heartedly  
*isak atok*: close bilateral kin; cognatic kindred (literally, 'blood part')

*atool*: a (secular) feast and dance, held at night; now, a year

*atul*: heat/hot; burning, stinging

*atul-so*: burning; stinging; angry

*atul tebemin*: to become angry

*tenum atul*: a man given to anger; a 'tough customer'

*weng atul*: angry talk or 'stinging speech'; reprimand or insult

*ayaap*: the ghost of an enemy killed in battle

*em ayaap*: a variety of fruit (oil) pandanus, forbidden to women and youths

## B

*baaben*: elder sister or father's sister (1st pers.)

*baap*: elder brother (1st pers.)

*bagan*: ground, territory; red ochre (secret names, *bagan isak*, *tobaal* = menstrual blood)

*Bagan Kayaak*: 'master of the territory' (one of Magalim's names)

*iman bagan*: gardening territory

*nuk bagan*: hunting grounds

*waasi bagan*: enemy territory

*bagel*: ghost (who died a natural death)

*Bagelam*: the land of the dead, the underworld

*bagelilep*: underground track to Bagelam, guarded by Bisiilki

*ban*: a rite, especially initiation (details secret)

*ban dupkamin*: to 'plant' or 'give birth' to a youth in initiation (i.e. beat him)

*ban kasel*: participants in a *ban* (may not eat with non-participants)

*biit ban*: initiation into *biit* sorcery (only others practice)

*bogol ban*: 'eagle rite'; was last of sequence, for hunting and warfare

*dagasal ban*: first initiation, boys receive *dagasal* (netbags with feathers)

*ifet ban*: see *tlalalep ban*

*iman ban*: 'taro rite'; includes *ot* and *tap bans*, fifth phase (at Telefolip)

*keemin ban*: discontinued; included all phases through *bogol ban* in long rite

*kong ban*: 'domestic pig rite'; not initiation; women may participate

*mafuum ban*: fourth initiation, youths receive *sel* headdress (at Telefolip)

*om ban*: 'sago rite'; second initiation

*ot ban*: 'drum rite'; first part of *iman ban*

*saaman ban*: 'wild pig rite'; see *un baal*

*tap ban*: second phase of *iman ban*; initiate considered 'adult'

*tiim ban*: 'dew washing rite', part of the *dagasal ban* sequence

*tlalalep ban*: third initiation

*tetil*: curing rite for epidemic illness

*un baal*: 'arrow rite'; sixth initiation (now discontinued)

*bil*: a small and relatively informal feast (often pandanus)

*dagasal bil*: a pandanus feast to compensate an initiate's ritual 'mother'

*mafuum bil*: a pandanus feast to compensate an initiate's ritual 'mother'

*biil*: a wild cane used for arrow shafts

*biilok*: a rat forbidden to men as food

*biit*: lethal assault sorcery; a practitioner of such sorcery

*biit ban*: a secret rite in which men learn how to do *biit*

*biit san*: materials (usually exogenous) for performing *biit*; 'biit seeds'

*binim*: nothing; not at all; finished, empty; none; destroyed

*biniman*: the process of becoming nothing, dissipating; degenerating; to (be) exhaust; to finish or be finished; run out; ruin, breakdown; the processes of entropy

*iman binim*: without taro; hungry or starving

*kalel binim*: without wife; single or abandoned

*kong binim*: without pigs (to be poor)

*kun binim*: without bones or strength; weak; lazy

*man binim*: childless

*mufekfek binim*: without 'things'; to be poor

*tiin binim*: without eyes; to be blind; to be stupid or foolish

*togol binim*: without fat; to be skinny

*tolong binim*: without ears; to be deaf; to be foolish or stubborn; ignorant

*weng binim*: without words; to be speechless, especially from shame

*win binim*: without name, no reputation, forgotten

*bisop*: futile; worthless; pointless

*bisop keemin*: to do things carelessly, haphazardly (and invite failure)

*tenum bisop*: a worthless man; a lazy man; a man of no account; sometimes--  
an "ordinary Joe"

*bisan*: a bird (?Willie wagtail)

*bisel*: big; mature, an adult

*biseng*: King Bird of Paradise; forbidden to women

*bisiil*: greedy, gluttonous; speedy

*Bisiilki*: The Greedy One, a huge dog guarding the entrance to Bagelam, one of Magalim's names

*biyal*: a variety of black palm

*biyal-sinam*: a spatulate or sword-like fighting club made from black palm

*blaana-blaana keemin*: to give and take freely without accounting

*blaana-blaana tenum*: one's best friend

*bogol*: harpy eagle

*bogol ban*: (formerly) the final initiation rite

*bogung*: white limestone clay, used as paint (people, pigs, carvings)

*bonang*: small cowries, valuables used in bridewealth

*bubuk*: a rat, forbidden to men

*bubul*: heart; thought; emotion

*bubul mafak*: 'bad heart'; sadness; anger; one given to anger

*bet bubul*: 'soft heart'; a kind, generous, gentle person  
*ilang bubul*: 'garden heart'; that portion of a garden where *tobaa* is ritually planted  
*nimi bubul*: my heart; my thought or feelings; affectionate term (male/female)  
*nimi bubul tem*: in my heart; "according to what I think..."

## D

*daam*: fence  
*tobaadaam*: fence of red cordyline (Pidgin: *tanket*) enclosing *yolam*  
*dabool*: tree kangaroo, only initiates may eat  
*dagaan*: intermediate altitude zone of cultivation (c. 4500-6000 feet a.s.l.)  
*dagasal*: Netbag lined with hornbill feathers, given to boys in first initiation  
*dagasal ban*: the first initiation  
*dam*: flesh; truth, or agreement (because tangible--but is ephemeral)  
*digii*: men's cane fire-making apparatus  
*digim*: women's and children's floor area of a house  
*diip*: low-lying altitude zone of cultivation (c. 3500-4500 feet a.s.l.)  
*ditip*: a variety of marsupial forbidden to women  
*doo fukunin*: to recall, remember, or reflect back  
*weng doo*: metaphorical ('reminding') speech; skits performed in initiations  
*dubung*: rule forbidding people to eat pigs they have fed, or have been fed by 'children'; analogous to incest tabu  
*dufaal*: a red parrot forbidden to women; feathers used as headdress  
*dulfen*: a marsupial forbidden to both men and women  
*dumiin*: domesticated nut pandanus (high altitude crop)  
*dungam*: women's menstrual and birth hut  
*dungantem*: menstruation; idiom for filth  
*dunkiil*: wild dog, forbidden to all Telefolmin as food  
*dup*: friend (may or not not be a relative) (3rd.pers.)

## E

- elam*: large fortress house, formerly made in gardens near enemy land
- em*: domestic fruit (oil) pandanus
- em ayaap*: 'enemy pandanus' forbidden to women and youths
- em kool*: a variety of domestic oil pandanus
- em naam*: a yellow variety of pandanus permitted only to initiates
- em muum*: pandanus seeds, metaphorically referred to as 'bones'
- et*: penis
- et kem*: (male) nudity ('penis exposed')
- et kun*: erection ('penis bone/strength')
- et ok*: semen ('penis water')

## F

- fiip*: taro stalks for planting
- fitom*: shame or embarrassment
- fitom tebemin*: to become ashamed
- fofolam*: shelter for young seedlings; brush enclosure in bush for initiations
- fubi*: stone adze
- fufalim*: a cave-nesting swift or swallow forbidden to women
- fukunin*: to think (sort of--seems to refer to some kind of cognitive process)
- aget fukunin*: to think or consider ('to think thoughts')
- doo fukunin*: to recall or remember
- fuup*: men's songs sung at dances or occasionally while walking through bush

## I

- ifalop*: birth-mates or initiation-mates (3rd pers.)
- ifet*: switches for thrashing
- ifet ban*: a phase of the *tlalalep ban*
- igil*: echidna, forbidden to all Telefolmin to eat (secret name: *nukogeen*)
- igin*: a tree or wood used for axe handles, shields, and pandanus dishes
- igit*: female (of animal species not of human); lower and larger portion of *sel* headdress
- iin*: liver
- iin ok*: mucus; a cold (literally, 'liver water')
- iip-tenum*: an intermediary; a man with relatives or friends in two or more villages (literally, 'middle man')

- ilaam*: small marsupial mouse, men may not eat
- 'ilami san ko'*: 'it's up to him', 'it's his choice', 'it's his responsibility' (literally, 'it's his own seed')
- ilang*: garden; term for initiands
- ilangok*: garden in which Telefolip *iman ban* is performed ('garden mother')
- ilang bubul*: part of garden where *tobaa* is ritually planted; this is fenced (literally, 'garden heart')
- ilep*: track or path; figurately, custom or manner
- ilet*: exposure platform upon which corpses were placed
- ilop*: maggots
- ilum*: heavy or heaviness; quality necessary for taro planting
- ilub (ilup)*: a small variety of 'pitpit', a garden vegetable
- imak*: male; husband; upper and smaller portion of *sel* headdress
- imaan*: bladder or urine
- imaan ok*: urine ('bladder water')
- iman*: taro (virtually synonymous with 'food' and 'meal')
- iman at*: sacred taro fire in rituals
- iman ban*: fifth initiation, aimed at promoting taro prosperity
- iman binim*: without taro, i.e., hungry or starving
- iman dumeen*: one of the two original taro varieties
- iman dung*: highly secret first fruits rite
- iman ilang*: taro garden
- iman ilo*: Taro Side; one half of the dual division of the men's cult
- iman mit*: Taro Base or Taro Kind; life-promoting half of cult
- iman mit kayaak*: a man of the Taro Side; an expert in taro ritual
- iman ninii*: grated taro, usually eaten with oil pandanus
- iman sok*: the Taro Vine or Taro Rope; a white-flowered vine growing from beneath the Telefolip and connecting it to surrounding countryside
- iman tep*: hunger or hungry
- iman tobaal*: one of the two original taro varieties
- iman tuul*: the Taro Hearth in the *yolam*, oriented towards principal garden areas
- inap*: snake (generic)
- inap utan*: rock- or cave-dwelling python; men may not eat
- inggat*: a rat forbidden to men as food
- isak*: blood; a reddish rot affecting taro and thought to result from bringing blood into contact with a garden
- isak atok*: close cognatic relatives ('blood part')
- isaklut*: the colour red
- isak-so*: 'with blood', bloody; sometimes used to refer to young men

## K

- kaal*: skin or husk; tree bark
- kaangat*: broad-bladed bamboo arrow for warfare and pig hunting ('killing wood')
- kabel*: mother's sister's child; wife's sister's husband (1st pers.)
- kabeel*: hornbill; metaphor for youths/initiands; women may not eat  
*kabeelam*: junior initiates' house ('hornbill house')
- kabo*: you (masc.)
- kabutem*: the area between the floor of a house and the ground
- kafan-so*: awake  
*kafan-so sinik*: alive ('awake spirit')
- kalbio*: a stinging nettle used to thrash initiands (literally, "here I am!")
- kamaa*: new or recent; not yet ripe
- kameen*: penis gourd
- kasak*: a green domestic cordyline variety; healthy or handsome
- katib* (*katip*): small; young; few; a marsupial  
*katibam*: senior initiates' cult house  
*an katib*: see *dungam*
- kayaak* (pl. *kasel*): person; inhabitant; holder of rights ('owner')  
*tenum kayaak*: father's brother's child (man speaking)  
*unang kayaak*: father's brother's child (woman speaking)
- kayaal*: a bandicoot forbidden to those of reproductive age
- kayaam*: domestic dog, forbidden to all Telefolmin as food
- kayop*: the moon (conceived as a man)  
*kayop tiinemin*: to hunt for marsupials (literally, 'walk by the moon')  
*kayop tonamin*: to menstruate (literally, 'to sit by the moon')
- kekfeen*: look or witness; to face (cf. *afeen*)
- kem*: open, visible, exposed  
*et kem*: (male) nudity ('penis exposed')  
*kun kem*: emaciated, skinny ('bones exposed')  
*nok kem*: (female) nudity ('vagina exposed')  
*weng kem*: non-secret moral instruction given to initiands ('open talk')
- kong*: domestic pig  
*kong ban*: rite for increase of pig herd, women may participate  
*kongböltiil*: mound behind the Telefolip to which pigs are tied before sacrifice  
*kong togol*: pig fat (used as medium for face paint--secret)

- kugup*: custom, way of doing things  
*kugup waafunamin*: to observe and preserve ('hold onto') customs  
*ilani kugup*: his own way of doing things
- kumak*: domestic ginger variety
- kumsop*: smaller mountain cassowary (females may not eat)
- kun*: bone; strength; hardness; endurance; severity  
*kun binim*: weak; lazy ('no bones')  
*kun kem*: emaciated ('bones exposed')  
*kun-so*: strong; strong-willed or stubborn; hard or tough in dealings with others  
*am kun*: housepost ('house bone')  
*tenum kun*: payment made to mourners at a man's death ('man bone')  
*unang kun*: payment made to mourners at a woman's death; bridewealth ('woman bone')
- kundunang*: cannibalistic amazons who inhabit the fringes of the Telefol world, are married to wild dogs
- kutal*: a marsupial forbidden to men and women
- kutinin*: marsupial carnivore, only eaten by old men
- kuyaam*: large terrestrial cave- and rock-dwelling marsupial (only seniors eat)  
*kuyaantem*: the nest of a *kuyaam* underground; vagina (idiom)
- kuuk*: the top or growing tip of a plant; exoteric portions of narrative
- kwet*: sugar cane  
*kwet afaayim*: red sugar cane variety (restricted)  
*kwet tenep*: red sugar cane variety (restricted)  
*kwet ugit*: green sugar cane variety (restricted)  
*kwet sangaatum*: red sugar cane variety (restricted)  
*kwet malandon*: red striped sugar cane variety (restricted)

## M

- maagop*: one; of the same kind  
*isak maagop*: close relatives ('one blood')  
*sang maagop*: the same story; people who have the same story  
*tenum mit maagop*: one *tenum mit*, members of the same cognatic descent category
- maatup*: crocodile
- mafak*: bad; evil; sick; rotten; ugly; ineffectual  
*at mafak*: firewood  
*sang mafak*: a bad or distasteful tale, a nasty or dirty story  
*tenum mafak*: an ugly man; a cripple; an old man; a man given to lying or laziness or anger  
*weng mafak*: insulting or hurtful talk; gossip



- mafuum*: headdress of fourth initiates (also called *sel*)  
*mafuum ban*: fourth initiation, held at Telefolip  
*mafuum bil*: pandanus feast to compensate 'mothers' of *mafuum ban*  
*mafuum det*: songs of the *mafuum ban*
- magalo*: hidden, invisible, unseen, unknown; meaningless  
*magalo amin*: to kill by *biit* sorcery ('hidden killing')  
*magalo keemin*: to do things invisibly; euphemism for death, to become invisible  
*magalo sang*: a rumour of uncertain truth  
*muu*: "I don't know; how should I know?"  
*Magalim*: The Unknown One, the Meaningless One
- magam*: origin; cause; basis; root; meaning; esoteric portion of a narrative; explanation  
*tenum magam*: genealogy  
*weng magam*: meaning (of a word)
- magayim*: the 'fathers' (*aalabal*) or 'enemies' (*waasi*) who beat and threaten youths in initiations
- mamiin*: heat; efficacy  
*mamiin-so*: hot; efficacious
- man*: child; sibling's child (man speaking); sister's child (woman speaking)
- mangkan*: a rat, forbidden to men as food
- men*: netbag  
*men anem*: sacred netbag, containing cult relics (bones of *usong*)  
*iman men*: a *men anem* for taro rites  
*kong men*: a *men anem* for raising domestic pigs  
*un men*: a *men anem* for hunting and/or warfare
- migik*: oblique, 'to the side'; deceptive  
*migik bagamin*: to speak deceptively, to conceal the truth  
*tenum migik*: an odd man  
*weng migik*: deceptive talk; lies
- mil*: beans
- milam*: shelter built for novices in *dagasal ban*
- mit*: stalk; base; source; variety or kind; efficacy  
*iman mit*: Taro Base, one half of the men's cult; esoteric knowledge concerning taro  
*suum mit*: a banana stalk, used as planting material; a type of banana  
*tenum mit*: named cognatic descent category; origin tale  
*un mit*: Arrow Base, one half of the men's cult; esoteric knowledge concerning hunting and warfare
- miliil*: the men's floor in the centre of a house, between the two hearths
- misim*: generous  
*Tenum Misim*: the Generous One; one of Magalim's names
- momoyok*: those who die violently and assume the form of flying foxes after death and return to raid erstwhile villagers' gardens

*mook*: a kind of stone adze

*moom*: mother's brother (1st pers.)

*ogot*: mother's brother (3rd pers.)

*ogosal*: mother's brothers (3rd pers.)

*mufekfek*: possessions ('things')

# N

*naam*: cane cuirass

*neeng*: younger sister

*nek*: cross cousin (1st pers.)

*nelii*: a yam, only initiates may eat

*nelenim*: a hawk, forbidden to women

*niing*: younger brother

*ninak-so*: dirty

*nok*: vagina

*nok isak*: menstrual blood ('vagina blood'); secret name is *tobaal*

*nok kem*: nudity (feminine)

*nok kul*: vaginal secretions (compare *abang kul*, pus from a wound)

*abemtem*: metaphor for vagina ('forbidden place/hole')

*kuyaamtem*: metaphor for vagina ('*kuyaam*'s hole')

*ooltem*: metaphor for vagina ('anus')

*nuk*: marsupials and small hairy animals (generic)

*nuk abem*: tabu or sacred *nuk* (used in rites)

*nuk bagan*: hunting grounds

*nukamin*: spirit men who look after marsupials

*nuk ilep*: trees felled by hunters across streams to act as paths for  
marsupials

*nukunang*: spirit women who look after marsupials

*unang nuk*: marsupials reserved for women's consumption

*nukok*: echidna; 'marsupial mother', forbidden to all Telefolmin to eat

*nukogeen*: ditto

# O

*oga*: a pigeon, forbidden to women as food

*ogeen*: mother (3rd pers.)

*amogeen*: 'mother house'; a *yolam*, especially the Telefolip

*ogeenal*: 'mothers' in initiations (care for novices)

*oget*: water gourd

*ok*: water

*okgeyam*: an amphibious marsupial, forbidden to men to eat

*om*: sago (not found in Telefolmin proper)

*om ban*: 'sago rite', the second initiation

*ool*: intestines; feces; filth

*oolisak*: anger ('intestine blood')

*ooltem*: anus ('feces hole')

*ot*: drum

*ot ban*: 'drum rite', the first part of the *iman ban*

## S

*saa*: spirit of one killed in warfare

*saaman*: wild pig (only initiates may eat)

*saaman ban*: 'wild pig rite'; see *un baal*

*saaman man*: 'wild piglet'; an unruly child

*saamin*: see *momoyok*

*saman* (*sagam*): flying fox; *momoyok*

*samanim*: far away, distant

*san*: seed; responsibility; initiative

*biit san*: materials for working *biit*

*ilami san*: his own choice, responsibility; initiative

*sang*: narrative, story

*Afek sang*: sacred and secret myths about Afek

*magalo sang*: rumour

*sogaamiyok sang*: tales of long ago (approximates the notion of legend)

*utuun sang*: non-secret tales told for entertainment, often with moral content

*waasi sang*: tales about warfare

*sebalam*: a variety of ginger

*sel*: a variety of wild pandanus; the *mafuum* headdress made from its leaves

*selman*: eagle owl, forbidden to women

*sengaa*: bush fowl, forbidden to women

*sep*: bush

*sebam*: bush house, garden house

*sepwaasi*: 'bush enemies', non-Telefolmin (traditional enemies who may be eaten)

*sep bilsak*, *am bilsak*: 'verandah post in the bush, verandah post at home'; aphorism affirming male superiority

*siliil dan*: tree sap used to prepare *mafuum* body paint

*sinik*: spirit; reflection; shadow; image; resemblance; awareness; vitality

*sinik-so*: lively, fresh and young

*kafan-so sinik*: alive ('awake spirit')

*sinok*: a rat, forbidden to men

*sogaalim*: a large lizard, skin used for drumheads

*sogaamiyok*: long ago

*sogaamiyok sang*: a tale of long ago

*soobim*: a marsupial forbidden to women to eat

*suu*: a bird forbidden to women to eat

*suuk*: tobacco; a cigarette

*suukang*: conical tobacco bundle, traditionally traded for cowries

*tiin suuk*: cross-eyed; ignorant ('tobacco eye')

*suum*: banana (generic)

*suum aalab*: variety of banana

*suum kalom*: variety of banana

*suum toen*: variety of banana

*suum umkan*: variety of banana

*suum usii*: variety of banana

## T

*tagaa*: stinging nettles

*taman* (-kaman): valley

*tambal*: good; healthy; handsome

*tenum tambal*: a good man (theoretically open-handed and generous)

*tamoon*: personal leavings sorcery

*tan*: small child

*tandet*: songs sung by novices in the *dagasal ban*

*tang*: smell

*tang mafak*: bad smell

*tap ban*: second phase of *iman ban*

*tenum*: man; person

*tenum magam*: genealogy

*tenum miit*: cognatic descent category

*tenum sok*: 'man vine', a vine with red flowers growing from under the Telefolip and spreading out into the surrounding countryside

*Tenum Miitim*: He Who is the Source of Men (Magalim)

*tetil*: curing rite for epidemic illness

*tetiin*: a hawk, forbidden to women

*tetip*: casuarina

*tibisak*: anger, angry ('forehead blood')

*tigin*: hill, mountain

*andutigin*: peak

*tiim ban*: 'dew-washing' part of *dagasal ban*

*tiin*: eye

*tiin aloop*: insightful; a man with clear vision; a seer ('two eyes')

*tiin binim*: blind ('no eyes'); stupid; headstrong

*tiin buul*: to faint, lose consciousness

*tiin kubabesu*: covered eyes, obscured vision

*tiin suuk*: cross-eyed; not perceptive

*timit*: cucumber

*timitiim*: tall; long

*tin*: beeswax

*tinangkamin*: to hear; to understand

*tingii*: disc-headed stone club

*tisol*: valuables (cowries, stone adzes, etc.)

*tituleng bagamin*: to make fun of or joke about someone

*tiyam*: a bird

*tlalalep ban*: third initiation

*tlooben*: a large marsupial forbidden to men

*tobaa*: red cordyline, forbidden for women to touch

*tobaa miton*: red cordyline planted in garden selected for *iman ban*

*tobaadaam*: red cordyline fence enclosing the *yolam*

*tobaal*: secret name for menstrual blood

*iman tobaal*: original taro, with mottled red flesh (forbidden)

*tobaabu*: cassava

*togol*: fat; grease

*tol*: clay, soil; yellowish clay worn in mourning

*toliim*: high altitude gardening zone

*tolong*: ears

*tolong binim*: stubborn, stupid, lacking in sense ('no ears')

*tuul*: hearth

*iman tuul*: Taro hearth in the *iman ilo* division of the men's cult

*un tuul*: Arrow hearth in the *un ilo* division of the men's cult

# U

*ubil*: a rat forbidden to men

*uleseen*: a large marsupial forbidden to men

*ulimal*: a man, his children, and his pigs; 'family'

*ugem*: a resinous plant, used to make a torch for curing

*ugem kong*: a pig sacrificed in a curing rite; the curing rite itself

*un*: arrow

*un at*: sacred arrow fire in rituals; arrow-smoking rite before warfare

*un baal*: Arrow rite, rite performed for hunting or warfare (6th init.)

*un ilo*: Arrow Side; one half of the dual division of the men's cult

*un men*: relics and *usong* for hunting or warfare

*un miip*: arrow binding; the herringbone slat pattern on the walls of the Telefolip

*un mit*: Arrow Base or Arrow Kind; life-taking half of the men's cult

*un mit kayaak*: an expert in hunting or warfare rites; man of the Arrow Side

*unam*: woman's skirt

*unankalin*: food

*unankalin anem (abem)*: tabu food

*unang*: woman

*unangabiip*: unrestricted section of the village ('woman clearing')

*unangam*: a family house or dwelling house ('woman house')

*unang nuk*: marsupials reserved for women (and children)

*unuuk*: bow

*unuuk tenim*: black palm bow traded from south and southwest

*unuuk telom*: black palm bow traded from southeast

*usong*: spirits of the men's cult (must have died natural death); a seer or diviner

*utamamin*: to see; to know

*utan*: ground-dwelling python forbidden to men

*utuun, utuumin*: 'little people' supposed to have lived in Ifitaman before Afek came

*utuun sang*: 'fairy tales' supposedly about the doings of *utuumin* (but made-up)

*uultem*: salt bin in corner of house

*uun*: bird (generic); nowadays, chicken

*uunok*: large lowland cassowary forbidden to all Telefolmin ('bird mother')

*uununang*: spirit women who look after birds

*uyam dan*: tree sap used in body paint for *mafuum ban*

## W

*waafu*: saved or alive

*waafunamin*: to preserve; hold onto; capture

*waan*: tuber (yam or sweet potato; generic)

*waan aalab*: a yam only permitted to seniors

*waan amem*: a yam only permitted to seniors

*waasi*: enemy; warfare

*amwaasi*: domestic enemies, i.e., other Telefolmin who should not be killed

*sepwaasi*: traditional enemies who may be eaten

*waasi bagan*: enemy territory

*waasi sang*: tales of warfare

*watom*: bush wallaby

*weng*: speech or talk; words

*weng amem*: sacred and secret speech; esoteric lore of the men's cult

*weng atul*: hot talk; angry or insulting talk

*weng aal*: insulting talk

*weng binim*: 'no talk', silence (usually response to shame)

*weng doo*: metaphorical ('reminding') talk; skits performed in initiations

*weng kem*: non-secret moral instruction given to initiands

*weng mafak*: cursing; insulting talk

*weng migik*: deceptive or misleading talk; lies

*weng tambal*: good talk, sound counsel

*win*: name

*win-so tenum*: a man with a name, i.e., a good reputation

*win binim*: a man with no name, i.e., no reputation; a forgotten man

## Y

*yet*: wild figs

*yol*: salt made from vegetable ash

*yol*: lizard arrow

*yolam*: men's cult house, home of the *usong* (forbidden to non-initiates)

*yolabiip*: the fenced yard surrounding the *yolam*

*yook*: a variety of pigeon forbidden to women

*yuul*: men's antiphonal cries, often to announce arrival or sometimes just for the fun of it while walking through the forest

## APPENDIX II:

The Two Blind Men Who Lived Inside a Stone<sup>1</sup>

A large stone stands. Inside this stone two cross-cousins had made their home. These two men were blind, could not see--they had no eyes. One of them made gardens while the other hunted with traps and snares. The hunter went up the mountain one day to check one of his snares along a cassowary run. He went and found a cassowary in the snare--it was huge and very fat, and he was very happy. But he didn't see that there was another there, one who could see.<sup>2</sup> The blind man took up the cassowary on his shoulders, and as he did so, the other man hopped on top too and sat astride the cassowary. The blind one thought to himself, "wow! This sure is a heavy cassowary! We'll have lots of meat and fat to eat tonight." Then he staggered downslope with his burden and came to his house. He pounded on the outside of the large stone with a small stone, and it opened and he went inside, where his cross-cousin was waiting. He put the cassowary down, and the two of them sat on opposite sides of the hearth. The third one sat between them but they had no eyes and didn't see him.

They were getting ready to cook their food now, and the hunter cooked the liver of the cassowary while the gardner cooked some taro. When the food was done, they were going to exchange their food so each could have some meat and some taro. But the third one was there too. When one of the men went to pass some food across to the other, the third one would take this from his hand. If a piece of roast taro was passed across, he would eat it and only pass on a small piece of crust to the other man. If a piece of cassowary was passed across, he would eat it and only pass a tiny piece of skin on.



This went on for some time, and the two blind cross-cousins suspected each other of being greedy: "When I ask him for something, he only gives me a little, and bad food too. And yet he keeps asking me for more and more, complaining that he is still hungry!" And so they became angry and thought badly of one another.

In the meantime, the other man there had eaten so much that he had to defecate. He was inside the stone, and could find no place to go, so he defecated in the salt-bin (*uultem*)<sup>3</sup> in the corner of the house. One of the blind men said to his cross-cousin, "get some salt (*yol*) and pass it to me". The other cousin reached in for some salt, but no! He groped around and felt something strange. He smelled his fingers. He tasted. "Eee! What's this?! That's not salt, that's shit (*ool*)! You're not a child any more that you shit in the house! Why did you do this thing?!" And the other thought to himself, "first he refuses to share his food with me, and now he wants to pick a fight. Very well!" And so the two of them began to fight, each flailing a piece of firewood at the other. They were blind and couldn't fight very well, but the other man would hit them both with firewood, and so they became more and more furious at each other. Soon they were afraid of wrecking the house, so they went outside to fight, with the other man following them.

Not far away, another man had just made a fire to clear the slash in his garden, and had gone back to his house to get some tobacco seeds. The two blind men kept fighting, and the third man kicked them, and they rolled down the slope, still fighting, and then fell into the garden fire and were burned. Then the sighted man ran away.

When the man who was making the garden returned, he saw the two blind men lying among the ashes. He reached down gingerly and pulled one of the fingers. It came off in his hand, and he wondered what it tasted like. He put a little to his lips and found it was delicious! He got excited about

the prospect of all this meat, and hurried off to cut some bamboo containers (*tet*) so he could carry the meat home. But he was in too much of a hurry and didn't pay attention to what he was doing. He chopped at some bamboo with his adze, and he cut it wrong--he cut a bent bamboo stalk, and it sprung up and impaled him through his belly. And so he was dead, frozen with his adze raised up over his head.

A little while later, a boy was going upstream towards the bamboo thicket, carrying his bow and lizard arrows (*yol*) and looking for something to shoot. Ahead through the forest he made out the figure of a man with his adze raised up, and the boy thought this man was going to kill him. Frightened, he threw away his bow and arrow and ran away downstream, and as he ran he tripped over a tree root, cutting off his penis (*et*) as he fell.

His penis was swept downstream until it came to a pool where the sedges for women's skirts (*umam*) grew. There were two sisters there, gathering sedges for their skirts. They had no husbands.

The elder of the two sisters waded into the deep part of the pool. Now the penis that had been carried down there got up and went inside her vagina and started moving around. "What's this?" So she thought. She liked it, and then she thought to herself, "now I have a husband!" Not telling her sister, she cut a forked piece of wood<sup>4</sup> and lined it with soft leaves to make a "nest" for her penis. Then she went and took it back to her house. Her sister didn't know about this.

She pulled away a strip of the bark floor and put her penis there in its nest. This was by her sitting place next to the hearth, and whenever she wanted to feel the penis, she would simply sit down over this spot: then it would spring up through the floor and enter her.

Soon she became pregnant and gave birth to a little boy. When her younger sister asked her about this, pointing out that there were no men, the

elder sister simply answered, "I went up on top of a high hill, and lifted my skirt and spread my legs when a strong wind was blowing". Her sister believed her and tried this, but nothing happened, she only began sneezing. The younger asked her sister again, saying that she knew she had been lied to. The elder sister said, "I went out into the bush and found a wild taro and rubbed it in and out of my vagina". And so the younger tried this, but all that happened was that her vagina became irritated and itchy.

One day the elder sister asked the younger to hold her baby while she went outside to defecate. The younger sister did this, and when she sat down at her sister's place on the floor, the penis sprang up and entered her. Then she became angry and thought, "so, this is what my sister has been lying to me about!". She took up some cooking tongs and covered the penis with hot coals and ashes (*ek*) from the fire. She killed it--she killed her sister's husband.

The elder sister came back and sat down with the baby while the younger sister went out to get some firewood. She sat and waited for the penis to enter her, but nothing happened. When she looked down, she saw nothing but ashes--then she knew what her sister had done. Later, when the younger sister returned, she leaned over and stuck her head through the doorway as she was entering the house. The elder sister took up her adze and struck. The younger sister's head fell inside the house and her body fell outside. The mother and her son remained, and then he grew up. He didn't have a name. These people are all dead now. That's the end of the story.

## NOTES

### Chapter 1: Introduction

1. This dissertation is based on fieldwork carried out in Telefolmin between February 1974 and October 1975. A subsequent visit was paid to Telefolmin in the summer of 1979 under the auspices of the following institutions, which I take this opportunity to thank: The University of Western Ontario Faculty of Social Science; the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada; the National Science Foundation; the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research; the Smithsonian Institution; and Cultural Survival. This latter visit was undertaken for research independent of that discussed here, but it provided a welcome opportunity to confirm some key points of interpretation and allowed the gathering of some supplementary information which has, where relevant, been included in this account.
2. In what follows I of course do not attempt to deal with the sum total of each of these writers' work, but instead only focus upon what seem to be their most distinctive contributions to our notions of the relation between structure and experience. I have likewise chosen to limit the discussion to the works of these authors, though it will be obvious that many others could be brought within the range of this discussion.
3. Here I do not take up Levi-Strauss' use of the concept of inversions, but it is evident from his Asdiwal analysis and other works that a key analytic point is that relations between structures can be negative--i.e., inverted--as well as positive or homologous.
4. This is with the notable exception of some of the closing passages of *Purity and Danger* and, in particular, the excellent piece on Dogon divination (in *Implicit Meanings*).
5. Though Leach (among others) has also touched upon the topic of status reversal (cf. 1976), it seems in his hands to be merely a diacritic to signal the shift from normal to ritual time without, however, really exploring the implications of such shifting. This is fairly representative of the relatively weak interpretation given some of van Gennep's basic ideas in the general run of anthropological thought.
6. See, for example Beck (1978), Ricoeur (1977b).
7. Here Burke's work (1966) is clearly apposite. One of the critical properties of language is the ability to bring possibility before the mind and to enfranchise counterfactual speculation.
8. See Beck (1978), Fernandez (1974), Ricoeur (1977b, 1978). There is a family resemblance between "lexical-semantic" signification vs. the meanings of metaphor and Sperber's (1975) distinction between encyclopaedic and symbolic knowledge.

9. In Ricoeur's words, "...the strategy of discourse implied in metaphorical language is neither to improve communication nor to ensure univocity in argumentation, but to shatter and increase our sense of reality by shattering and increasing our language.... With metaphor we experience the metamorphosis of both language and reality" (1978:132-3).
10. *Habu* seems already to have born fruit in the work of others. See, for example, Schieffelin's excellent *Sorrow of the Lonely and the Burning of the Dancers* (1976), which seems clearly to be founded upon the scaffolding built up by *Habu*.
11. Here we may note that awareness and cultural meaning are perhaps to be understood as standing on complementary sides of the same coin: transformation of awareness proceeds through transformation of meaning and vice-versa.
12. Virtually all of my information on Telefol culture stems from my conversations with men, and it was impossible for me to achieve a corresponding degree of contact with women, due largely to pervasive adultery fears and suspicions. To the extent that I comment about women or their situation, this is largely based on an understanding of the men's views balanced against my own observations and a few privileged conversations with elder women, especially with Konungen, my self-appointed mother.
13. I decline to offer a formal definition of religion, though a number are available to us in the literature. My preference is to let definitional problems remain in the background in the hopes that we can get further by letting a sense of things emerge in the course of discussion.
14. Published works on the Mountain Ok peoples include Barth (1971, 1975); Brongersma and Venema (1962); Champion (1966); B. Craig (1967), R. Craig (1969); Cranstone (1968); Healey (1962); Jorgensen (1980); Pouwer (1964); Quinlivan (1954); and Wheatcroft (1973). Unpublished works by Hyndman, Jones, Poole, and Wheatcroft should be consulted. The present work invites comparison with Barth (1975).

## Chapter 2: The Background of Telefol Life

1. In fact, Telefol theory maintains that if a man comes in contact with menstrual blood, he will be blinded to game in the bush.
2. Note a curious structural parallel between the social arrangement attributed to *kundunang* and Mead's account of Mundugumor "ropes" (1963). There is also a resonance here of what may be a widespread association between primordial women and male dogs (cf. Gewertz 1978; Williams 1977).
3. This *utuun sang* is attributed to the Fegolmin.
4. Compare the floorplan of Kaluli longhouses, which seem to display the same structural arrangement (Schieffelin 1976:33).
5. In information I gathered about suicide in Telefolmin, 23 of 28 cases involved some sort of breakdown in relations between men and women.

## Chapter 3: Order and Entropy in the Telefol World

1. See, e.g., Cook (1966); Kaberry (1967); Langness (1964); Pouwer (1966a,b); Salisbury (1964); Schwimmer (1973); and Watson (1965, 1970).
2. Much the same could be said in relation to Australian systems of marriage.
3. "Mountain Ok" is a linguistic term originally coined by Alan Healey, and is differentiated from the Lowland Ok languages in the region of the upper Digul and Fly rivers. For our purposes it will suffice to identify as Mountain Ok those peoples whose own designations for themselves are marked by the common suffix *-min* or *-tan(a)*, denoting "people" or "descendants". Some of those claimed by Telefolmin to be *Afekman*--e.g., the Dulanmin or Oksapmin--are in fact speakers of languages unrelated to Mountain Ok proper, though cultural affinities seem evident to an outsider.
4. Some of the other *tenum miit* names are Misinmin, Tumiitmin, Timkelmin, Uubrenmin, Tomaanmin. With the exception of Misinmin, these are said to be "other names" for members of the four *tenum miit* already mentioned. For example, Tomaanmin is said to be a name assumed by the Kayaalikmin residing in Telefolip after the founding of the Kayaalikmin village (now including Derolengam and Ankevip) from Telefolip. While it is tempting to view these other names as indicative of fission and segmentation of *tenum miit*, my informants insist that this is simply a matter of names and that, e.g., Tomaanmin are "really" Kayaalikmin, and there are likewise attempts to place the other names within the framework of the four "original" *tenum miit*. Misinmin itself seems to be an anomalous case, and I found no consensus on whether it is to be considered as "really" one of the others or an independent *tenum miit*. Some at least harbour the suspicion that Misinmin may not in fact be a true Telefol *tenum miit* at all. This is clearly a complicated matter, and one which I would like to explore on another occasion.
5. The core villages founded directly from Telefolip are: Kubrenmin (Kubrenmin *tenum miit*), Biiltevip (Bogelmin *tenum miit*), Falamtigin (Atemkayaakmin *tenum miit*), and Kayaalikmin Derolengam + Ankevip (Kayaalikmin *tenum miit*). Together, these villages account for the majority of the Telefolmin population in Ifitaman (see Maps).
6. See Gewertz (1978) and Williams (1977) on women and dogs in the mythos of other peoples of Papua New Guinea.
7. Such ideas are spatially demarcated and identified only in the village of Telefolip.
8. *Abiip* refers both to the villages of Derolengam and Ankevip and to the larger entity of Kayaalikmin as a whole, which might be termed a village-cluster. I defer exploration of the formation of such clusters to another occasion. In practice, the tendency is to identify Derolengam and Ankevip as separate entities in normal usage. In this particular case, the two villages seem to have formed from fission relatively recently, but remained in close proximity to one another.
9. The prior presence of Nukokmin ("marsupial-mother people") and the more or less "mythical" Utuummin is conceded.

10. My orthography differs from that adopted by the Healeys from time to time. As they have themselves noted, Telefol orthography is in a continual process of refinement. Such differences as there are should be understood as the result of varying pronunciations within Telefol, the vagaries of one's hearing, and a balancing of the demands of phonemic accuracy against those of readability for English speakers.
11. There is no correlation discernible between *tenu mii* and the use of kinterms. In practice, a kin term can be found for almost anyone in Telefolmin.
12. This results in a net masculinization of genealogies.
13. The situation is only marginally clearer if blocs of land are considered in terms of the village memberships of those who cultivate them. Land rights are individualized and shift through time--any general tendency in the pattern of landholdings is more a reflection of inheritance patterns following from endogamous marriages.
14. Occasionally siblings or affines will attempt to coordinate their gardening movements.
15. Such harvesting following a hunt had to be performed by a man who had not actually killed any animals during the hunt.
16. Compare Gell's exposition of the centre/periphery opposition among the Umeda (1975).
17. The conventional cash value for *bonang* ranges from two to six (Australian) dollars, while that for pigs is conventionally put at roughly thirty (Australian) dollars.
18. This is based upon the administration's census figures for 1971.
19. In the event, such a move had not--by 1979--taken place.
20. Note that his loss is only partially balanced by the presumptive advantages of links with relatively powerful and wealthy outsiders.
21. According to current reckoning, the Telefolip has been rebuilt thirteen times since its founding. Twenty-seven is the base of the counting system.
22. See Healey and Healey 1977:18-9).
23. In Telefolmin, as elsewhere, turnabout is fair play.
24. Compare Burridge's analysis of the Tangu category *imbatekas* (1969).

Chapter 4: The World of the *Yolam*

1. There seems to be no overall meaning attributable to *amitung* (Craig 1967).
2. This seems to share the logic of the *dubung* prohibition. For an example of similar regulations among the Iatmul, see Bateson (1958:36-42).
3. It seems clear that *magalo* and *magam* are antithetically related. It is tempting to view *magalo* as the linguistic negation of *magam*, since negation can be indicated by the insertion of -l- in the final syllable of a word. This, however, cannot be the case, for this is a verb construction, and the appropriate form in any case would then be *magalam*. When I questioned informants on possible linguistic relations between the words *magam* and *magalo* they were noncommittal but remarked that in any event if something were without *magam* then it would be *magalo*.
4. *Biit* was originated by an *aanangen*, which is one of Magalim's manifestations.
5. This consists of passing the distraught child between and underneath the mother's legs. I have seen men do the same thing with taro that had been dropped or otherwise poorly treated, and once saw a man pass a *men amem* between his legs after it was roughly (but accidentally) knocked down from the wall upon which it had been hung. Note the passage of initiands through initiators' legs in the *om ban*. In each case, such action is spoken of as "binding the *sinik*". In the course of the *ugem kong* curing rite, the *men amem* to whom the pig is sacrificed is then hung above the doorway of the house in which the rite is held. The participants then enter the house underneath this *men amem* and the leg of a senior man (the one who looks after the *men amem* in question), which he stretches over the entryway. This may also be related to the practice older men adopt of passing otherwise forbidden food to young children underneath their left armpit, though I was unable to get any explicit exegesis on this point.
6. Though money was occasionally involved in Ok Bembem, and though the leader himself occasionally profited from this (indeed, handsomely in one case known to me), in general the amounts were small and most of the money went to finance "parties" for those who came to the seances. For most of the participants the concern was less a matter of gaining access to goods than gaining contact with loved ones who had died. People were in the main motivated by loneliness for the dead rather than desire for wealth.

## Chapter 5: Telefol Religion and What It Means

1. Among those anthropologists who one way or another have drawn upon the work of theologians are Burridge, Douglas, Evans-Pritchard, and Turner. The general reluctance to pursue theological matters, however, is perhaps most clearly stated by Evans-Pritchard at the end of *Nuer Religion*, and I will cite his closing remarks in full:

We can...say no more than that Spirit is an intuitive apprehension, something experienced in response to certain situations but known directly only to the imagination and not to the senses.... We seem indeed



to be watching a play or listening to someone's account of what he has dreamt. Perhaps when we have this illusion we are beginning to understand, for the significance of the objects, actions, and events lies not in themselves but in what they mean to those who experience them as participants and assistants. What this experience is the anthropologist cannot for certain say. Experiences of this kind are not easily communicated even when people are ready to communicate them and have a sophisticated vocabulary in which to do so. Though prayer and sacrifice are exterior actions, Nuer religion is ultimately an interior state. This state is externalized in rites which we can observe, but their meaning depends finally on an awareness of God and that men are dependent upon him and must be resigned to his will. At this point the theologian takes over from the anthropologist (Evans-Pritchard 1956:321-2).

Clearly, Evans-Pritchard's reluctance to go further is well-grounded and is based on an appreciation of the depth of the problems and the limits of anthropology. But these are limits which we must seek to extend, and it is in this spirit that the present work is written.

2. The strengths and limitations of this are perhaps best seen in Gell's excellent *Metamorphosis of the Cassowaries* (1975), where a painstaking and brilliant analysis of Umeda ritual is in the end brought back down to a discourse on problems in Umeda social relations. As a necessary scaffolding to approach Umeda ritual, the emphasis on social relations seems to pay off. But the obvious riches brought to light in the course of the analysis are cast away in the final attempt to re-ground the discussion in terms of social structure, resulting, in my view, in a short-circuiting of interpretive power.

#### Appendix II: The Two Blind Men Who Lived Inside a Stone

1. "Two no-eyes", *tiin binim aloop*, a popular *utuun sang*.
2. According to some versions, this mysterious third man is a ghost, *bagel*.
3. Cf. *ooltem*, 'anus'.
4. This is described in detail as being virtually identical with the way in which the head of the *yol* lizard arrow is constructed.

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