

## **GIFT-EXCHANGE**

**in the**

**MENDI VALLEY.**

**Chapter**

**Page**

I. **Ecology & Subsistence.**

( An examination of the socio-political implications of the ceremonial exchange of wealth among the people of the Mendi Valley, Southern Highlands District, Papua.)

II. **History & The Basis of Exchange.**

III. **Private & Individual Exchanges.**

**by**

**D'ARCY RYAN.**

IV. **Marriage & Bride-payments.**

V. **Death & Mortuary Exchanges.**

**Causes of Death, & the Allocation of Responsibility.**

VI. **Death & Mortuary Exchanges.**

VII. **Death & Mortuary Exchanges.**

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## SYNOPSIS

The culture of the Mendi Valley has much in common with that of its neighbours (the Huli, Enga, Kyaka and Mbowamp) and conforms in broad essentials to the general pattern found throughout the New Guinea Highlands. The Mendi have, however, developed one institution, gift-exchange, to a degree of elaboration not found among other Highland cultures.

This thesis is an examination of the role of economic exchange in Mendi society, where almost every social relationship, whether between individuals or groups, is marked by the transfer of valuables.

From an examination of the compulsory exchanges associated with marriage, death, warfare, truce, etc., the basic principle of the system emerges: "Exchange is friendship: only friends can exchange, and all friends must exchange".

The institution of Mendi gift-exchange fulfils certain functions:

I. In a society with a flexible descent system it marks off significant social groupings.

II. It establishes the pattern of alliances between otherwise autonomous groups.

III. The ability to make prescribed prestations is essential for the survival of a political group.

IV. It is the only means of achieving individual status.

An examination of gift-exchange also shows how, in a self-consciously egalitarian society, distinctions of status are thrown up by the social structure itself.

Gift-exchange is quite distinct from trade, and has little to do with the supply or distribution of consumer-goods.

The system of gift-exchange has provided the Mendi with a means of adapting their social structure to certain external circumstances.





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## I.

### INTRODUCTORY NOTE:-

The following thesis is based on field-work carried out in three periods: June to December, 1954; July, 1955 to October, 1956; and July to December, 1958. The first two visits were assisted by research grants from the University of Sydney, and the third was financed by the W.M. Strong Fellowship, which I held for 1957 and 1958.

Field-work in this area presented certain difficulties. When I arrived in Mendi in 1954, the government station (the first in the Southern Highlands District) had been open for only four years, and the whole District was a "restricted area". The natives were still hostile, and while I was there, government patrols were attacked twice, within six miles of the station. Travelling without an armed escort was presumed dangerous for Europeans, and our movements were severely restricted. I myself was given more latitude than were most Europeans who were not Native Affairs Officers, but, until my third visit in 1958, I was not allowed more than 10 miles north of Mendi station, nor could I enter the neighbouring Lai Valley.

Language was a further problem. There were, in 1954, only two or three local Pidgin speakers, all of whom were fully employed as government interpreters. I was forced, therefore, to work entirely in the vernacular without any interpreters at all. This procedure was undoubtedly rewarding in the end, but it did delay the gathering of information for a long time. Were it not for the assistance I received from the staff of the Methodist Overseas Mission, who generously gave me complete access to their own work on the language, my task would have been much more arduous than it was. Even with this invaluable assistance, it was more than 12 months before I could converse in Mendi with any ease. I



## II.

found it an extremely difficult language (to my knowledge, there are at least 17 complete sets of verbal inflections) and it was only after about 20 months that I could pick up a conversation in which I was not specifically included.

The greatest difficulty of all, however, was the people themselves. They were not obstructive; just completely unco-operative. There were two principal reasons for this. First, they disliked Europeans, and (not unreasonably) resented our presence in their valley. They are a proud and independent people who, living in an acephalous society, were quite unaccustomed to authority. There was nobody at all in native Mendi society who could give orders and see that they were obeyed. Certain men with achieved status had influence, but even these had no sanctions by which they could enforce obedience. When, therefore, the government arrived and imposed an alien set of laws on the Mendi, when it forbade fighting, and exacted compulsory, unpaid labour for air-strip and roads, and when it punished with a jail sentence anyone who defied it, then it is not surprising that the Mendi did not take kindly to the new order. At first they attempted open aggression, and when this was found unprofitable, they lapsed into a sullen, truculent hostility. The only thing that made relations with them possible was their avid desire for certain forms of material wealth: pearl-shells, axes, and knives. Europeans have a plentiful supply of these things, and the natives are prepared to swallow their pride to get them. Why they want these goods so desperately will form the central topic of this paper.

The second reason the Mendi were hard to work with was that they have, to a degree which I imagine to be unusual among primitive peoples, a code of "minding your own business". Not only did they try to exclude me, an outsider, from their affairs, but I have reason to believe that they did not discuss very much among themselves any matter in which they were not personally concerned. Certainly, there was a consistent refusal to speculate on the motivation of others, and queries in this field were invariably met with the reply: "Do I see inside his mind?". They showed little or no curiosity about our way of life, assuming it to be, in all basic essentials, similar to their own.

When I first went to live at Map, a dance-ground about two hours walk north of Mendi station, my initial reception

### III.

was one of open hostility, even to drawn bows. This was merely a bluff, and when I stayed, it was made clear to me that I would be tolerated for two reasons: one, I was to be a cornucopia of trade-goods which I was to distribute to all and sundry; and, two, I was to act as an intermediary with the Administration to gain the Map people preferential treatment. When I proved a complete disappointment on both counts, and when the novelty of my presence had worn off, I was simply ignored. I had been there for about seven months on my second visit (about thirteen months in all) before I began to get any information to speak of; and until the day I left, I cannot recall one single scrap of information that was actually volunteered, even by regular informants whom, by that time, I knew quite intimately. Everything had to be elicited by questioning, and if I missed the crucial leads, no help was ever offered. This had one minor advantage: they seldom bothered to lie to me; if they didn't want to tell me something, they just didn't.

By and large, I did not really like the Mendi, but I must confess that, if an impertinent stranger came prying into my life, I should probably have behaved much as they did.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

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Professor A.P. Elkin, who helped arrange my first field-work, and who gave me constant encouragement when I badly needed it.

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Professor W.R. Geddes, whose comments on my rough



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My thanks are also due to:

The Director and staff of the Methodist Overseas Mission, Mendi, whose assistance (particularly with the language) saved me many months of work.

The officers of the Department of Native Affairs at Mendi, without whose full co-operation this study could hardly have been made at all.

Native terms, and their translation: I have avoided, as far as possible, the interlarding of my text with native terms. Many such terms have indeed been included, in order to indicate that they represent concepts isolated and defined by the people themselves; after their introduction, such concepts are subsequently referred to in their English translation. Translation presented a special problem in that a literal translation is often as meaningless to the reader as was the original native term. In referring to specific kinds of exchanges, I use a descriptive rather than a literal translation. For example, ke kondisha is an essential part of any mortuary payment; it means, literally, "pork-quarters shared-together", but I refer to it as "the return-gift pigs", a term which describes the functional role of such an exchange.

To the foregoing, there is one important exception: the term twem, which will be defined fully in Chapter III. There is no simple translation of this word, and, as it describes an economic operation which permeates every level of Mendi life, and on which all other forms of exchange are completely dependent, I have left it untranslated. The term twem appears on almost every other page of this thesis, and I venture to ask that I be granted this concession.

# V.

The pronunciation of Mendi: Mendi contains several sounds not found in English, and many phonemes change phonetically with word-position. I use here a phonetic spelling which is little more than a rough approximation to the actual sound and which ignores phonemic variation.

Unless otherwise indicated, stress is always on the first syllable.

o as in cot

ô as in law

a as in far

â as in fat



## CHAPTER I:-

### ECOLOGY & SUBSISTENCE:

The Mendi River rises about eight miles north-west of Mt. Giluwe, the highest mountain in Papua. It flows south in a long curve for about 30 miles to join the Kagua-Akuru, and thence, via the Erave, it meets the Purari which flows into the Gulf of Papua. The Mendi Valley is in the Southern Highlands District of Papua (approximately  $6^{\circ}10' S$ ,  $143^{\circ}40' E$ ). Running almost north-south, it is about 25 miles long. The floor of the valley is 5000 feet above sea-level at its southern end, rising to 7000 feet in the north, where it merges into the foothills of the Kandep area. It is bounded along its length by two mountain ranges rising a further 1500 to 2000 feet above the valley floor. The valley is roughly wedge-shaped: about two miles wide in the south, it broadens to over twelve miles in the north.

The terrain is rugged and broken, and consists of a series of swift, rocky, mountain streams tumbling through gullies whose walls rise steeply from 50 to 250 feet. Thus, the whole valley floor consists of a network of gullies and ridges which serve to

define the territorial boundaries of the localized social groups.

Climate: The climate is mild throughout the year: the days are warm but the nights are chilly, and the northern, and higher parts of the valley are subject to severe frosts. There are no seasonal variations in temperature.

Over eight years (1951-1958) the rainfall averaged 108.13 inches a year, distributed monthly as shown in Fig. I. There is a slightly less wet period in May-June, but this appears to have little influence on the local agriculture. The daily pattern of rainfall is also fairly regular: it usually begins to fall in late afternoon and continues until late in the evening.

European Influence: The valley was first entered by Europeans in 1936, in a patrol which cut across it from west to east, spending only two days in the area. In 1938, a mapping expedition made a more detailed exploration and took several astro-fixes, which at last put the Mendi Valley on the map of New Guinea. A few of the local people recall these two visits, and remember that they were frightened, believing that the white men were their ancestral ghosts. There was no other European contact until 1950, when a government station was established on the Mendi River about ten miles north of its junction with the Kagua-Akuru. An air-strip was built, and this station became the administrative head-quarters of the Southern Highlands District. In the same year, 1950, the Methodist Overseas Mission established a post about one mile north of the government-station: and in 1955, a Catholic Mission was estab-



Inches of rain:

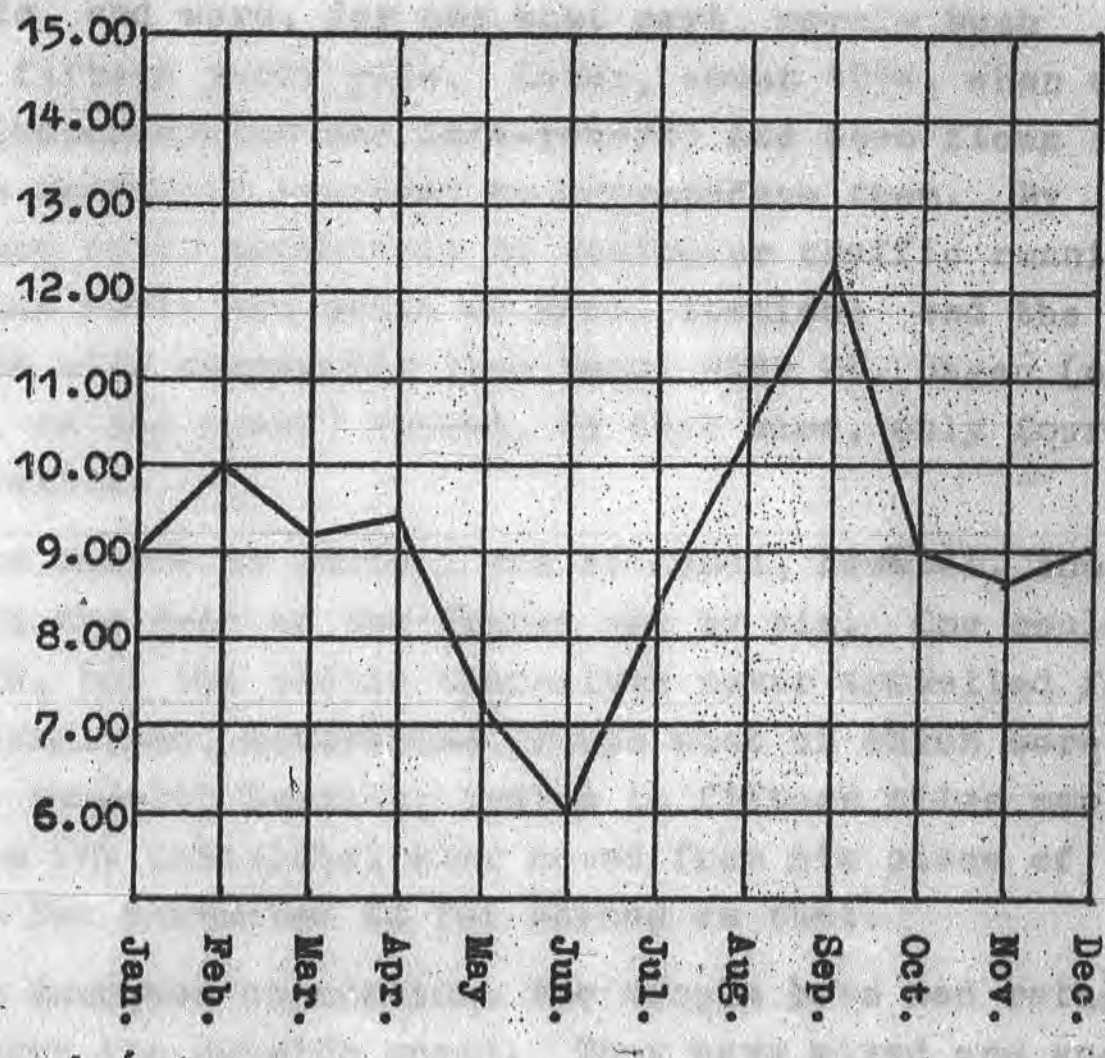


Fig.I

AVERAGE RAINFALL (1951 to 1958)

(Recorded at the Government Station, Mendi.)

lished about one mile south of the station.

The Australian Government followed its usual practice in new areas: it placed an immediate ban on inter-clan fighting, and began to build roads. The first roads were made largely without European supervision and tended to follow the previously existing native tracks. They were quite unpassable to any wheeled vehicle, and were, for the most part, merely bush tracks ten or fifteen yards wide. Later, about 1954, when a few vehicles (motor-cycles and land-rovers) had been flown in, the roads were gradually improved to accommodate them. By 1958, there were roads negotiable to vehicular traffic running nearly ten miles north and south of Mendi station; and the "highway" which will eventually link Mendi with Mt. Hagen (and thence to Lae, on the coast) wanted, by that time, only four miles to completion.

During the period in which I was at Mendi, however, the usual access to the rest of New Guinea was by air. One could, of course, walk, but the people themselves never travelled far. They live in localized, autonomous groups most of which were, and still are, mutually hostile; twelve to fifteen miles was about as far as any individual ever moved from his place of residence, and few travelled as far abroad as that.

Since the European occupation, the people have had rather more contact with the outside world. They have mixed and spoken with police and "cargo-boys" (native labourers) brought into Mendi from other areas, and a few of them have visited the coast and other parts of the Highlands either as indentured labourers or as guests of the government (the latter being part of a policy designed to acquaint natives of recently contacted areas with the rest of New Guinea).



The Christian missions have had little or no influence in the Mendi area. The Methodist Mission conducts a school with a trained teacher, and has, in about ten years, produced perhaps half-a-dozen youths rudimentarily literate in Mendi. The Catholic Mission has had no discernible effect at all. The government school teaches English only (not Pidgin) and, by 1958, had achieved slight success.

Certain of the people living within a mile or two of the station are becoming accustomed to white men, and some are beginning to acquire a smattering of Pidgin.

Generally, however, during the period covered by my visits (1954-1958) the people can be described as "untouched". Disregarding those few individuals (usually youths) who attached themselves to the European station, their lives and their social structure are very much what they were before the Europeans arrived.

European contact has had two effects of which the future consequences are, at this stage, difficult to estimate. First, the influx of European trade-goods has caused a marked inflation in the local currency; and second, the government ban on warfare and on the violent redress of injury may well bring about important changes in the social structure. Both these matters will be discussed later in their relevant contexts.

The people of the Mendi Valley do not think of themselves as one group, social, political, cultural, or racial. They call themselves Ip Ment Piri (Mendi River People) to distinguish themselves geographically from the inhabitants of, for example, the neighbouring Lai Valley to the west (Ip Engi Piri); but regular social intercourse takes place between the two valleys, and their cultures are identical. The cultural

area has not been defined; indeed, as Highland cultures tend to merge into each other, it is by no means certain that such definition would be profitable, or even possible.

Language: Linguistically, Mendi appears to be on the eastern edge of an area which extends about 30 miles<sup>1</sup> south-west to the Mubi River.<sup>2</sup> About ten miles to the north-east of Mendi the Medlps (Mt. Hagen)-speaking area begins. The two linguistic areas merge gradually, with a bilingual band, about five miles wide, between them. The Mendi language is spoken as far as the Kandep (about 20 miles north of the station) where the inhabitants are trilingual in Mendi, Enga and Huli. It stretches south eight miles to the Kagua-Akuru River, but how far it is understood beyond that point has not been established. The surrounding languages are, linguistically, closely related to Mendi, but are not mutually comprehensible. Roughly then, the Mendi language is spoken over an area of about 40 miles by 25 miles. Within

1. When, in the course of this paper, I refer to distances in miles, I mean map measurements "as the crow flies". It must be borne in mind, however, that in this kind of terrain, distance can be meaningfully expressed only in terms of walking-hours. Ten miles along the crest of a ridge can be done comfortably in under four hours, but ten miles from the Mendi River to the Nembi River, over two 1500 foot ranges, takes about twelve hours of hard walking.

2. See: F.E. Williams, "Report on the Grasslanders, Augu-Wage-Wela" (Annual Report of the Territory of New Guinea, 1938-39.)



this area are numerous dialects with variations of pronunciation and vocabulary rather than of grammar or syntax. The language is highly inflected, but, unlike some of the neighbouring tongues, is not tonal.<sup>3</sup>

The People: The people are of a physical type common throughout the New Guinea Highlands: short, muscular, and well-proportioned. The men average about 5 feet 1 inch in height, and the women about 4 feet 8 inches. Skin-colour varies a good deal, from very dark brown to a light olive, but, oddly enough, light skins do not run in families, and the gene-patterns governing skin-colour appear to be unusually complex. A light skin has no social significance.

Modes of Subsistence: The people live in patrilineal descent-groups, territorially localized. On each clan-territory, there are one or more "dance-grounds":<sup>4</sup> grassy, park-like clearings surrounded by tall casuarinas, and approached by narrow bush-tracks. In former times, the entrances to dance-grounds were fortified by wooden palisades many of which still remain. The grounds vary in size from 10 by 20 yards, to 50 by 100 yards; they are often bordered by

3. There are, of course, general terms in the language for both people and speech, and at least three named dialects are distinguished locally, but there seem to be no disacritical terms for Mendi culture or Mendi language as opposed to other cultures or languages. Consequently, I use the Europeanized name "Mendi" to refer to the area, the people, the language, and the culture.

4. nol oma: "dance-soil".

flowering hedges, and many of them are lovely places. A clan-territory may have from one to a dozen dance-grounds. Each of these is usually associated with one or more sub-clans which have their ensha ("communal men's houses") on the edge of the ground. The dance-ground is often owned by the sub-clan or sub-clans associated with it. This is generally true of the minor dance-grounds, which function merely as decorative clearings and are rarely the site of dances, pig-killings, or other ceremonial. The larger dance-grounds, however, of which there is usually only one on each clan-territory, are the site of many important inter-clan ceremonial activities. The major dance-ground forms the ceremonial and social centre of the territory in which it is located, and the rights of land tenure attached to it are similar to those of our own Crown Reserves. In contrast with gardening land, which is individually owned, the dance-grounds are the communal property of the clan. A Mendi takes pride in, and has a sentimental attachment to, his dance-ground; for him, it is the focal point of his home territory.

The people do not live in villages. The residential pattern is one of scattered farm-steeds, with house-compounds located separately, each among its own gardens. The family living-pattern will be discussed more fully in the next chapter.

The Mendi are subsistence gardeners, growing and harvesting enough for their daily needs. There are no facilities for storing food, nor is any provision made for possible future shortages. Generally speaking, no such provision is necessary, for the climate is an equable one, land is in plentiful supply, and seasonal variation is negligible. In the north of the valley, and on the higher slopes, severe



frosts are common, and the people dependent on such land suffer occasional hardship. But, as will be shown later, there is a high degree of residential mobility, and the inhabitants of the more poorly endowed areas are able, in times of need, to reside temporarily with affines and other relatives in more fertile areas until their own gardens are back in production.

The principal crop is the sweet-potato<sup>5</sup>, of which the Mendi distinguish 52 named varieties.

The district is lime-stone country, with about two feet of volcanic top-soil over a red clay base. The soil is generally poor and heavily leached by the high rainfall. Thus, the most fertile ground tends to be towards the middle of the valley (especially in small pockets) and on the river flats. This has produced some degree of symbiotic relationship between certain clans: for example, a clan living high on the valley walls sometimes makes an arrangement with a clan on the valley floor whereby timber-rights are exchanged for gardening-rights.

Gardening is on the fallow system, and each garden-owner has simultaneously a number of gardens (usually about four) in varying stages of cultivation. The yield of sweet-potato ranges from  $2\frac{1}{2}$  tons to 9 tons per acre, with an average of 5 tons per acre. This crop is the staple diet, and the average consumption is 5 lbs. per adult male per day. Allowing for difference in soil fertility, the individual subsistence area has been calculated as 1 sq. chain  $\pm$  50%.<sup>6</sup>

5. Ipomoea batatas.

6. I am indebted for these figures to Mr. D. Johnston, Agricultural Officer of the Methodist Overseas Mission, Mendi.

A sweet-potato garden in this environment requires four to five months from planting to production, and it produces thereafter for about two years (gardens have been known to produce for four years, but this is exceptional). At the end of this time, a garden is turned back to fallow for five to eight years. Crop-rotation and composting are unknown, but the people are aware of the fertilizing effect of ashes.

Sweet-potato is planted by runners in circular mounds about six feet in diameter, a shape which seems characteristic of the Mendi area; most other Highlanders cultivate in square mounds. The only other crop which shares a sweet-potato garden is sugar-cane.

In addition to the main sweet-potato gardens, which are sometimes an acre or two in size,<sup>7</sup> there are smaller gardens adjacent to the women's-houses. These are given to assorted crops: beans, sugar-cane, edible gourds, and a dozen or more varieties of green vegetables. The houses are surrounded by banana trees. A third kind of garden is devoted to taro. For this crop, the most fertile pockets of soil are reserved, and individual plots are small (usually about 50 yards by 30 yards). Taro is the only crop which could be described as even approximately seasonal: its planting is a communal affair and the garden seasons are synchronized with its maturation-cycle.<sup>8</sup> The taro-gardens are shared by beans and other vegetables.

7. The biggest I measured was just under 2 acres, but I saw several apparently larger.

8. See: Chapt. XI (Part II), p. 292



When a new garden is begun, the land is burnt off, cleared, broken up, and fenced by the owner. If it is an old garden which has been lying fallow, the boundary is permanently fixed, and the new fence is built on the line of the old one. Once cleared and fenced, the new garden is mounded, planted, and subsequently maintained, by women of the owner's family.

Every man owns some domestic pigs which are tended by his women and stalled in their houses. Pigs (and certain leguminous vegetables) are the main source of protein in the Mendi diet, and pork is highly valued. Pigs are not merely a source of food, however; they play an important role in the Mendi economy, they are a major item of currency, and their killing and eating is attended by a number of ceremonial provisions which will be discussed in the course of this paper. If a man owns more pigs than can be accommodated in his own women's-houses, it is the practice to farm them out to be tended by the women-folk of fellow clan-members who are repaid by a fee called môk yari ("fee for the pig's leg-rope").

It is the Mendi practice to castrate male pigs before they are mature; they say that a fully-grown boar would be impossible to control and could not be stalled in a women's-house where the pigs are normally kept. A few boars are allowed to reach sexual maturity for breeding purposes; they are given a season with the sows, and then castrated. For this reason, within any one clan, there are very few serviceable boars, and their owners lend them to other pig-owners for breeding. A payment called môk tushi ("for the pig's testicles"), consisting of one piglet from a sow's litter,

is given to the owner of the boar that sired it.

The ordinary diet is supplemented by pandanus-nuts (a rare delicacy), edible fungi (found in the rain-forest), tiny, scaleless mud-fish, and any birds, possums or bush-rats that can be shot or snared. Fishing and hunting, however, are sports indulged in by children and youths, and their products are not part of the normal diet.

It is apparent, then, that in geography, climate, and natural environment, as in their modes of subsistence, the Mendi conform to the general pattern of New Guinea Highland societies.





(a) Youth carrying sugar-cane.

(b) A clan dance-ground.

"clan". Hence, the clan is, as the outside observer, the most immediately visible of all the Mendi social groups. It is, to begin with, the primary territorial unit identified with a clearly defined area of land whose boundaries are known (even if occasionally ignored) by both the members of the clan and by its adjacent neighbours. Clan boundaries consist of a series of natural

## CHAPTER II:-

(rivers, creeks, gullies, etc.) which make the territory easier to defend, for the clan is also the basic fighting unit. Thus the clan is the largest of the

## THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE:<sup>1</sup>

Like most peoples of the Western and Southern Highlands of New Guinea, the Mendi have a segmentary social structure based on a system of localized patrilineal clans. As in the neighbouring areas, there are levels of segmentation both above and below the clan, and perhaps I should begin by making it clear why, for the purpose of analysis, I have selected a particular level of segmentation, namely, the clan, as the pivotal unit of the whole structure.

First, all unilinear descent-groups in Mendi, from a clan-cluster of up to a thousand people to a simple family of a man and his children, are known by a generic term, shem. Shem does in fact mean "unilinear descent-group", and the particular social group to which it refers at any time depends on context. But when asked by a complete stranger for the name of his shem, a Mendi replies almost invariably with the name of the group I am calling the

1. See: D.J.Ryan, "Clan Formation in the Mendi Valley" (*Oceania*, Vol.XXIX, 1959, p.257-289). This chapter is a synopsis of the material discussed in some detail in the above article.



"clan". Second, the clan is, to the outside observer, the most immediately obvious of all the Mendi social groups. It is, to begin with, the primary territorial unit identified with a clearly defined area of land whose boundaries are known (even if occasionally ignored) by both the members of the clan and by its adjacent neighbours. Clan boundaries consist as a rule of natural barriers (rivers, creeks, gullies, etc.) which make the territory easier to defend, for the clan is also the basic fighting unit. Third, the clan is the largest of the named social groups, and its name is carried by its members as a prefix to their personal names. Finally, and less precisely, the clan represents the group of people among whom most of an individual's ordinary daily life takes place. I refer here not to the more formal occasions, like house-building or pork-distributions, but to such vaguer associations as: with whom does a child play? or a youth hunt? or a man share tit-bits of food? Contacts of this kind tend, if only for geographic reasons, to be restricted to the limits of the clan. To put it simply, a Mendi sees more of his fellow clan-members than of other people.

In presenting a description of any social structure, particularly of a segmentary one, the problem is where to begin. One can, for example, select an important social unit like the clan and then describe its relationship with all the other units. Or one can start with the largest units and break them down into their component parts. Or again, beginning with the smallest social groups, one can show how they are integrated into larger and wider-ranging units. There is, of course, no simple or absolute answer

to this; ultimately the people being described and the nature of their social order will determine the approach. In dealing with the Mendi the last method has been adopted: starting with the individual and his family, I shall trace the ways in which he identifies himself with progressively wider groups, and the manner in which groups of a particular order are integrated with each other. This method of presentation has been thought best, firstly, because the individual in Mendi plays a very important part in determining the relations between social groups, and, secondly, because the complex composition of larger units, like the clan, depends on those same principles which may be more easily analysed in simpler units like the sub-clan.

The Family: I begin with the polygynous family: a man, his wife or wives, and their unmarried children. Married children are not as a rule included because it is the custom for them to move immediately after marriage to a new house, where, with their spouses and children, they form a separate household. Married children who are widowed or divorced, often return to the parents' household.



Co-wives usually live in separate houses, sometimes miles apart, either because they frequently quarrel, or because the husband may wish to maintain land-rights and gardens in different places, and it suits him to have a household in each. The commonest living arrangement is one or more women's-houses grouped around a beaten dirt yard, and it is here that the family gathers for the evening meal which is prepared and eaten in a lean-to shelter open at the front. Some of the older men have a separate house in their yard, containing a sitting-room, leading to a sleeping room at the back; but more usually the men, married and single, sleep in a communal men's-house (ensha) with other men of their sub-clan. Here each of the regular occupants has his own private sleeping cubicle, where he keeps his personal belongings, while he shares the common sitting-room with the others. A man with only one wife sometimes sleeps in her house, but in a separate room, for women are held to be inherently impure, if not actively dangerous, and a man risks his health by too constant proximity to them.

Sleeping patterns, however, are not very strict, and a good deal of free choice is evident. Girls sleep with their mothers until married, while boys sleep in the women's-houses until the age of six or seven, when they move out to sleep with the men. Some boys, closely attached to their fathers, join them in the men's-house at an earlier

age.<sup>2</sup> Among non-agnatic clan affiliates,<sup>3</sup> dormitory arrangements are almost completely haphazard: most sleep under the same roof as their sponsoring kinsman, while others share quarters with personal friends or gardening-partners.

Men with no wives of their own are given their evening meal by a mother or step-mother if there is one living, or by a brother's wife if there is not.

In cases where co-wives have separate houses (i.e. not in the same house-yard), but still on the same clan-territory, they, with their children, all gather for the evening meal in the house-yard of one of the wives, and return to their own houses afterwards. The evening meal, although quite an informal affair, is important socially because it is the only regular daily occasion on which the entire family gathers together, and the failure of a woman to have this meal prepared for her husband is a common cause of marital dispute.

In the comparatively few cases (four recorded) in which a man maintains households in two or more different clan-territories, the regularity with which his separate households meet is a function of the distance between them. In one case, a man kept a household two hours' walk

2. From a sample clan with 32 agnatic male members over the age of 7 years:

13	(41%)	sleep in their sub-clan's communal <u>ensha</u>
6	(19%)	" " " own private <u>ensha</u>
5	(16%)	" " " father's private <u>ensha</u>
4	(12%)	" " " own <u>tenda</u>
3	(9%)	" " " father's brother's private <u>ensha</u>
1	(3%)	" " some other <u>ensha</u>

3. See below.



from his paternal ground, so that his distant household had little contact with his two others; the main link was the man himself who used to divide his time more or less evenly between them.

Not only do wives often live in separate houses, but usually each woman is given her own marked-off area of garden, for which she alone is responsible. This is designed to avoid disputes about which wife is, or is not, doing her fair share of the garden work.

Wives are seldom assimilated by their husband's clan. They usually make a point of maintaining strong and permanent ties with their own kin. It is to her own people, and not to her husband's, that a woman looks for protection and redress. Moreover, her children nearly always maintain ties with their mother's people: and ties with mother's brothers (mā) and matrilineal cross-cousins (ā) are of particular importance. As a man cannot marry more than once into the same sub-clan (and, in fact, rarely marries into the same clan) it follows that each wife and her children have a series of active kinship affiliations which are different from those of her co-wives and their children.

In view of the very loose ties between co-wives, it may seem surprising that Mendi kinship terminology does not distinguish between full and half siblings; and this may be a reflection of the strength of the patrilineal principle, for the hostility that frequently exists between co-wives does not appear to carry through to their respective children: the fact that they are children of the same father is the all-important factor. Some further support for this view may be found in the fact that the children of a remarried widow who accompany their mother to the home of her new husband are made welcome by their step-father. They appear to suffer no social disability;

but they are, nevertheless, regarded as strangers among his people and are expected later to return to the land of their fathers. While it is true that in fact they often do not return, it is still of significance that this is the ideal or accepted pattern of behaviour. The point I am suggesting here is that children of the same father and different mothers are considered to be more closely related than are children of the same mother but different fathers although they are not distinguished in the kinship terminology.

From the foregoing, one may infer that the polygynous Mendi family is not a tightly integrated unit: its members have dissimilar (and sometimes conflicting) patterns of kinship outside the clan: it seldom forms a discrete residential group; and an adult Mendi does not mix very much more with the members of his immediate family than he does with the other members of his clan. I can only suggest that what family unity and cohesion does exist may be largely attributable to the strong feeling for patrilineal descent typical of the area.

The Sub-clan: The next step up in the segmentary hierarchy is the sub-clan. This is, first of all, not a territorial unit. Land in Mendi is individually owned, and one man's gardens are not only scattered throughout the territory of his own clan but may even be found in that of other clans (his mother's, for example). A topographical survey of gardens and their owners shows no discrete sub-clan pattern at all. The sub-clan, then, is a purely social unit, a group of families, and, in its simplest form, is composed of a number of brothers and



their descendents. This group always claims, and can usually trace, descent from a common founding ancestor, and it usually, but not always, bears his name. In genealogical fact, the eponymous ancestor of the sub-clan may be the father of its oldest living member: or he may go back as far as four generations. Should the founding ancestor be as far, or further back than this, the precise genealogical links become blurred and may even be lost entirely; but the sub-clan retains its identity as a group.

There is a marked tendency to fuse the lesser descent lines within a sub-clan genealogy into a single direct line leading back directly to the eponymous or apical ancestor. This kind of telescoping is a common feature of lineage systems in general, and in Mendi it is possible to see the process actually taking place. When a sub-clan genealogy is first taken it is presented usually in its simplest form, and only under further questioning does it transpire that quite often a "single" ancestor is really two or more brothers; or even, sometimes, that an entire generation has been dropped.

The point at which a sub-clan segments is determined by its size. These groups vary from one surviving member to (the largest I recorded) about 100, a figure including non-resident married daughters and excluding wives. The smaller sub-clans are degenerate remnants of formerly larger groups which, for a number of reasons, such as warfare or disease, have not managed to maintain their numbers. This was stated explicitly by informants, and I think it may be accepted that there is a minimal size below which a sub-clan is no longer able to function as such.

For example, the sub-clan is the primary economic unit in such inter-group exchanges as bride-price and mortuary-payments which are an essential feature of the political life. A sub-clan below a certain size would no longer be able to play its part in such activities and could, therefore, no longer survive as a social unit.<sup>4</sup> Where the membership of a sub-clan has declined beyond this critical point, it forms an amalgamation with a larger and more thriving sub-clan, or with a number of smaller groups in the same situation as itself. This fusion process can be observed at its various stages: at first, genealogically and nominally, the component parts of such an amalgamation maintain their own identity; socially and functionally, however, they form a new single unit. Later, as genealogical details tend to be forgotten, the merging of descent-lines in the way just described becomes more and more complete, until finally, when they are quite fused, there no longer remains evidence to show that an amalgamation had occurred. The point in size at which a sub-clan ceases to function varies with the wealth and personal character of the surviving members; at least one case is known in which a sub-clan degenerated to two brothers, both young men, and amalgamated with a larger one. One of these brothers so prospered, however, that he was able, as it were, to restore the family fortunes, to break off the amalgamation and re-establish his original sub-clan as a separate functioning entity.

There is not only a lower critical limit of sub-clan membership below which a sub-clan is unable to function; there would appear also to be an upper limit above which

4. See: Chapt. VIII & IX.



its functioning becomes unwieldy. One sub-clan I observed, with a membership of 78, was beginning to find itself in such a position; its men's-house was crowded, and the distribution among its members of bride- and death-payments was becoming awkward. Its members expect that, within the next generation at least, this sub-clan will split into two. The process of fission, which had already begun, was explained in terms of pig-sacrifice.

Each sub-clan keeps its ancestral spirit-stones in its own sub-clan stone-house, and any pigs sacrificed to the stones must later be shared among the whole sub-clan. When it was found that a sacrificial pig had to be distributed among so many people that the individual portions were lamentably small, it was decided that the time had come to build a second stone-house. Without, for the present, going into too much detail about these stones,<sup>5</sup> each one is the residence of a dead ancestor, and every simple family is represented by one or more of them. When the new stone-house was established, certain "genealogically related" stones were removed from the older house and placed in it; and from then on the sacrifices, and their accompanying pork-distributions, took place in these two separate genealogically-defined groups within the sub-clan. These two groups, however, have not established separate men's-houses and still act as one sub-clan in all other activities. The members of this sub-clan said they did not know whether segmentation would proceed any further, but a number of them felt that it probably would.

Of course, the reasons given above for this segmentation must not be taken too literally, for obviously a

5. See: Chapt. XI. (Part I).

social group is not going to split over a small and relatively infrequent piece of pork. It should be noted, however, that the sharing of pork among individuals of a group has a great symbolic importance to the Mendi, for to partake regularly in such sharing signifies the individual's membership of the group and his full acceptance of the rights and obligations such membership imposes. In this, as in other circumstances, the sharing of pork implies either close kinship or a personal relationship of some intimacy. To describe a sub-clan fission, therefore, in terms of a breakdown in pork-sharing was just another way of saying that the sub-clan concerned had reached a size which its members felt to be inconvenient, and that the ties between its individual members could no longer be as intimate as ties between sub-clan brothers should be.

Although a sub-clan always centres around an agnatic core, it often includes a number of members who are not true agnates. All non-agnatic members of a sub-clan, however, are related, either cognatically or affinally, to one or more members of the agnatic core. The Mendi recognize non-agnatic affiliation in the use of three terms:

shu moria ("born to the land")

ol ebowa ("having-come-men"; i.e., "new-comers")

ebowan ishi ("son of a new-comer")

These terms are seldom used, because there are very few situations in which a distinction between agnates and non-agnates is socially relevant. In any personal quarrel with a non-agnate (not necessarily about land) an agnate might say: "Clear out, you're only a new-comer anyway!"



A non-agnate's child could also have this thrown at him, but if he had been born on the land, he would deny being ebowa and claim to be moria; but in any case, the dispute would have no effect on his status or land rights. By the third generation (the son of an ebowan ishi), the descendants of the original ebowa are firmly established as shu moria.

When, in subsequent discussion, I refer to non-agnates, I am restricting the term to presumed-permanent first generation immigrants; people who have themselves moved from the territory of their patrikin. Their children, (ebowan ishi), born after change of residence, I have classed as quasi-agnates who are not normally distinguished from true agnates. When I make such a distinction, I shall say so.

There are at least five circumstances leading to this kind of non-agnatic accretion:

1. Warfare: a clan that has suffered a major defeat in war is often completely dispersed. Its members then seek refuge, either individually or in groups, with various of their more distantly-located kin. Or again, while the fighting is still going on, a mother may decide that this is no place to bring up her children; she then takes them to the safety of her own clan-territory.

2. Widowhood (or Divorce): a widow with young children frequently takes them with her to her own people, and if she remarries they may even accompany her to her new husband's home.

3. Land: (a) a shortage of good gardens in one's own clan-territory; or (b) a kinsman in another clan who

has more land than he can work, and who invites outside kin to help him; or (c) the desire to maintain garden-rights in the territory of the mother or father's mother by making a garden there every few seasons; (since land in Mendi is quite plentiful, land-shortage is not a common reason for changing residence).

4. Holiday: people, particularly youths and girls, often make extended visits (sometimes of a year or more) to their territorially distant kin. The usual reason given is that they wanted a change.

5. Intra-clan Strife: this is rare, but if there should be a serious or prolonged dissension among close kin, one of the parties may take up residence elsewhere. In one case (the only one of its kind I heard of) where a man murdered a clan-brother, it was firmly suggested that he reside elsewhere permanently.<sup>6</sup>

Refuge in another clan-territory can be claimed only through kin who are already resident there, whether as members of the agnatic core or as assimilated non-agnates

6. Of the 57 non-agnates in one clan-territory, 31 were original immigrants and the other 26 were the latter's children born after the change of residence. Of these:

- 11 (35.5%) were war refugees fled from the territory of their patrikin.
- 11 (35.5%) were children of clan-women who had been brought home by their widowed mothers.
- 8 (26%) had moved for reasons connected with land.
- 1 (3%) was on an extended visit.



who have migrated there at an earlier period.<sup>7</sup> Admittedly, the sample is too small to convey exactly the frequency with which any one category of kin will be called upon to sponsor residence in their clan's territory: nor is this of much importance. What the figures do show, however, is (a) the very wide (one might say, almost unlimited) range of kin who can act as sponsors, and (b) the overwhelming preference (54%) for the mother's clan-territory as a place of migration.

Concerning residence-sponsorship, there are three facts which should be noted. First, when I observed above that "all non-agnatic members of a sub-clan are related, either cognatically or affinally, to one or more members of the agnatic core", I should have added that the relationship need not be direct: migrants who have been sponsored by kin in their new clan of residence may themselves,

7. Of the same 31 migrants, 10 had a double right of entry to their new place of residence: i.e. they were related both cognatically and affinally to members of their host clan. For example, a man could take refuge in the territory of his wife's father, which might also happen to be the place of residence of his own mother's brother; either of these relationships alone would be sufficient to give him a right of entry. The 31 migrants, therefore, represent 41 sets of relationships between migrant and sponsor. Of these 41:

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| 14 (34%) | accompanied their mother (usually widowed) to her own clan-territory as children.      |
| 8 (20%)  | moved to mother's territory after her death, and claimed land there from her brothers. |
| 4 (10%)  | moved to clan-territory of m.sis.H.  |
| 3 (7%)   | " " " " " sis.H.   |
| 3 (7%)   | " " " " " spouse.  |
| 3 (7%)   | " " " " " F.F.F.sis.S.S.   |
| 2 (5%)   | " " " " " m.H.(2)(stepfather)  |
| 2 (5%)   | " " " " " w.sis.H.   |
| 1 (2%)   | " " " " " d.H.   |
| 1 (2%)   | " " " " " F.S.or m.S.(half-brother)  |

when thoroughly settled in, sponsor other migrants. These new "second-degree" migrants need not be thought of as related at all to the agnatic core of the sub-clan. Second, sponsorship is dependent not only on the category of kinship between an immigrant and his sponsor but also on the intimacy of the personal relationship that has been maintained between them. From the figures given, three migrants took up residence in the territory of their father's father's father's sister's son's son; but the reason for this was not the kinship so much as the fact that their sub-clan of origin and their new sub-clan of residence had maintained an unbroken personal friendship for three generations, and such a relationship is a necessary concomitant of all sponsorship. Such friendship is symbolized by occasional gifts of pork and by the establishment (between males) of personal exchange-relationships - except in the case of mother's sub-clan, where the kinship is felt to be so close that friendship can be assumed without being formalized by gifts.<sup>8</sup> Third, the land-rights conferred by sponsorship can be either temporary or permanent and, if permanent, can be inherited by the holder's children; but, like all land-rights, they must be maintained. The land must be gardened from time to time and personal connections kept up with the clan occupying the territory, even if the holder of the land is no longer resident there. It is thus possible for a man to change

8. The connection with mother's patrikin is symbolized economically in other ways: e.g. the giving and receiving of bride-wealth, and of funeral payments.



his residence, obtaining through sponsorship land in another clan-territory. After some years, he (or his son) may return to his original clan-territory to live while continuing to maintain the gardens he has acquired from his sponsors.

It is apparent, therefore, that there is a great deal of fluctuation in the composition of the residential group, even though it presents a generally constant corporate entity. The non-agnatic membership of any sub-clan may constitute as much as 50% of the whole, and potential mobility involves agnatic as well as non-agnatic members of the group. That is to say that, while the non-agnatic residents at any one time have varying degrees of permanence, there is also the possibility of some agnatic residents going off to live elsewhere.

But flexibility of residence should also imply flexibility of affiliation, and the next problem is the degree of assimilation of immigrants with their sponsor's sub-clan. This is, of course, related to the duration of their residence. The range of variation is again considerable:

1. A holiday visit of a few weeks or months.
2. A more extended gardening visit, in which the visitor is lent a garden and stays for its complete cycle.
3. Children of widows, who are expected to stay until they reach adolescence and then to return to their father's country; but who, in fact, often become so attached to their mother's brother that, with his consent, they decide to remain permanently.
4. War-refugees who are granted land on the under-

standing that they will return home on the cessation of hostilities; these people may return to their own land as much as 20 or 30 years later, or, on the other hand, they may not return at all.

5. Those who come, and are accepted, with the avowed intention of staying permanently.

It will be obvious that, in certain of these categories (e.g. the children of widows), it is difficult to draw any clear line between non-agnatic residents who are to become permanent and those who are mere visitors. In fact, it may well be a feature of the system that no such distinction really exists; certainly, no accurate picture of Mendi clan-structure can be presented in terms of permanent, static, socio-residential units: not only is there constant informal inter-action among them, but sub-clan affiliation and residence do not always coincide. And I must stress here, as in most other aspects of Mendi life, the importance of individual choice.

In considering the assimilation of non-agnatic immigrants who have settled permanently in their new territory, we must distinguish between acceptance and disability. Although it is asserted that acceptance is complete (and in daily intercourse this does appear to be true: I never heard of anyone excluded from an activity because he was a non-agnate), yet non-agnates do suffer certain economic handicaps. An example is the giving and receiving of bride-wealth. Briefly, bride-wealth is provided by contributions from the fellow-members of the groom's sub-clan, added to a nucleus which he must provide himself, and it is distributed among the members of the bride's sub-clan.



Marriage figures indicate that non-agnatic men tend to marry later than agnatic clan-members, more of them marry only once, and more of them have only one wife at a time. It would seem, therefore, that in the field of marriage, the non-agnate labours under a handicap.<sup>9</sup> But the point is that non-agnatic immigrants have, in most cases, been forced to change their residence and clan-affiliations because of some disruption among their own patrikin. Since the latter are the people to whom a Mendi usually looks for his bride-wealth, it follows that, if the patrikin are dispersed, or if the ties with them have been broken, then the immigrant who wishes to marry will find it difficult to collect the contributions which his patrikin would normally provide. Uprooted as he is from his true background, and having to adjust himself to a new set of personal relations, he finds it difficult to amass the goods which will form the nucleus of his bride-wealth and without which he will not be able to claim contributory assistance. Furthermore, he will be under a similar handicap in all activities which require this kind of economic contribution - in all the activities, in short, upon which individual status depends. Thus the disabilities of a non-agnatic immigrant do not come directly from non-acceptance by his sponsor's clan but rather from the same disruptive circumstances that originally led to his migration.

Another criterion of assimilation is the dropping of the patronym in favour of the name of the clan of residence. As was mentioned, each Mendi carries the name of

9. This will be discussed more fully in Chapt.V.

his patri-clan as a prefix to his personal name. The general rule is that a non-agnate is known to his clan of residence by his patronym and to outsiders by the name of his clan of residence, but there are cases in which individuals who have quarrelled with their patrikin insist on being known by the latter name only (or by the name of the territory of their residence-clan).<sup>10</sup>

The children of non-agnates born after migration have a free choice of future allegiance. The choice they make is determined by the sets of personal relations they have in their father's clan of residence (i.e. their own clan of birth), and those that have been maintained with their father's clan of birth. In other words, they make up their minds whether they want to settle down with this crowd of people or with that one. It is not, I think, surprising that in nearly all such cases they elect to remain with their father's clan of residence, for these are the people they know best, among whom they were born and reared, whose name they now bear, who will give or receive their bride-wealth, on whose land their ancestral stones will now be stored - with whom, in short, they will share pork. It should not be inferred, however, that there comes a time in the life of an immigrant's child when he or she must make a formal and irrevocable choice about future residence and clan-allegiance. The choice is seldom made explicitly but is, rather, implied by behaviour --

10. On the other hand, it must be remembered that there are individuals who maintain, with no apparent conflict, both a double residence and a double clan-allegiance and who are known to each clan by its own patronym.



the retention of the patronym, for example, and the frequency of visits to the father's patrikin. And it is never made irrevocably; residence can always be changed. Finally, the choice is sometimes ambiguous, in that residence and allegiance may be maintained in two separate clan-territories.

The sub-clan, then, in its commonest form, is composed of an agnatic core, with a more or less permanent accretion of cognatic and affinal kin, all claiming patrilineal or other descent from a common ancestor who usually gives his name to the group as a whole. The group may also include members who are related to the accretion only and not directly to the agnatic core. The sub-clan is a most important unit in Mendi social organization. I do not propose, at this stage, to discuss its functions in any detail, but the big inter-clan payments, such as those for death-compensation and marriage, are organized on a sub-clan basis, and it is the sub-clans which are the basis of the exogamous groups which are such a feature of Mendi clan-structure. But before discussing these, I shall examine the structure of the clan.

The Clan. As I have already said, the clan is the basic territorial unit. It comprises a number of sub-clans (from two to six or even more) and its manner of composition reflects that of the sub-clan. That is to say, there is a central agnatic core of sub-clans claiming direct patrilineal descent from a common founder and forming, therefore, an exogamous unit, while added to this core there may be a number of other sub-clans related in various

ways to the original nucleus. These non-agnatic clans are groups of migrants who have changed residence and affiliation from their clan-territory of birth to that of some sponsoring kinsmen. The circumstances leading to such a group migration appear to be more limited than those operating in the cases of individual migration which I have been discussing. All recorded cases of sub-clan migration were the result either of defeat in warfare with consequent dispersal into refuge or of migration from a crowded territory to an uncrowded one.

Sponsorship for a group migration occurs in the same way as for individuals: that is, it can be either cognatic or affinal. In the former instance, the remains of one sub-clan of a defeated and dispersed clan may, as a group, seek refuge with a sub-clan of a distant clan with whom at least one of the members can claim common descent through a female: this means that at some time in the past, these two sub-clans have inter-married; a relationship of this kind is stated in the words: "a woman bore us". The refugee group, consisting of sub-clan brothers and their families, may be large enough to assume the immediate status of a sub-clan, meaning, as I have already defined it, that it will be able to function as an independent economic unit within the clan. Once the people have been accepted, granted land, and have settled down, there is almost no further differentiation made between them and the original sub-clans. The only differentiation that is in fact made is in the sphere of inter-marriage. The Mendi marriage-rule is that one marriage between any two sub-clans will bar all further inter-marriage for the next four or five generations. In the case we are discussing,



the new-comers, even before their change of residence, were forbidden to marry into their sponsoring sub-clan; one marriage had previously taken place between them, and it was this marriage which created, simultaneously, both their antigamy<sup>11</sup> and the kinship ties which were later to give the refugee group entree. Thus, when the new-comers arrive, they are forbidden to marry into their sponsoring sub-clan, but they can marry into all the other sub-clans in their sponsor's clan. It is only necessary, however, for them to contract one marriage with each of these other sub-clans, and the whole of the clan will then be antigamous. When this state of affairs has been reached, it is very difficult for an outsider to tell the later arrivals from the original nucleus. The only way to find out is by intensive genealogical enquiry, and this information is confined to a very few of the older men; for the Mendi think of their marriage prohibitions in terms of sub-clan units, and most people tend to remember the list of sub-clans into which they themselves are forbidden to marry, without being aware of the precise genealogical ties that gave rise to these prohibitions.

11. With some misgiving, I have taken the liberty of coining the term "antigamy" to refer to the existence of marriage prohibitions between specific groups; thus, "antigamous groups" are groups forbidden to inter-marry, while "partial antigamy" means that marriage between certain groups is allowed, but restricted.

To illustrate with a hypothetical example:

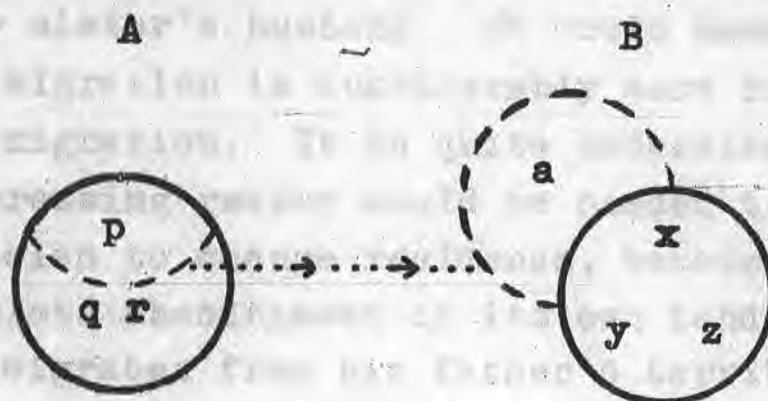


Figure I.

Clan A consists of sub-clans p, q and r, while Clan B has sub-clans x, y and z. A is dispersed after a battle, and the survivors of p, by reason of common descent through a female, claim refuge and land from x of B clan. They will not be able to marry x, since a marriage between p and x had already taken place in the past (whence their claim of refuge) but they will be able to contract one marriage with y and one with z before the whole of B becomes barred to them. They will thereafter, for all practical purposes, be a sub-clan of B on an equal footing with x, y and z. Their sub-clan, however, will now be named a, after their clan of origin. (Or they may adopt a place-name for the territories of either A or B.)

Affinal sponsorship of a sub-clan means that a man claiming refuge with his wife's sub-clan may, if there is enough land available, bring his sub-clan brothers and their families with him. This is, in effect, the same as the cognatic sponsorship described above, with the sole difference that the marriage giving rise to the sponsorship tie is still extant, so that the new-comers include affines as well as descendants.

There were no recorded cases of migratory groups



sponsored by categories of kin outside the range of mother's brother, wife's brother, mother's sister's husband, or sister's husband. It would seem, therefore, that group migration is considerably more restricted than individual migration. It is quite understandable that some very pressing reason would be needed to force an entire sub-clan to change residence, because this amounts to the complete abandonment of its own land. When an individual migrates from his father's territory he retains his claim on the land (with consequent right of return) from the members of his sub-clan who have remained behind. When the whole sub-clan moves, on the other hand, such a claim is harder to establish, for there is no one left from whom the land can later be reclaimed. In the same way, a sub-clan which might be willing to sponsor an occasional individual migrant, however distantly related, would certainly hesitate to receive an entire sub-clan group moving in as an integrated unit. One might, indeed, wonder how migration at this level was possible at all. In every case recorded the sponsoring clan had itself been involved in debilitating warfare and welcomed new members as an addition to the fighting strength which would enable it to survive.

A second kind of accretive sub-clan is that which develops over several generations by the natural increase of a small nucleus of non-agnatic migrants. When a group of this kind is too small to function as a sub-clan immediately it is at first amalgamated with its sponsor sub-clan. Later, if there are enough male descendants, they may constitute themselves a separate sub-clan. I shall give two examples, each of a mother with two young sons, who

returned with her children to her own clan-territory.

In the first case, the boys retained their father's clan-name until they married and had sons, but on forming a new sub-clan they abandoned their patronym and identified their group by a locality-name from their mother's clan. In the second case, the sons took immediately the clan-name of their mother, but when their descendants increased and formed a new sub-clan, they re-assumed the patronym they had borne originally.

It is, of course, possible for even one single non-agnate to found a sub-clan, just as any true agnate can, and the process is much the same as that of sub-clan fission already described. We saw, moreover, that fission of an agnatic descent-line is the result of internal stress created by growth to an unwieldy size. But one might reasonably suppose (although proof is almost impossible) that a group descended from non-agnatic migrants would require less stress to cause it to assume independent sub-clan identity. In other words, the agnatic core of a sub-clan splits into two only when internal strain actually forces it to do so, while an accretive group of non-agnates tends to form a separate sub-clan as soon as it can stand on its own economic feet. In the former case, a new line of fission must be created where before there was none; in the latter case, fission merely reopens a division that always existed.

If the above supposition is correct, the implication follows that there is a latent awareness of the distinction between agnates and non-agnates which persists for some time after assimilation is apparently complete. Non-agnacy may be ignored, but it is not forgotten.



It should also be mentioned that, once a refugee-group has assumed the function of a sub-clan, it may, in its turn, sponsor other refugees, either singly or in sub-clan groups, and the new-comers need not be related directly to the original clan core. Indeed, in several cases this process has been going on for so long that it is no longer easy to identify the original sub-clans of the group.

Once full antigamy has been established, the distinction between core and accretion ceases to have any more than historical relevance. Some clans, indeed, show an extreme development of this process in the building up, on the clan-territory, of a growing network of accretive sub-clans, accompanied by a simultaneous degeneration of the original core. This has, on occasion, reached the point where the agnatic sub-clans have been compelled to fuse into one which then takes its place on equal terms with the accretive sub-clans. This clan remnant retains its former clan-name. Let us consider a synthetic example (Figs. IV and III).

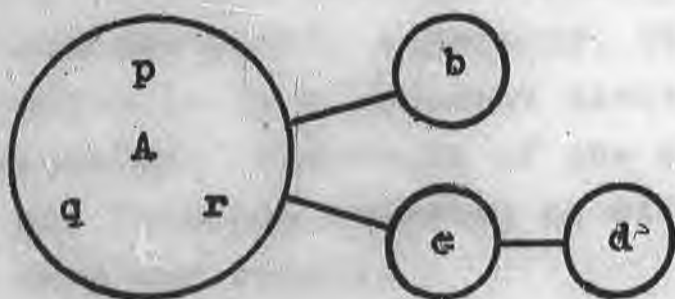


Figure II.

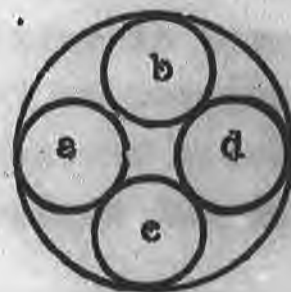


Figure III.

In Fig.II, clan A, comprising agnatic sub-clans p, q and r, has accreted to it, by any of the processes we have been describing, non-agnatic sub-clans b and c, while c in turn has brought in its own non-agnatic sub-clan d; these are the inhabitants of the one clan-territory. In course of time and circumstance (Fig.III) A degenerates to the point where p, q and r are forced to amalgamate as one sub-clan, a. The territory will then be occupied by a group of sub-clans, a, b, c and d, which will act together as an exogenous unit performing all the functions of a clan. When this degree of historical complexity has been reached, it might be suggested that we can no longer continue to describe clans as a group of sub-clans clustered around a central agnatic core. The point is, that, unless we begin by describing them in that way, such an apparently haphazard pattern as that illustrated in Fig.III makes no sense at all. As I observed when discussing the sub-clan, Mendi clan-structure cannot be presented in terms of static groups; the dynamic processes of fragmentation and amalgamation at all segmentary levels are themselves an important structural feature of the system. Thus, although the Mendi clan, unless completely dispersed in war, remains a fairly constant entity, a corporate group residing in a defined geographic territory, its composition in terms of sub-clans is in a constant state of actual or potential fluctuation; fragments of one clan are forever breaking off and becoming attached to others; sub-clans die out and new ones are formed.

New sub-clans, as we have seen, can be formed in two ways: either internally, by genealogical fission or externally, by accretion of refugee groups. But all sub-



clans, no matter how formed, have equal status within the clan: or at least, any difference in importance that may exist is not a structural feature but is due rather to relative sizes and to the wealth of the individual members. There is no seniority-ranking of sub-clans in terms of their manner of affiliation, whether through agnatic descent or through accretion, but the bigger sub-clans, or those containing the richest men, naturally play a more important role in the great inter-clan payments characteristic of Mendi life.

Clan and sub-clan names. As a very general rule the sub-clans which have been formed by the segmentation of previous sub-clans and which are the hereditary owners of the land where they live (i.e. those sub-clans which form the agnatic core of the clan) bear the name of their founding ancestor. Accretive sub-clans (i.e. those which are descended from refugee migrants), on the other hand, usually carry the name of their original clan (not sub-clan) or else they are known by a place-name, usually the place of origin, but sometimes by the name of a particular locality on the territory in which they have settled. While it is by no means an absolute criterion, this system of naming is consistent enough to make the observer suspect that a sub-clan which does not bear the readily identifiable name of a founding ancestor is probably accretive.

In addition to his personal name, each individual carries another name with a broader connotation. This other name, which precedes his personal name, is normally that of his father's clan. (This is the name meant when I speak of "patronyms".) Quite often, however, an individual's patronym is that of his sub-clan, and this latter usage

again is an indication that his sub-clan is not a member of the agnatic descent-group of his resident-territory, for non-agnatic sub-clans, even when completely absorbed into their clan of residence, and not discriminated against in any way, still tend to be identified, and to identify themselves, by a name indicative of their origin.

A further naming complication is that the name of certain groups may vary according to the context in which it is used. To give some examples:

1. Although a sub-clan is usually known to others by the name of its founding ancestor, yet, if that ancestor is only one or two generations back (i.e. if he is the father or grandfather of a living member of the sub-clan), his name must not be mentioned within the sub-clan. This is because ancestral ghosts are dangerous to their direct descendants for at least two generations, and speaking their names is likely to attract their unwelcome attentions. In such cases, the sub-clan is known to others by the name of the founding ancestor; but its own members refer to it by the name of its senior living member.

2. A clan may be known to its own members by the name of the agnatic core but known to outsiders by the name of the leading sub-clans of the group. For example, seven sub-clans are known to each other as the Perikole because all are associated with an original Perikole core; but they are known to outsiders either as Perikole or as Torolt-Kunjolt after the names of the two biggest sub-clans in the group.

Finally, the clan name (like the sub-clan name), is, one might reasonably guess, that of its founding ancestor.



The Mendi have no such tradition and are quite uninterested in speculating on the matter. It was not possible in any one case to refer a clan name to a founding ancestor, although a few clan names were coincident with the name of the clan-territory.

When a clan reaches a certain indeterminate size, we would expect that, after the fashion of the sub-clans, it would split. This process may be observed in two forms; fragmentation and fission. In the former, fragments of a clan detach themselves from the parent body and re-attach themselves to another clan elsewhere, while in the latter, the break-away group sets up independently and an entirely new social unit is created. To give two instances: first, a clan may find that land is becoming short; this is not usual in Mendi, where land is fairly plentiful, but some clan-territories are more fertile than others. In these circumstances, one sub-clan of the under-privileged clan may decide to move off to distantly located kinfolk where land is under-populated. These people then become established in their new home by the process of accretion I have been describing. While becoming absorbed into (or rather, accreted to) their new host-clan, they maintain ties with their clan of origin; they retain the latter's name, but prefix it with the name of their new territory. For example, a group of the Shurup Clan, from Wash, moved, by virtue of a maternal connection, to Umbim, where they became known as the Umbim-Shurup; some time later, some members of the latter group broke off and moved a short distance to Wakwak, where they developed into a sub-clan known as the Wakwak-Shurup. Obviously, fragmentation is merely the identical process of sub-clan accretion that

we have been discussing, only viewed from the clan of origin rather than from the sponsor's clan. That is to say: when a sub-clan changes residence, it represents both a splitting of its clan of origin and an accretion to its sponsor's clan, and this single process may be considered from either point of view. In the second instance, clan fission occurs when a similar situation arises, but the break-away sub-clan or sub-clans move merely to another, and unoccupied, part of the same clan-territory. There, they establish their own dance-ground, their own sub-clan men's-houses, and may, in the fullness of time, become a separate clan. The fission may be regarded as complete if and when the two groups finally decide to inter-marry. But this raises a methodological problem.

The complete process of clan fission is inevitably a lengthy one. Even after the change of residence and an almost complete separation of social activities, the anti-gamous relationship is still preserved for an indefinite period. As with the sub-clans it almost certainly lasts longer than the memory of the genealogical links between the two groups. In assuming that sections of a clan which have separated from each other will eventually, in the course of time, be able to inter-marry, we are admittedly indulging in speculation not based on direct observation and not (at the present time at least) empirically verifiable. There is, nonetheless, evidence to show that such speculation is not entirely unjustified. I recorded several examples of both extra- and intra-territorial clan splitting, but in none of these cases is there any sign of a breakdown in antigamy. There are, moreover,



other examples of clans which bear the same name but which have no tradition of genealogical connection and which are free to inter-marry. Again, in the absence of historical records, any original connection can no longer be proved. Briefly then: (a) we know that a tendency to split is an observable structural feature of the sub-clans; as the structure of the clan is an almost exact reflection (on a larger scale) of that of the sub-clan, we may reasonably expect that the clan will split in a similar way: (b) we have examples of territorial and residential clan fission in which a clan divided into two clans, quite distinct, geographically and functionally separate, but still mutually antigamous and preserving some tradition of common descent. Finally (c) we have further examples of clans which are entirely separate and able to inter-marry but which bear, nevertheless, a common name distinguished in each case by a locality-prefix -- a naming pattern typical of (b) that indicates a possibility of common descent in the distant past, even though this is no longer remembered.

The Clan-Cluster. There is a third and final order of socio-political unit in Mendi which, for want of a better name, I am calling a clan cluster. First of all, it must be clearly understood that this can be, but is not necessarily or even usually, a level of segmentation like the sub-clans and clans; it is, more commonly, a system of inter-clan alliances based on kinship connections.

A clan cluster might best be defined as: "a group of two or more clans which either share the same, or occupy contiguous, territories, which act together in most inter-clan contexts, between which exist many ties of kinship

(with total or partial antigamy), and finally, between whose members a constant and regular social intercourse is maintained".

In fighting, in the big fertility-stone rituals, and in most inter-clan activities, the clans and sub-clans composing a cluster act as a single unit. They dance together, kill pigs together, share pork with each other, and contribute to each other's bride-wealth, and when opposed to outside groups of the same order, refer to themselves as shem pomborr, or "one clan".

The clusters are not named, and in this again they differ from the purely segmentary groups. When outsiders wish to refer to another cluster, they call them "the people of Such-a-place" (naming the biggest dance-ground on their clan-territory); or else they call them by the name of the two biggest clans in the group; or they double the name of the biggest clan (e.g., Omalt-Omalt: all the people clustered around an agnatic Omalt core).

Clan clusters may be formed by the same three processes we have already been examining: segmentation, accretion and inter-marriage.

A cluster through segmentation occurs when a clan splits in the way previously described, and a number of its sub-clans moves off to establish themselves in another part of the clan-territory. While the two segments, as we have seen, may remain antigamous for a long time afterwards, they do tend, in some ways, to function as separate clans, although, when it comes to the point of opposing outside groups, they continue to act as one. It is not easy to define precisely the degree of separation between



such clan-segments. It can probably best be described as a diminishing in the frequency of daily social intercourse and an increase in the general feeling of "them-and-us-ness". By the latter term I mean the awareness of separateness which is implicit in such behaviour as admission of ignorance by one group about the affairs of the other ("That's their business; how should we know what goes on over there?"); denial of shared responsibility ("They might have stolen it, but none of us ever would"); and choice of casual companions in daily activities. In any society where the social units are residentially defined, each residential group feels more intimately associated with the people living nearest to them - the people they see most of. The quotations given above are frequently made about other clans in the speaker's cluster; they would seldom if ever be made about other sub-clans in the speaker's clan. It might reasonably be objected that the situation just described is not a clan cluster (or, for that matter, any other kind of social unit) but merely an uncompleted segmentation. But it must be remembered that this is an entirely different sort of situation from that in which one fissive segment goes off to live in a different clan-territory. In this latter case, while antigamy between the segments will be maintained, they will not, except occasionally in fighting, ever act as a social or economic unit.

A cluster through accretion occurs when an accretive sub-clan takes refuge in its host clan's territory, retains its identity, and increases either by breeding or by acting, in its turn, as host to other sub-clans which are related to it; until at last, with its protégés, it

is able to assume the role of an independent clan. Here, again, we have two clans at least partially antigamous, sharing the same territory, presenting a united front to outsiders, but, within the group, thinking of themselves as separate clans.

Finally, clans may be linked through inter-marriage. An analysis of Mendi marriages shows that there is a marked tendency for men to marry women whose clan-territory is (a) near their own, (b) within easy access (with no major geographic obstacles, like rivers, lying between), and (c) friendly. This is because the men court their future brides by visiting their houses for evening singing-parties, and, reasonably enough, they prefer girls to whose houses the walking is short and easy, and whose kinsmen will not be hostile. Most marriages tend, therefore, to be contracted between neighbouring (preferably adjacent) clans which already enjoy friendly relations. Such unions forge a bond because, as has been mentioned, one match between two clans bars the sub-clans of the contracting parties from further inter-marriage: further, the two sub-clans are in a semi-permanent affinal relationship. Each additional marriage, by widening the affinal ties between the clans, makes the bond so much stronger until, in the end, a clan cluster is formed. It must be borne in mind, however, that the cluster is not a formal relationship, in the sense that there is no definite point at which it is deemed to have been established. It is just that, through repeated inter-marriage, there is set up such a network of affinal and, subsequently, common-descent ties, that eventually the two groups become almost completely



antigamous. In certain of the major inter-clan activities, like the big pig-killings and the marriage-payments, it is customary to be assisted by one's affines or maternal kin as well as by one's own clansmen, and it follows that the two groups, on these occasions, pool their resources and act as one. For the same reasons, they also become allies in war.

In the definition of a clan cluster, I said that linked clans must "share the same, or occupy contiguous, territory". The reason is that the kind of constant, close, social inter-action which characterizes the relations of the component parts of a cluster diminishes rapidly with increased geographical distance. In other words, you mix with the people who live closest to you. But this statement must be qualified. First, the mere fact that two clans occupy adjacent territories does not in itself mean that this kind of relationship will be formed between them: such clans could be, and often were, permanent and bitter enemies. Second, inter-marriage or other kin ties between clans may create mutual rights of potential refuge, but this is not enough to make a cluster: the territories must be easily accessible.

A further factor that helps to cement relations between adjacent clans is the system of land tenure. One rule is that, while a man normally inherits his land from his father, he has also a claim to land in his mother's territory. This latter area, since women do not own land, is allotted to him by one of his mother's brothers. If, as in the last form of clan cluster examined, the father's and the mother's territories are adjacent, then the claim will usually be made. Therefore, the descendants of any marriage

between two adjacent clans commonly maintain gardens, and even households, on both clan-territories and spend perhaps equal portions of their time in each. Thus, for these people at least, the formal boundary between the two clans has little or no relevance. They live, garden, and have their social contacts about equally in each. They form, as it were, a marginal sub-clan which straddles the two clans and provides a bridging relationship between them.

Some further points about clusters should be noted:

1. Each single clan belonging to a cluster need be linked to only one of the clans in that cluster and not to the others. Thus in a cluster composed of clans A, B and C, A may be linked to B, and B to C, but A and C may admit no connection other than their common bond to B. This means that A and C can inter-marry and may even fight. Should the latter contingency arise, however, B acts as mediator and does all it possibly can to stop the squabble of its two partners. Informants knew of several cases in which such intervention had been necessary and of none in which it had failed to be successful.

2. In clusters formed by accretion and inter-marriage (as distinct from those formed by segmentation) the ties are between sub-clans. All this means in practice is that between clans linked in this way some further marriages are still possible.

3. From the foregoing, one might expect that clusters would not be territorially-discrete units but would extend throughout the whole of the Mendi Valley as a sort of unbroken network of inter-clan relations. Yet this



does not seem to be so. All the clusters of which I am aware are in fact discrete units, sometimes confined to the one clan-territory, sometimes embracing two or even three, but stopping there. The only explanation I can suggest for this (and I am well aware of its inadequacy) is that clusters are formed mainly by such historical and geographical accident as fission, accretion of war-refugees, and inter-marriage with contiguous neighbours. Such clusters tend to be orientated towards a particular clan which forms the structural and social core of the group. Often certain sub-clans at the extremities of a cluster have kinship ties with clans further out which are adjacent to them, but are members of another cluster and not of theirs.



Figure IV.

From Fig. IV., Cluster I consists of clans A, B and C, and Cluster II of clans P, Q and R. C and P are geographically adjacent and one or more marriages have occurred between them: they will usually be on friendly terms. But in those affairs which concern clusters, C will act with I, and P with II.

4. No clan belongs to more than one cluster.
5. Clusters are normally fairly stable units, but they can be broken up. One case was observed in which a

four-clan cluster had been formed by the inter-marriage of two two-clan clusters. A dispute arose about a bridal payment, and strained relations developed, culminating in a formal severance of all amicable ties. The result was that the four-clan cluster divided again into the original two-clan clusters. The members of the two groups do not know whether this condition will be permanent. In the past, clusters were also disrupted by warfare. When the component sub-clans were dispersed to different parts of the valley there was no absolute assurance that they would ever reassemble on their former territory and still less that their former pattern of inter-relationships would be resumed.

Major Political Alliances. Beyond the clusters which are known to their members as "one clan" (shem pomborr and/or mbalielt)<sup>12</sup>, there is a further range of fighting-allies. These are called "brotherhood" clans (amialt, amien). Although some kin connection may exist between amialt clans, the alliance is, or rather was, primarily political. It was established and maintained,

12. Mbalielt (dual), mbalien (plural): lit: 'brother-sisterhood' (i.e. "clans whose women we call 'sister', and whom, therefore we cannot marry"). This term is also applied to any clans between which exists an antigamous relationship arising from inter-marriage, and it is applied whether or not they are members of the same cluster. But clans which are antigamous because they claim common agnatic descent (i.e. those which have split into agnatic segments) are not mbalielt but shem pomborr.



as are all inter-group relations in Mendi, by an elaborate complex of ceremonial economic exchanges. Since the ban on warfare, political alliances are in fact no longer necessary for a group's survival, but the exchanges associated with them are still made, and can be expected to continue for some time to come. These relationships also seem to have been rather unstable. Switches of alliance were not uncommon, and some clans and clusters sold their assistance to the highest bidder.

Goodenough and others have raised the point as to whether a system of clan affiliation as flexible as that of the Mendi can truly be considered unilineal. Suggested alternatives have been bilineal, ambilineal or multilineal. But surely in order to qualify as patrilineal, it is not necessary for a clan to confine its membership exclusively to descent in the male line? Indeed, it is doubtful whether many of the accepted unilineal systems are so absolutely rigid.<sup>13</sup> Accepting, therefore, that a flexible or modified unilineal system is a legitimate possibility, I have chosen to present the Mendi clan-system as patrilineal for the following reasons:

1. The Mendi descent-group (shem) is always thought of by the people themselves as patrilineal. It can be applied, in its simplest context, to a man and his children but never to a woman and her children. By the same mode of thought, in the higher levels of segmentation, no shem is ever referred to or named after an ancestress.

13. Cf. J.A. Barnes, "Politics in a Changing Society", Oxford, 1954, p.54.

2. Women do not own land; although land-rights can be acquired through a woman, the land itself can be granted only by her male kin.

3. No individual genealogy includes two successive female ancestors. While it is possible for a man to own land in his mother's mother's clan-territory, he could only get it from his mother's brother, who had in turn got it from his mother's brother; he could never make a direct claim on his mother's mother's land. And even then the land would be thought of as his "mother's brother's" land, not his mother's mother's brother's. Thus, while a man usually has an unrefusable claim to land from both his parents' patrikin, he has only indirect access to that of his parents' maternal kin (i.e. he can acquire the latter only through his father or mother's brother).

4. Women tend to be forgotten in genealogies far more quickly than men. It is rare that a man can name even the clan of his mother's mother. A genealogically significant ancestress (one whose marriage had provided entrée for a non-agnatic group) will never be remembered by name but only as "X's sister". (It might be added that this female anonymity begins with a woman's marriage: she is known to her husband's clan, and often to her husband himself, as "woman-of-Y (clan)" or "woman-of-Z (place)".)

5. There is a marked difference in roles between patrikin and maternal kin. In death-payments, for example, the patrikin of the deceased compensate his maternal kin, and this rule is observed regardless of any changes in his residence or clan-affiliation.



6. In nearly all the cases, changes in the normal patrilineal/patrilocal pattern are caused by warfare, widowhood, or some other form of disruption of an individual's relations with his patrikin. In other words, non-patrilineal affiliation is nearly always the result of circumstances which, though common, may fairly be described as abnormal. That is why, as I have pointed out, non-agnates suffer certain economic disabilities.

Granting that the Mendi system of descent is "modified patrilineal", there is another point to be considered. The sub-clans appear to have all the nine features given by Gluckman as characteristics of a lineage.<sup>14</sup> They are unilineal and exogamous; they form a basis for grouping of kin; they are reflected in the grouping of the ancestral fertility-stones; they recognize a discrete unity as opposed to other groups at the same level; rights and obligations of sub-clan membership are in some measure distinct from those of kinship; they endure beyond the death of their founders; they group to form higher segments (clans), and are divided internally into lower segments (families); they are usually eponymous with their founder. It might be suggested, therefore, that the Mendi clan-structure should be presented as a lineage-system; but this terminology has been deliberately avoided for the following reason. It is profitable to speak of lineages only when the entire system can be discussed in those terms; the term 'lineage' not only defines a particular kind of descent-group, but it also implies a particular kind of

14. See: M. Gluckman, in J.C. Mitchell and J.A. Barnes, "The Lamba Village", School of African Studies, 24, Capetown, 1950; pp.4-5.

structure which embraces the whole society. It is not possible to describe the Mendi clan cluster in lineage terms; certain kinds of cluster represent an upper level of segmentation, but certain other kinds (e.g. clusters by inter-marriage) do not. Rather than have to place the latter in a separate category, I preferred to avoid the term.

### Summary:

I. Effective units in Mendi society are the sub-clan, the clan, and the clan-cluster. In warfare, the clusters combine in shifting patterns of military alliance.

II. All clusters and most clans are territorially discrete, but the sub-clans are not.

III. Two or three levels of segmentation may be discerned, but the inter-relationship of social groups is not determined only by segmentary principles.

IV. Descent and residence are ideally patrilineal/patrilocal, but this pattern is not strictly enforced. A great deal of affiliative and residential mobility is generally found.

V. Social units, therefore, are composed of individuals (or groups) forming an agnatic core, to which non-agnatic individuals and groups have become accreted by certain recognized structural principles.





### CHAPTER III:-

#### CURRENCY: the Media of Exchange.

Mendi economic transactions use, as media of exchange, certain prescribed goods.

The most important of these is the large mother-of-pearl shell, the upper valve of the pearl-oyster.<sup>1</sup> This is polished, and cut in a crescent-shape, with two holes pierced in the horns for threading as a pectoral ornament.<sup>2</sup>

The pearl-shell is a common form of currency throughout the Highlands, although not so important elsewhere as in the area between Mt. Hagen and Mendi. In this area, the pearl-shell is not only economically significant, it is also the focus of a peculiar emotional or aesthetic attachment, and the mere sight of a pearl-shell causes in the Mendi an avaricious enthusiasm which seems (to the

1. Margaritifera Margaritifera

2. Known in Mendi as momak, in Pidgin as kina, and referred to throughout this paper as "pearl-shell".



outside observer) to be disproportionate to its exchange value in terms of other goods. When, however, we come to consider the significance of economic exchanges in Mendi life, and the role of the pearl-shell in these exchanges, it will be realized that the people's attitude to it is a reasonable one; the pearl-shell is not merely an item of currency, but a symbol of social status.

The value of pearl-shells varies with their quality. The most highly-prized are large, heavy and, most important of all, with a "good skin" (that is, not worm-eaten, and of a rich, deep, golden colour<sup>3</sup>). It might be mentioned that the value of a pearl-shell, once established, is not changed by breakage. If the golden rim is chipped, the shell's value is diminished; but if broken cleanly it is rivetted together (and even if burnt, it can be scraped) without impairing its value.

Four grades of pearl-shell are distinguished:

I. momak pombere ("black pearl-shell"): small, gun-metal in colour. Used only as an ornament, and then almost solely by women, their value<sup>4</sup> is one six-inch knife (5/-).

II. momak manu-wi ("neck-wearing pearl-shell"): an

3. They are referred to by some writers as "gold-lip shell".

4. Values given here are those of 1956. From 1953 on, both the Mendi and Australian currencies have been undergoing independent inflations.

ordinary pearl-shell, but small and of poor quality. As its name implies, it is considered more suitable for adornment and is not usually acceptable as currency. Shells of this kind vary in quality. Value: one or two axes (15/- to 30/-).

III. momak orr'nenk ("ordinary pearl-shell"): the standard exchange pearl-shell, and the basic unit of Mendi currency. Differences in quality are recognized, although not formally graded, and the worst momak orr'nenk are about equal to the best momak manu-wi; indeed, certain "border-line" pearl-shells are used in both contexts: for wearing and exchange. The values of exchange pearl-shells vary considerably: they cost a European about 25/- a pound, undressed, and weigh from one to five pounds, valued at 25/- to £6.<sup>5</sup>

IV. momak  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{win} \\ \text{pa-win} \end{array} \right\}$  (lit. "pearl-shell which stay put"): These are special heirloom shells which are thought of as communally owned by the sub-clan. I say "thought of" because they may either be acquired by contributions from the whole sub-clan or owned outright by a single individual member. In the former circumstance, they are left in the custody of an important man; and in the latter, they are retained by the man who originally acquired them. In either case, however, they reflect the prestige, not only of their owner, but of his entire sub-clan. If

5. Trade stores charge considerably more than this.



individually owned, heirloom shells are handed down in the patriline. Their custodianship descends in primogeniture, but all agnatic descendants of the original owner share in their ownership. Heirloom shells also have individual names. The momak win, as their name implies, remain in their custodian's house and are not circulated in private exchanges, for it is said that the late owner's ghost would be angered by any infringement of this rule. There are, however, certain circumstances in which heirloom shells can change hands: (a) a shell of special quality which has come in as an ordinary exchange-shell may be adopted as an heirloom shell. It is known at first as a pame win.<sup>6</sup> After a generation or two, the ancestral-ghost sanction comes into operation, and the adopted shell becomes a win orr'nenk, or "true heirloom". (b) They can be bought as heirloom shells for their value in ordinary shells, but such a transaction would take place only in special or emergency circumstances. (c) Although heirloom shells cannot be used in individual exchanges, they do occasionally form part of the goods involved in such inter-group exchanges as bride- or mortuary-payments. (d) Heirloom shells can be forced to change hands: in an actual example, a clan that was hard-pressed called in desperation on a neighbouring group for help. As these people were not traditional allies, the second group demanded ebu, the customary fee for military

6. pame is a loose term meaning "bores", "joking", "nonsense", etc.; in this context, it would best be translated as "quasi-heirloom shell".

assistance, but taking advantage of the situation, they said that, unless this fee included all the besieged group's heirloom shells, they would join the attacking group.

The heirloom shells are of superlative quality (I have seen some ten inches across by one inch thick) and each is said to be worth 8 to 10 ordinary shells of average quality. How true this is in fact I cannot say, for none of my informants could recall a specific transaction in which heirloom shells were actually exchanged for ordinary ones.

As an heirloom shell is not generally circulated as currency, its main significance is that of a wealth symbol which is worn by members of the owning sub-clan at full-dress dances, death compensation parades, and pig-killing parades. On such occasions, which are themselves displays of clan prestige, a momak win indicates that its wearer, and hence, his sub-clan, is so rich that he can afford to have at least 8 or 10 shells permanently out of circulation; it is the Mendi equivalent of hanging a Renoir in the kitchen. The heirloom shell has, in this role, replaced an ornamented wooden plaque, called a shomp, which was formerly paraded on public ceremonial occasions to indicate a clan's wealth. The shomp has not been used for about a generation, and one might reasonably suspect that it functioned when pearl-shells were much scarcer in the valley than they are now, and that its obsolescence began when shells in large quantities and of top quality began to spread west from the Mt. Hagen area.

In discussing the value of pearl-shell, I have given their equivalents in terms of European trade-goods or money



in 1956. In terms of the Mendi economy, however, their value must be assessed somewhat differently. The first point to be noted is that, in actual practical dealing, only certain kinds of goods can be exchanged for pearl-shell at all. Although there is an accepted scale of exchange equivalents in which all European trade- and native goods are equated against pearl-shell, the fact remains that there are only five commodities for which shells can actually be exchanged. These are, in order of frequency; other pearl-shells, pigs, bamboos of oil, possums and cassowaries. As possums are rarities in Mendi, and oil and cassowaries are traded in from outside, one can say that the only indigenous goods exchanged for pearl-shell are pigs. The scale here is:

a pig to mid-calf (10")	= 1 pearl-shell
" " " just below knee (15")	= 2 pearl-shells
" " " knee (18")	= 3 " "

and so on, up to 6 shells. A really exceptional pig will go to 8, but Mendi pigs are usually killed before they grow that big. A possum costs 1 shell, an oil-bamboo 1 or 2, depending on size, and a cassowary between 4 and 6. It should also be noted, however, that the above value-scales show the value to a Mendi of not the shells themselves, but the value of other goods in terms of pearl-shell. When a Mendi wants to discuss the value of a particular shell, he always does it in terms of other shells of ordinary, average quality.

In the formal group-payments, like those for death or marriage, a distinction is made between major items and minor ones. Minor items are:

axes  
 matchets  
 head-bands of 1/4" cowrie (tomp)  
 necklaces of 1" cowrie (tenkel)  
 possum-tail fur (shap aigib)  
 gourds of oil, approx. 1 qt. (wombolt pe)  
 packages of native salt (ep)  
 piglets, 8" or less

All these items are rated as equivalent, and each, in 1956, was equal to half a pearl-shell. But although all these things are related to pearl-shell in theory, and although any two of them will count as a shell in a ceremonial payment, yet in actual practice, no quantity of them would buy a shell, for minor items cannot be exchanged for major ones.

Besides the major and minor items, there is a third category of goods called pame-sha or mensha-pame ("something-nothing", "trifles". Pame-sha are such things as:

mirrors  
 small knives  
 beads  
 handkerchiefs  
 feathers (with certain exceptions)  
 small items of adornment

A large quantity of these things will sometimes buy goods of the second category; but they will not buy anything of the first category, and never appear at all in ceremonial exchanges. They are used mainly as small personal gifts between individuals: e.g. the ten sholt ("courting-gift"), or the ya bono ("flattery-gift").<sup>7</sup>



### Summary:

The items of Mendi currency fall into 3 distinct categories:

I. Major items: those things which can be exchanged for pearl-shell, and whose value is reckoned in terms of pearl-shell.

II. Minor items: objects whose value can be expressed in terms of pearl-shell, but which cannot be exchanged directly for pearl-shell.

III. Trivialities: usually European trade-goods whose value is not expressed in terms of either major or minor items, and which can rarely be exchanged for such items.

I and II provide the media for all the formal inter-group exchanges to be discussed in this paper, and will be referred to henceforth as "major items" or "minor items".

It is possible to manipulate exchanges in order to move up the currency scale: for example, several small knives (Category III) can be exchanged for a matchet or axe (Category II). Certain minor items will buy a small pig which, when it grows a little, can be exchanged for a pearl-shell (Category I). It is quite impossible, however, to exchange directly from Category III to Category I.

Items of personal belongings also change hands: bird-of-paradise plumes, woven string or cane bags, decorated arrows, dance-drums, stone ceremonial axes, etc., but

these goods, like those in Category III, are confined to personal transactions and have no part in the currency of inter-group exchange.



## CHAPTER IV:-

### PRIVATE & INDIVIDUAL EXCHANGES.

#### Part I: "Twem".

In terms of the political relations between otherwise autonomous groups, the large ceremonial exchanges to be discussed in the following chapters are the most important feature of the Mendi socio-economic structure. But in order to make any such payment, the donor group (usually a sub-clan) must first assemble the required goods. This is done by contributions from the individual members of the group.

It is a feature of the Mendi economy, however, that the goods used in exchanges (with the exception of pigs) are never hoarded. Pearl-shells, for example, may remain in the possession of one man for a week or two at a time while he is amassing them for an important payment; but with this and one or two other exceptions, which will emerge later, exchange goods are in a state of constant and rapid circulation.<sup>1</sup> It follows then, that when a sub-

1. Goods stolen on one occasion from the government store were found, when located, to have changed hands a dozen or more times within a week.

clan requires contributions for an inter-group payment, its members seldom have the goods to hand, so that they must be acquired from outside the group. The principal means of doing this is through the institution of individual exchanges known as twem.

Twem might best be defined as "a delayed gift-exchange between individuals, signifying a more or less permanent socio-economic relationship". It permeates every aspect of Mendi life. When a boy is quite small, his father and other close kinsmen give him small items of wealth: salt, necklaces, knives, and tell him to go and make twem with them. In this way, he learns to become familiar with the exchange-system on which his whole future status will depend, and by the time he is adult, he will have built up the necessary credit-connections which will enable him to play his part in contributing to the inter-clan payments. As a matter of fact, making twem starts at an even earlier age, as a game played by very little boys with sticks and stones, so that, when a lad is given his first real goods to twem with, he already has a fair idea of the routine involved.

Twem works this way: starting with small goods, and exchanging with members of my own clan, I eventually acquire my first pearl-shell. As soon as this is known, someone, preferably outside my clan, will ask me for it, on the promise to repay two shells, either on demand, or at some specified time or function, usually about six months later. If this is agreeable, we become "twem-partners"; so that I have, as it were, "invested" my pearl-shell at 100% interest, and if ever an emergency



arises, or my sub-clan requires it to make a ceremonial payment, I have a credit of two pearl-shells. My newly-acquired twem-partner, however, in order to repay me when I ask for it, must contract two new twem deals: one to repay my capital (shon), and one to repay my interest (paróli). While this chain of deals can get very involved, it does not expand indefinitely, because any big and experienced operator will have, at any one time, roughly as many credits as he has debts, and he will spend his time playing off one against the other: paying old debts and contracting new ones. Moreover, between any two twem-partners, the debtor/creditor relationship alternates fairly regularly: I borrow a shell from you, and later pay you back two; but the next time, you will probably borrow from me, and so even the balance. The rhythm of exchange, however, is not strict: should one partner be caught by an emergency (such as a sudden death) requiring an immediate sub-clan funeral payment, he can call on the other even if he is already in debt at the time. Twem can also be described, therefore, as a system of "borrowing at interest".

Twem relationships, whether debts or credits, tend to expire on the death of one of the partners. Occasionally, the dead man's son may endeavour to take over his late father's twem relationships; but this is usually difficult. for the son, like most Mendi men, would already have as many twem-relationships as he is capable of maintaining and would be unable to cope with more. Moreover, twem is distinctively a personal affair which is normally confined to men of the same generation and approximately equal economic status. The dead man's twem-partners, therefore,

would be reluctant to continue the relationship with his son, a man much their junior in years and of lower economic status. Status in Mendi is not hereditary, but achieved, and its achievement depends, as we shall see shortly, on the individual's ability to establish and maintain the widest possible network of twem exchanges.

Apart from the formal exchanges just described, the twem-relationship should involve a special degree of personal friendship. Partners are expected to offer each other hospitality and to assist each other, when called upon, in such tasks as house-building or garden-clearing. The formal and obligatory friendship implied in a twem-relationship often deepens into a sincere personal affection, and partners frequently encourage (and sometimes try to force) a marriage between their children. Certainly, such match-making often has political motives, but I was assured (and believe) that in many cases the fathers' desire for the match is based on sentiment.

In short, twem can take place only between friends, and all friends are expected to make twem. This, as we shall see, is the basic principle underlying all Mendi exchanges; it will be restated frequently throughout this paper, for its importance cannot be overstressed.

When, through age or sickness, a man's mental and physical powers begin to decline, he gradually tapers off his economic activities, terminates amicably his twem-relationships, and retires from active participation in the economic life.



Summary:

A Mendi is trained from earliest childhood to operate a system of individual gift-exchange. On a purely personal basis the benefits of this are easy to understand. The building up of a network of credit-relations is the only way in which a Mendi can gain prestige. The mere possession of wealth avails him nothing in terms of higher living standards. Its sole function is the establishment of economic credits which enable him to contribute, when necessary, to his clan's ceremonial payments. Since these payments, as I shall show, are the pivot of all inter-clan relations, then the man who, by his personal network of credits, controls more wealth than anyone else in his clan, is in a position to dictate his clan's relationships with other clans; that is, he has a position of power which could not be achieved in any other way. This is the only kind of individual political power which has any relevance in Mendi.

For an important man, the maintenance of his twem-relationships occupies most of his time; partners must be visited, debts collected, payments made; funerals, pork-distributions, death-compensations, dances must all be attended; for it is at these inter-clan gatherings that new and socially valuable contacts are made. A man of any ambitions must do all this, and if he is successful, his name is known throughout the valley; within his own clan and its immediate neighbours, his advice is sought, and he is invited to arbitrate disputes. He has no official authority, but a great deal of influence.

A man of prestige has usually a number of wives and hence, many descendants; this means that he has a good chance of becoming the founder of an eponymous sub-clan. If he achieves this his name is not only known widely during his life-time; it will also be remembered long after his death.

The Mendi call such a man ól óma, "a rich man"; and this

position can be attained only through twem.

## Part II: Personal Gifts.

There are other purely individual prestations and exchanges which do not fit into any institutional category. Most are of minor importance and are significant only as examples of the ways in which it is thought necessary for friendship to be cemented by the exchange of goods.

### I. ashumb'iri sholt and shank'iri sholt ("hair fee" and "whiskers fee"):

When a man cuts his hair or beard (usually because of the fleas and lice) anyone, outside of his own sub-clan, who witnesses it can claim a payment of one minor item. If the claim is refused the claimant seizes a portion of the cut hair and takes it home with him as a reminder of the rebuff; at subsequent meetings, he will humiliate the other by saying, "I have your hair in my house". However, such claims are met as far as possible, for they represent an offer of particular friendship which is not usually made unless the claimant is fairly sure of the response. The payment is reciprocal: A claims a "hair fee" from B, and when A cuts his own hair, B makes a counter-claim; but informants said that the counter-claim should be twice the original claim.

### II. ne po-yano and ki-shombo po-yano ("tooth binding", and "finger-nail binding"):

When a man loses a tooth or a finger-nail (whole, not clippings), a friend may pick it up, thread it on a string, and wear it around his neck. For this mark of affection, he should be rewarded with a small gift. This relationship



is similar to that of the "hair fee".

These two prestations are purely good-will or friendship gifts. They take place nearly always between fellow clan-members because the latter are the people one lives with, and are, consequently, most likely to be present in the circumstances giving rise to these payments. A claim for a "hair fee" or a "tooth binding" signifies an offer of close personal friendship, involving mutual co-operation and assistance; this explains why such claims are never made by fellow sub-clan members with whom it is assumed that such a relationship already exists. In other words, these two prestations represent an accepted method of formalizing preferences based on personal affection within a kin-group, and they serve to unite certain individuals more intimately than would their kinship obligations alone.

III. punda ompuldu kune ("to wipe clean the tongue and lips"):

This is a compensation for obscenity or insult, and consists of one minor item. It is payable reciprocally between men, and between men and women. But it is not payable between women, who tend to fight in these circumstances: sometimes with sticks, but usually with abuse. Women do not pay each other compensation because, with the single exception of magic purchased from their mothers, all

2. In this respect, they have a function similar to that of the practice of "private names". (See: D.J. Ryan: "Names & Naming in Mendi", Oceania, Vol. XXIX, p. 114).

the economic exchanges in which they are involved are performed through the agency of their men-folk. Between men, if the insult-compensation is claimed and refused, the parties may come to blows.

IV. tonga ("to compensate for loss or damage to property"):

The compensation is equivalent in value to the loss or damage. Tonga refers also to food that is stolen and eaten, and to damage caused to one's garden by a neighbour's pig.

The obvious function of payments III and IV is that of damping a potentially serious dispute within a small residential group. A breach in social relations can be mended only by an economic exchange, and, if necessary, pressure is brought to bear by other members of the group to encourage such an exchange.

V. ya pono ("string tying"):

When men (particularly young men) are fully decorated at dances, various girls may approach and tie a small piece of string or grass around one of their fingers: this is a mark of admiration or flattery, and the man must make the girl a small gift. Some girls do this to collect as many presents as possible; and at the end of a dance, the young men proudly compare their "strings". If, however, a girl offers to tie a man's finger and he refuses, it is an embarrassing rebuff; so that she approaches only those men whose willingness she is sure of. The "string tying" can be an invitation to courtship, but is not necessarily so.<sup>3</sup>

3. In a typical episode, a group of young girls stood giggling and daring each other to "tie" a particularly handsome young man: "Go on, tie him!" "No, you do it!" "Oh, I don't like to." And so on.



VI. shebi kondia ("food sharing"):

This does not refer to a particular exchange operation, but rather to the general principle of etiquette that friends should always be prepared to share their food with each other. In theory, it applies to all people with whom one enjoys amicable relations. When the subject is a staple food, like sweet-potato, the practice presents no inconvenience, but if a family has collected such delicacies as fish, pandanus-buds or edible fungi, it would obviously be impossible to share with their entire sub-clan (let alone clan, or cluster). Etiquette compromises: food of this kind is eaten in the privacy of the family house-yard, and other members of the group do not intrude unless specifically invited. Often, such special food is not even presented to the family, but is cooked and eaten in the scrub by those who have caught or gathered it. If, however, anyone stumbles accidentally upon such a secret feast, the participants are in honour bound to share with him: not to do so would be an affront.<sup>4</sup>

4. This practice proved a major barrier to my own acceptance by the Mendi. I did not, and indeed could not, subsist on their food; nor, on the other hand, could I financially afford to share my own rations with up to 300 people. Shortly after my arrival at Map, it was explained to me that, as a resident in their territory, and thus one of their brothers, I would be expected to share all my food with them. At the same time, I was reminded that, being a white man and a stranger, they were under no obligation to share anything whatever with me. This piece of "double-think" was never satisfactorily resolved.

Summary:

All relationships between individuals, even within small, co-residential kin-groups, are marked by some form of gift-exchange. We shall now go on to examine how this same principle of gift-exchange is expanded to create and maintain relations between progressively larger groups, up to alliances among the major political units.





(a)

Making a ceremonial wig for a drum-dance; packets of loose hair in the foreground.



(b)

Re-hafting a stone-axe.

## CHAPTER V:-

### MARRIAGE & BRIDE-PAYMENTS.

The Marrying Age: In Mendi, there is no special form of initiation to mark the passage from youth to adulthood, and there is, consequently, no socially recognized age at which a youth or girl may be called marriageable. Personal observation is not of much help in determining the usual marrying age, for Mendi ages can only be guessed.

The dozen or so brides whom I saw appeared, from their breast-formation, to be between 15 and 22 years old. Nevertheless, the Mendi say that a girl can be married even before her first menstruation, although nobody could cite an instance of this. When a girl's breasts begin to form, she receives male visitors at night for singing-parties in her house, and it is generally agreed that she will probably marry within the next two years.

In the only first two marriages that I witnessed, the grooms were about 30 years old. However, the marrying age for men seems to vary widely, and depends on when the youth can amass his bride-price. This in turn



depends on his own business success, the wealth and importance of his closer kin, and (an unpredictable but important factor) the amount of help they are prepared to give him. Although one could say that the son of a rich and important man should be in a position to marry earlier than his less prosperous contemporary (and it is true that all the younger married men I knew did in fact have rich fathers) this does not always happen, for the father may, for any of a number of personal reasons, hold back his contributions to his son's bride-price for several years.

When a youth is about 16, he allows his hair, which he has hitherto worn close-cropped, to grow longer. He takes more pains with personal adornments and joins courting-parties to houses in marriageable clans. It is said that by the time his hair has quite grown, he will be eligible to "buy" a wife.<sup>1</sup> The youngest married men I knew seemed to be about 18 or 20.

Reasons for Non-marriage: Nearly all Mendi marry at least once. The commonest reason given for a bachelor's state is that he cannot afford a wife, but younger men say that they are simply not interested in marriage.<sup>2</sup> Another reason given

1. The verb used here is keys, "to buy, or hire, specific objects for an agreed price". It is used for acquiring a wife, for buying dressed timber for house-building, and for hiring certain feather head-dresses. It is distinguished from twem in that the goods are specific: one is acquiring a particular woman, or a particular head-dress. At the same time, keys is used only for transactions between friends; for the same transaction between strangers, a different verb, tôp, is used.

2. In Mendi the sexes are more or less segregated from a fairly early age, and, as the men believe women to be essentially impure, initial contact between them tends to be a rather coy affair.

TABLE V:-

Frequency of marriage for married men.

<u>No. of marriages</u>	<u>CLANS</u>						<u>TOTALS</u>		<u>TOTALS %</u>	
	<u>Möbera</u>		<u>Kunjop</u>		<u>Kuberup</u>		<u>agn.</u>	<u>non-a</u>	<u>agn.</u>	<u>non-a</u>
1	8	8	9	4	5	4	22	16	56	76
2	3	3	1	-	3	1	7	4	18	19
3	1	-	-	-	1	1	2	1	5	5
4	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	5	-
5	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	3	-
6	1	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	5	-
7	1	-	1	-	-	-	2	-	5	-
8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
12	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	3	-
							39	21	100	100

TABLE VI:-

Contemporaneous  
wives

0	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	3	5
1	8	7	10	4	7	6	25	17	64	81
2	4	3	-	-	2	-	6	3	15	14
3	2	-	1	-	-	-	3	-	7	-
4	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	3	-
5	1	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	5	-
6	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	3	-
							39	21	100	100



**TABLE I:-****CLANS****Marital Status:**

	Möbera agn. n-a		Kunjop agn. n-a		Kuberup agn. n-a		TOTALS agn. n-a	
marriageable men	18	15	15	6	12	6	45	27
married men	17	11	12	4	10	6	39	21
eligible bachelors	1	4	3	2	2	0	6	6
% bachelors/marriageable men	5.5	26.6	20	33.3	16.6	0	13.3	22.2

**TABLE II:-****Frequency of Marriage:**

married men	17	11	12	4	10	6	39	21
total marriages ever contracted	49	14	12	4	21	9	93	27
marriages per married man	2.9	1.3	1.8	1	2.1	1.5	2.4	1.3

**TABLE III:-****Plurality of Marriage:**

married men	17	11	12	4	10	6	39	21
living wives (including temporary separations)	30	13	18	4	17	8	65	25
contemporaneous wives per married man	1.9	1.2	1.5	1	1.7	1.3	1.7	1.2

**TABLE IV:-****Divorces & Separations:**

wives living with husband	26	13	18	4	17	6	61	23
" dead (dying as wives)	14	1	3	0	4	1	21	2
separations (permanent)	5	0	2	0	1	0	8	0
" (presumed temporary)	4	0	0	0	0	0	4	0
% permanent separations/ marriages	10.2	0	8.7	0	5	0	8.6	0

for someone else's bachelorhood is his lack of physical attraction; this usually carries the further implication that he is also poor and unsuccessful; the ol ebe (lit: "good men" or "men of good credit") are assumed to be sleek and strong, whereas the ol obe ("bad men") are wizened, with dry skins.<sup>3</sup>

I have given no figures for unmarried women: the Mendi say that no mature woman remains unmarried and I have never seen a spinster older than about 22. Yet there is a phrase (ten piri)<sup>4</sup> for a mature unmarried woman.

Frequency of Marriage: The data in Tables I to VI were gathered from a single cluster of three clans (Möbera, Kunjop and Kuberup), residing on a common territory.

In this sample, a total of 60 married men had contracted 120 marriages (an average of 2.1 each); of these, the 39 agnates had married 93 women (2.4 each), and the 21 non-agnates married 27 women (1.3 each).

From Table V, the total number of men who have married only once outnumber those who have married more than once. Of the agnates, 56% marry only once, and of the non-agnates, 76%.

From Table VI, 64% of agnates and 81% of non-agnates have only one wife at a time.

It would appear, therefore, that (a) non-agnates

3. Oddly enough, this assumption appears to have some factual basis. It is not impossible that, in these Highland societies, where status is determined almost entirely by individual effort, success has a psycho-somatic effect on physical appearance.

4. Lit: "useless or damaged woman". I have heard of 3 such women, all mentally and physically retarded.



contract significantly fewer marriages than do agnates; (b) more non-agnates marry only once; and (c) a higher percentage of non-agnates have only one wife at a time. The figures supporting these conclusions are statistically significant with reference to the sample.

Of a total of 72 men of marriageable age, 12 (16.6%) had not been married. In terms of agnates and non-agnates, the 45 agnatic marriageable men included 6 bachelors (13.3%), and the 27 non-agnatic marriageable men also had 6 (22.2%). Even though all but one of these bachelors were under 30 years of age and probably would marry eventually, the non-agnates of this cluster included a higher proportion of bachelors than did the agnates.

Tables III and VI show that the 39 agnates of the sample had 65 contemporaneous wives (1.7 each), whereas the 21 non-agnates had only 25 (1.2 each).

It might further be suggested, therefore, that (d) non-agnates tend to marry later than agnates; and (e) non-agnates have fewer contemporaneous wives. The figures supporting conclusions (d) and (e) are not statistically significant; they are, however, in accord with the general conclusions concerning the marital disadvantages of non-agnacy, and I have included them for that reason.

It has previously been shown that the non-agnatic member of a Mendi sub-clan is usually in that position because he or his parents have taken refuge, which in turn implies some sort of domestic or social disruption among his own patrikin. Because the latter are the people who would normally help him with his bride-payments, one would expect him in his new clan of residence to be under some handicap in acquiring a wife. The examination of the above sample seems to indicate that this is so.

Before leaving this section, a further point should be considered. If, as the Mendi say with apparent truth, all men marry and many marry more than once, then where do the women come from? There is no evidence of a markedly differential birth-rate in Mendi, but there is reason for believing that, until the Government finally suppressed inter-clan warfare (between 1950 and 1955), the male death-rate was appreciably higher than it is now, and higher than that of women. One reason for believing this is the very high proportion of non-agmates who trace their change of residence-clan to the death of a father or husband in a fight. Precise figures were unobtainable, but it seems probable that the deaths of bachelors and the re-marriage of widows would account for the surplus of females. If this is true, we may expect the ratio of marriages per man to approach parity in the next generation or so.

Courtship: Acquaintance between the sexes begins most often with an accidental meeting, usually at a dance, or (these days) at the government produce-market, but young couples sometimes meet accidentally on bush-tracks; the significant point is that nearly all these initial meetings appear to be fortuitous. The young man may ask the girl's permission to come and sing to her. This is a matter of pride to both; a desirable young man must have entrée to as many girls' houses as possible, and the girl's prestige demands that she attract male singers in a similar way. A popular girl has between six <sup>and</sup> ~~or~~ a dozen courtiers, and an enthusiastic young man visits regularly a similar number of girls. These visits can keep a young man very busy, because, counting travelling time, he may be thus occupied for as much as ten hours a night six or seven nights a week.



A courting-party is a particularly dreary affair. A fireplace runs down the centre of the women's-house; the girl sits on the side of the fire opposite the door, while her visitors sit against the wall containing the entrance-door. She usually has a couple of female chaperones and occasionally a brother as well (ti irr-perela: "one who sits stoking the fire"); the father does not act as chaperon. One guest rises, crosses the fire and sits cross-legged beside the girl, their shoulders touching. In a soft, nasal falsetto, he sings a courting-song whose length is matched only by the uninspired monotony of its words and tune. The words may be part of a general repertoire or self-composed, but the tune is always the same. When the song is finished, the young man moves back across the fire, and another takes his place. There is some conversation among the waiting men, and sometimes a few whispered words between the singing couple. Often someone plays a jews-harp or, more rarely, pan-pipes. New guests arrive, and others leave.

In the course of time, for both boys and girls, the field of prospective suitors narrows, the singing-parties become smaller and more intimate until at length the girl reaches an understanding with one young man and thereafter receives only him and his clan-brothers, who come to spare him the embarrassment of courting alone. When the affair has reached this stage, the suitor makes a formal approach to the girl's father or brothers, and, if they are agreeable, the bride-price is arranged. He gives one pearl-shell immediately as a deposit.

It might be mentioned here that although young married men frequently attend singing parties, older men seldom do so. It would be beneath the dignity of an established man to compete for a girl's affections with unmarried youths twenty years

his junior. Instead, he negotiates directly with the girl and her parents.

During the betrothal period (in fact, until the formal consummation of the marriage) the couple are supposed to remain chaste: but it is accepted that some intercourse will take place. I was assured that this would not be frequent, as unlawful intercourse, like over-indulgence, can result in a physical wasting-away of the man, with loss of hair and drying-up of the skin (known as being "eaten by a woman").

Choice of Spouse: Marriage is forbidden with members of the following groups:

1. Any sub-clan with which common descent can be traced.<sup>5</sup>
2. Any sub-clan into which a member of one's own sub-clan has married within the previous 5 or 6 generations.<sup>6</sup>

5. The common genealogy of any two such groups is usually remembered only by some of the older men; individuals tend to remember their personal antigamy-lists in terms of sub-clans rather than of genealogies. After 5 or 6 generations, the details of a common descent are forgotten by almost everybody, and this appears to mark the time when the groups concerned are again permitted to inter-marry.

6. That is, one marriage between any two sub-clans bars all further marriage between them for 5 or 6 generations. Theoretically, this prohibition applies for the same period to all descendants of the original two sub-clans; in fact, an individual remembers few of the marriages of any ancestors outside his own patriline: even the sub-clan of mother's mother is often forgotten. For this reason, an individual's choice of marriageable sub-clans is in fact much wider than a strict application of Rule 2 would allow.



3. Any sub-clan into which one's mother's sub-clan cannot marry by either of the preceding rules.

From the above rules, it follows that each individual has a list of antigamous sub-clans by virtue of his membership of a certain descent-group which he shares with other members of that group. In addition to these, he has a further list of antigamous sub-clans derived from his mother which he shares only with his full siblings. The potential spouses of each individual, therefore, are in part determined by his personal genealogy. Marriage prohibitions are determined entirely in this way and are not influenced by changes in residence or affiliation, although, as we shall see later, these latter considerations do affect the contributions to and distributions of bride-price.

Anyone not included in these 3 categories is a potential spouse, and the rules look as though they were specifically designed to spread the network of kinship over as wide an area as possible. This is a point I shall return to shortly.

Positive reasons for the choice of a particular spouse I found more difficult to determine.

The Mendi themselves invariably answer in terms of the personal attributes of the parties concerned: women are attracted to men entirely by their appearance, perhaps encouraged by a little love-magic (but not much importance is attached to this) and men like women who are tall, straight and strong. (European women of statuesque build are much admired; and one local girl considered by the Mendi to be a raving beauty was in fact one who was closest to being a beauty by our standards.) For the young man, his bride's appearance and personality are

primary considerations, but, as he gets older, he comes to attach more importance to strength, industry and skill in tending pigs and gardens.<sup>7</sup> (I should mention that all my informants were male.)

Questioning of informants on motives for choice of spouse never really got past this: a man selects a woman he likes with the qualities of a good wife, and she will marry a man she likes who is able to pay a good price for her. Always, it is emphasised, that the personal qualities of the two parties are the only factors involved.

However, there is at least one other factor, and possibly two, influencing choice of spouse.

In the discussion of the formation of clusters (Chapter I), it was shown how adjacent clans tended to inter-marry, thus establishing affinal and political connections. By the operation of the marriage rules stated above, each marriage between two sub-clans bars any further marriage between them for several generations. It follows, therefore, that an individual has few potential spouses remaining among clans adjacent to his own: among clans, that is, within one mile or so of his place of residence. That is why only 19.5% of the sample of marriages took place between couples residing less than one mile apart. Beyond this radius, the range of potential spouses widens considerably, and Table VII shows a clear correlation between frequency of marriage and distance of residence. (It can also be shown that marriages tend to take place in the direction of easiest walking.)

7. Mendi proposal: He: "Girl, you please me. I'll give you pearl-shell, I'll give you pigs. Say no to other men who want to marry you." She: "Another man will come and I shall say, 'No, another man's pigs are here, another man's shells are here'." He: "I have told you I shall give you pearl-shell. Let us go. Woman, I am about to give pearl-shell to your brother(s)."



The reason for this is quite obvious. The Mendi terrain is rugged and broken, and courting takes place at night. Ghosts are abroad in the bush at night and, until recently, so were enemy ambush-parties. If a young man has the choice of two girls of more or less equal attraction, one of whom resides within 15 minutes easy walking, and the other two hours away with deep gullies to be crossed and mountain torrents to be forded, there can surely be little doubt as to which girl will receive his attentions. The figures given indicate that, in this respect, a Mendi's outlook is similar to our own.

TABLE VII:-

Frequency of Marriage as a Function of Geographic Distance:

			marriages	%
<u>Couple Residing</u>	less than 1 mile apart		18	19.5
	1-2 miles "		31	33.3
	2-3 " "		19	20.4
	3-4 " "		17	18.2
	4-5 " "		2	2.1
	more than 5 " "		6	6.4
Totals:			93	100.0 %

The other factor is more difficult to establish. It will be shown later in this chapter that a necessary part of any Mendi marriage is the establishment of twem, or private

exchange relationships between the bride-groom and his wife's father and brothers, and that it is essential for a man of any ambition to have as many of these relationships as possible, allying him to as many different clans as possible. It would seem reasonable, therefore, to suppose that the choice of a wife might be influenced by the desire to make twem with certain important individuals or groups. But all my informants, with two exceptions, would have none of this; Mendi marriages are personal affairs: "You marry a girl because you like her and because she'll make a good wife." One man did indicate that there might be more to it than this. He said a man chooses his first wife as an alliance with a rich man, but when asked to elaborate, he changed his mind and finished by saying: "We do not marry only rich men's sisters; one man will marry a rich man's sister and another a poor man's." The same informant, when asked if an ambitious young man had a choice of two girls: (a) a strong, good worker, daughter of a poor man, or (b) weakly daughter of a rich man; which would he take? replied that he would take the poor man's daughter "because the rich man would always be asking for things, while the poor man would give them." In other words, twem can only be made satisfactorily between partners of approximately equal social standing; if one partner is dominant, he is in a position to make demands that can cause the other serious embarrassment.

Another informant also argued that it was pointless to choose a bride for her twem connections, for, he said, twem would always be possible with in-laws whether rich or poor, because no one is so poor that he has no pearl-shell at all; if he were, he would not be engaged in a marriage transaction. Finally, "a rich man will have no preference either, he will



marry rich or poor girls, so long as they can tend his gardens."

The answer to this question probably lies in the marriage-rules already cited; we observed then that an obvious result of these rules was the diffusion of kinship-ties over a wide area. But this also means the diffusion of twem-partnerships over the same area.

It is therefore unnecessary to arrange marriages consciously and deliberately to achieve certain economic results (namely, a wide network of twem-partnerships); these results follow automatically from the operation of the marriage-rules.

The part played by parents in the choice of their children's spouses is even more difficult to estimate. Informants are unanimous that, ideally, they play no part at all; but they agreed that occasionally conflicts arise when a father favours one girl for strength, gardening and pig-tending, while his son wants another more decorative and less strictly utilitarian. They say there are no rules about the outcome of such a conflict: it depends, as such things usually do, on the personal relationship of the individuals involved: sometimes the son might have his way, and sometimes the father. For his first marriage, a young man is usually more dependent on his father for bride-price than he will be later on, so that the father can exert some degree of economic pressure to determine his son's choice. The Mendi say this has occurred but is not usual, and they could recall no specific instances.

Pressure influencing a man's marriage can come not only from his own parents, but also from those of his prospective bride. I was given two cases in which two women wanted to marry the same man... so, in one case, he obligingly married both contemporaneously. In the second instance, it was the kin of

the two women who exerted the pressure and who were, in fact, actually fighting each other. So the man pooled resources with his younger brother and paid bride-prices for both women; but, tired of the whole business, he handed both over as wives to his younger brother.

Finally, a girl's kin may endeavour to force a marriage if she has been seduced, but their success depends on the relative strength and determination of the two kin-groups. In such a situation, the girl's kin are usually prepared to accept a smaller bride-price, and this fact is sometimes taken advantage of by men who wish to acquire a wife cheaply.<sup>8</sup> If, moreover, a marriage is opposed by the girl's kin, seduction and pregnancy are recognized as a way of circumventing such opposition. If, despite all pressure, the seducer refuses marriage, he must pay compensation to the girl's kin. The payment is called onap-ya tomp ("pubic-apron payment"), a general term for compensation paid to a woman's father or husband for illicit sexual intercourse. It covers: (a) Rape of either a single or married woman. In the latter instance, if the raper is of the same cluster as the husband, the other members of the group endeavour to settle the matter by compensation; but if the two men are of different groups, the offence could lead to violence or even warfare. (b) Intercourse with a consenting, unmarried girl, and subsequent refusal to marry her. This payment consists usually of only one major article; but if

8. Case 5, Table VIII, p. 108.



the offended party is strong enough, more may be extorted by threat.\*

It is also asserted, again ideally, that a girl can marry the man of her choice; but in practice, the importunity of her kinsmen is often so great that she must be very determined to resist it. As usual, the matter turns upon personal relations, but the following case illustrates the kind of conflict that can take place:

The girl, Woshi, had a marriage arranged for her by her father with a young man whose kin offered an exceptionally high bride-price.<sup>9</sup> Her father wanted the marriage for two reasons: the size of the payment, and the fact that the prospective groom's father was an old twem-partner and a close friend; both men felt that it would be a good thing to have a more formal connection between their respective groups. Woshi, however, wanted to marry another man. Negotiations reached the stage where the bride-price was agreed upon, laid out for inspection and formally accepted, under compulsion, by

\* In one case I witnessed, a married man raped a single girl of the same cluster. He was willing to compensate her father, but an argument arose over the amount. The father demanded a large pig, but the culprit said she was only a little girl, so that a little pig would suffice. The debate continued on this theme for several hours, and while it was still in progress, two of the father's brothers sneaked up to the raper's house and took a large pig. The raper accepted this situation, and the matter was settled. The dispute was watched by other members of the cluster, but there was no active interference. This form of individual self-help is a common feature of Mendi intra-group disputes.

Woshi herself; her father had even arranged the redistribution. The wedding was to take place the next day. Just before the wedding, Woshi asserted that she had miscalculated her periods and took refuge in her menstruation-hut. As no man would touch her there, the wedding was postponed for 8 days. Those of her kin who were to receive her bride-price were angry and said the marriage would take place the day after she emerged from seclusion. This respite apparently strengthened Woshi's resolution and, when she emerged, she flatly refused to go on with the marriage, which was again postponed. Her life at this time was made unpleasant by the members of her sub-clan, and there was some rumour that her father thrashed her; at all events, the wedding did eventually take place. In former times, the affair would probably have ended either with Woshi settling down to an unwanted marriage, or possibly eloping with the man of her choice.<sup>10</sup> At this time (1958), however, she went to the District Officer and asked to be released from the marriage.<sup>11</sup> Her father capitulated at last, and reluctantly returned the bride-price, but he still refused to allow Woshi to marry the man she wanted. Informants gave two reasons for this refusal:

10. See: "Truce", Chapt. X, p. 252 //

11. It is the general Administration policy not to interfere in native marriage disputes unless asked to arbitrate by both parties. The idea of "impartial justice", however, is still as inconceivable to the Mendi as it is to most native peoples. As Woshi's lover was a hospital assistant, he must (her father thought) have influence with the white men; so it would be useless to contest the case.



(a) Woshi's lover could afford only a small bride-price; and (b) he came from a territory fifteen miles away and Woshi's father did not want any exchange-relations or affinal connections at so great a distance. As we shall stress repeatedly, exchange-relations are political relations, and, for them to be effective, the parties must live within an accessible distance of each other. In Mendi, fifteen miles is not regarded as an accessible distance.

The case of Woshi is a fairly typical example of the kind of parental pressure used to force a marriage, of the reasons for such pressure, and of the steps an unwilling bride can take to avoid the marriage. The outcome of such a conflict is always doubtful, but, in general, the balance seems to be weighted against the girl; nevertheless, there were certain other cases in which the girl finally had her own way.

The whole question of parental influence on marriage can be answered most simply thus: (a) most marriages are arranged by the couple themselves; (b) where parental pressure is exerted, some children are more submissive to their parents than are others; and (c) resistance to parental pressure is easier for a man than for a girl, but possible for both.<sup>12</sup>

12. This situation is in marked contrast to that in other parts of the Highlands (notably webag and Mt. Hagen) where first marriages at least are firmly arranged by the fathers of both parties. But, in both these areas, strong parental discipline is a feature of the cultures; this discipline is sanctioned by a scarcity of land (a father can withhold his land from a rebellious son) and by a fairly rigid patrilineal and patrilocal social structure. In Mendi, on the other hand, a son who quarrels with his father can always claim land from his mother's brother, and usually from other kin and affines also.

When the prospective spouse has been decided, there follows the negotiation of bride-price.

The size of a bride-price varies considerably. In theoretical discussions, the average payment for a young, strong and attractive wife was said to be: 12 pearl-shell, 3 pigs, and an unspecified number<sup>13</sup> of minor items. The 12 pearl-shell are jokingly reckoned as:

1	for each leg	=	2
1	" " shoulder	=	2
1	" " breast	=	2
1	" the head	=	1
5	" " vagina	=	5
<hr/>			
			<u>12</u>

Even speaking theoretically, it is admitted that few bride-prices accord exactly with this estimate: an exceptionally fine woman may bring as many as 16 shells, and an old, crippled, or unattractive one may be worth 3 or less. The price is not, moreover, entirely determined by the value of the woman; it is influenced too by the wealth and status of the man: "a very rich man" (ol ondôbe ôma) pays 16, "a fairly rich man" (ol ôma kank-pu) pays 12, a "rubbish-man" (ol timp) pays 4. Obviously, a man who pays 16 pearl-shells for a wife gains prestige, and he may therefore be willing to pay this price for a woman whom he could, if he chose to haggle, have got for 12. No attractive woman, they say, would consider an offer of 4 pearl-shells.

Some value is placed on pre-marital chastity. If a girl

13. Usually some multiple of 24. This is the maximum unit of counting. The numerical system goes from 1 to 8, and thence in groups of 4 up to 24. This is called orr pomberr, or "one complete unit"; then counting starts again on the second unit.



is known to have been promiscuous, it is felt that her husband may have trouble with her later, but the people insist that this does not affect her bride-price.

Widows, if still young, fetch the same price, for, as men say, "the death of her husband didn't cut out her vagina; she still has that."

It is also asserted that divorcees do not fetch a lower price: even a woman dismissed by her husband for being shrewish or lazy is still worth as much as any other woman of her age. (This I rather doubt, but cannot disprove. I have heard, however, of a woman who ran away from four different husbands, the bride-price being refunded in each case. She was a handsome woman, and I was assured that her instability had not lowered her value to any of her husbands).

When a widow re-marries, she often brings with her the children of her first marriage (especially if they are still young enough to need a mother's care). Neither she nor they suffer any disability. Her new husband is happy to have more children around his establishment: their mother's work will feed them, and eventually he will have more people to cultivate his land. If his step-daughters elect to stay with him instead of returning to their father's territory, he will benefit, too, from the affinal exchanges and political relationships to which their marriages will give rise. Moreover, the larger his household, the greater his own prestige.

In a later section of this chapter, when we consider actual examples of marriage-payments, the correlation between bride-price and the status of the parties will be examined in more detail. It suffices for the moment to say that such a

correlation, although explicitly recognized in discussions, is even more clearly apparent in practice.

The Marriage Payments:<sup>14</sup> Although there is much variation in the size of marriage-payments, the exchanges follow a prescribed form. The sequence is as follows:

I. A "good-faith" "deposit" of one or two pearl-shell paid immediately upon betrothal by the prospective groom to his fiancée's father or brothers, or to other representatives of her kin. This is refundable if the betrothal is broken by the girl.

II. A series of small betrothal-gifts to the girl herself. They consist of pame-sha, or "trivialities" (e.g., mirrors, beads, small pieces of pork, etc.)<sup>15</sup>

III. The private display of pearl-shell (and, usually, a few pigs) to those of the bride's kin who will ultimately share her bride-price. For a first marriage, this display takes place in the house-yard of an older brother (or some other close kinsman) of the groom, who has been acting as the

14. in ldap: a general term for all payments to wife's kin.

15. Both I and II are called ten sholt ("the woman's contract-fee"). Sholt is also the term used for "wages" when working for Europeans: it implies a "contract" in which certain obligations are undertaken for a specified payment.



latter's spokesman throughout the marriage negotiation.<sup>16</sup> This man slowly removes the pearl-shells from their bark wrappings and lays them in a row, and a representative of the bride's kin inspects them. If he approves, he calls the girl and ceremoniously offers her two of the shells. She takes them, turns to face the spectators and then hands them back. This is a public statement that the bride-price has been accepted. It also signifies that the girl herself is the recipient of her own bride-price, that it is hers to dispose of as she thinks fit, and that her kinsmen are acting only as her agents. This assumption of the bride's independence is, as will be shown, a distinctive and basic feature of Mendi marriages, and although it is sometimes merely a fiction, the girl is in fact often allowed to exercise her discretion.

IV. A few days later, the public delivery of bride-price takes place on the bride's clan dance-ground. The girl, covered in a gleaming, black mixture of palm-oil and soot, wearing a bulky, blackened net bridal veil and carrying the bride's forked wand, stands in the midst of the bridal wealth placed in the centre of the dance-ground by the groom and his kin, who have retired to one side. The girl herself then makes the distribution. Item by item, she hands the wealth out among her kin and their affines, calling the name of each recipient.

16. This is because a young man is shy at his first marriage, and inexperienced in handling the complicated dealings that go with it. For subsequent marriages, he usually supervises his own arrangements.

V. On this same occasion, a return-gift of pigs (olel mōk, "bride-groom's pigs") is made to the bride by certain of her kin. The number and value of these pigs are known in advance, and specific provision is made by the groom for their payment when the bride-price is offered. For example, when first negotiating the bride-price, he offers x shells for the girl. Her father or brothers thereupon agree to provide y return-gift pigs, each of a certain value. (Their number and value will be determined by the general size of the payment.) The groom must then add the value of the pigs to the payment for the girl herself. The number of shells handed over in IV, therefore, is in two parts: the payment for the bride (tenel) and that for the pigs (mōkel). The tenel is distributed, as will be shown, among the bride's kin, but the mōkel goes only to the men who provided the return-gift pigs.

VI. After the ceremonial distribution of the major items, the bride accompanies her husband to his home, bringing with her the return-gift pigs. The marriage should not be consummated, however, for another month (or, as the Mendi say, until the bride's anointment has worn off); during this period, the groom gathers from his clansmen and others the minor items which will complete his bridal payment. Meanwhile, he does no arduous physical work, abstains from certain foods,<sup>17</sup> is sexually continent, and acquires<sup>18</sup> and memorizes the "anti-woman" magic which will protect him when eventually he has

17. Forbidden foods vary, but are such that their absence occasions no great inconvenience.

18. Usually from his mother's brother.



sexual contact with his wife. The tabus have two sanctions: first, the man who breaks them will be "eaten" by the women (i.e., will waste away physically)<sup>19</sup>; second, his kin may refuse to contribute the rest of his bride-price. The tabus are more strictly observed at a first marriage than at later ones when the groom is sexually more sophisticated and less dependent economically on his own kin.

The month of abstinence gives the bride time to become acquainted with her affines and adjusted to her new life. It is regarded as a trial period; if the marriage is to break up, it is thought better for the break to come then than later. I was unable to obtain any reliable estimate of the number of marriages broken off before the official consummation, but was told that the number was great. That marriages were recognized as being unstable during this period is shown by the fact that the bride's kin who have received her bride-price are expected to keep the goods in their possession until the marriage is completed and consummated. If the marriage should break at this point, the bride-price is refundable in full; therefore the girl's kin should keep it available for this contingency. Frequently, they do not do this; there may be debts to meet, or payments to make, so that the bride-price goes into general circulation immediately it is received. Should the marriage then break up and a refund be claimed, the bride's kin may find themselves embarrassed and will do everything in their power to preserve the marriage. Many marital

19. This sex-tabu is in accordance with general Mendi notions about the dangerous impurity of women.

disputes arise from this situation. Formerly, they could have led to warfare; today, they are brought in increasing numbers to the Administration court.

VII. When all the minor items have been collected and handed over, the groom gives a "marriage-feast" which is attended by the bride's kin, and by all the contributors to the bride-price. The bride's return-gift pigs are killed, with some others added by the groom, and the ensuing pork-distribution is both a gesture of friendship by the groom to his new affines and a token acknowledgement to those who had assisted him with his bride-price.

VIII. Before the marriage is consummated, the bride and groom perform a small private ceremony in her house. Part of her bridal decoration is a bamboo knife, about 5 inches long, worn in her arm-band. This kōsh-shōbē is either an heirloom from her mother, or is made for her by a favourite brother or mother's brother (whom, incidentally, her husband must reward with a pearl-shell). In the ceremony the bride cuts a cooked gourd<sup>20</sup> with this knife, and the couple eat half each. Up to three days later, when the man has performed the appropriate protective magic, the marriage is consummated. The woman then puts the knife away in her best bag and later gives it to her daughter or to some close female relative.

Provenance of Bride-price. Although some of the major items in a bride-payment (i.e. pearl-shell and pigs) are contributed by the groom's sub-clan, it is nevertheless expected

20. Sp. cucurbita.



that he should be able to contribute a considerable proportion of it himself. When a boy is quite young, his father and other close kinsmen give him small items of wealth (salt, necklaces, knives) and tell him to make twem with them. In this way, he not only becomes familiar with the system of individual exchange which permeates the whole of Mendi socio-economic life, but he is expected by the time he is of marriageable age, to have built up credit-relations upon which he can call for the nucleus of his own bride-price.<sup>21</sup> A young man preparing to marry has also three other potential sources of wealth: I. his share in the bride-prices of his own sisters; II. his share of mortuary payments; (both of which he invests immediately in more twem contacts); and III. the sale of his pigs, which his mother and sisters have been tending for him.

The minimal amount to be contributed by the groom himself varies with individual cases and is decided mainly by discussion. It is generally agreed, however, that a man who cannot produce two pearl-shells of his own cannot look for much assistance from his sub-clan, and that, if this is all he can raise, he can hope only for the cheapest old wife. Thus, in Mendi, it is not the group which buys wives for its members, but rather the individual who, with some assistance from his kin-group, buys a wife for himself. The assistance required and given is likely to be greater for a first wife than for subsequent ones, and a big man may boast that he bought his later wives with no outside help at all.

21. As a matter of fact, making twem starts much earlier than this as a game played by very little boys with sticks and stones, so that when a lad is given his first real goods to twem with, he already has a fair idea of the routine involved.

For a first marriage, the groom himself provides the nucleus of the bride-price. His sub-clan of residence, which is normally his father's sub-clan,<sup>22</sup> contributes most of the remaining major items, but his mother's brothers or his sisters' husbands may also give major items. Minor items are contributed by other of his kin, affines or twem-partners. An analysis of bride-price donors will be made later.

A man repays contributions to his bride-price in two ways. Contributions from kin or affines are reciprocal, unless otherwise specified; that is, the groom has an obligation to assist in the marriage or other payments of those who have helped him. The debts thus incurred are often called "twem", but they differ from ordinary twem in that the repayment (shon) is made without the usual 100 per cent interest (parôli). Contributions from other twem-partners (i.e., those who are not relatives) are repaid on demand as ordinary twem with interest. There is thus a distinction made between the mutual obligations of kinsmen and affines and the wider inter-personal political relationships symbolized by the economic exchange of twem.

Distribution & recipients of Bride-price: In ideal terms, a Mendi bride-price is seen, not as the purchase of a woman by one group from another, but as the payment of a woman for her future services by the man who is going to receive the benefit.



22. If the groom is residing permanently elsewhere than with his father's sub-clan, his sub-clan of residence may take over the leading role in his bride-price contributions. This would only occur, however, if there had been an almost complete transfer of affiliation, as well as residence, from father's sub-clan to some other, and it would imply that relations with the patrikin were tenuous or severed.



of them. Mendi women do not themselves retain or use any of the forms of exchange wealth; and even when, as in marriage-payments, they are the recipients, they must immediately redistribute the goods among their male kin. But because, however temporarily, a woman is the actual owner of these goods, she has, in theory at least, the right to say who will ultimately receive them. The reasons for which a girl might exclude (say) a particular brother were given as these:

1. He failed to give her pork when he killed pigs.
2. Before she married, he refused to make her ornaments to wear or to carve her digging-sticks.
3. He gave her no oil or paint for the dances at which she hoped to attract young men's attention.
4. He wove her no arm-bands (both sexes weave leg-bands for themselves or each other, but only men weave arm-bands).

A share in a woman's bride-price is thus seen as a material return for certain inter-personal obligations, gifts and services, rather than as a compensation to her clan as a whole; and these gifts and services, while trifling in themselves, have a great symbolic importance, for they signify the girl's attachment to her own kin: the group in which her main interest and loyalty resides, the folk to whom she can look for refuge and protection while living her married life among strangers. A brother, therefore, who neglects these symbolic duties towards her, is not merely depriving her of arm-bands, or occasional scraps of pork, but is also, in effect, repudiating his entire relationship to her, so that he forfeits any share in her bride-price. The converse of this is equally true: no girl at her marriage will lightly or capriciously

deny a share in her bride-price to someone who would normally be entitled to it, for to do so would formally sever a relationship which she might one day need. As an informant put it quite succinctly: "If a girl offend her brothers, who then will give her pork?"

In practice, a woman's right to distribute her own bride-price may be modified by her relations with her father and brothers: a timid girl with a domineering father may, indeed, have no say in the matter at all. Without an intimate acquaintance with all the people concerned, it is quite impossible to say just how much freedom any bride is allowed. I am aware, however, of several cases in which the girls' discretion was decidedly and pointedly exercised, to the chagrin of several close kinsmen with whom they had recently quarrelled.

In the ordinary way, therefore, a girl residing with her own patri-clan distributes her bride-price to her father and brothers, to her mother (who gives it to her own brothers) and to her married sisters, who pass it on to their husbands or sons. Generally speaking, the people who receive part of a girl's bride-price are the same people who would have contributed to it had she been a man. It sometimes happens that there are not enough major items to satisfy all the people with a reasonable claim to them; in such cases first preference in distribution goes to the person or persons who have provided the return-gift pigs, then the pearl-shells are distributed in agreed proportion between the two main groups (bride's patrilineal and matrilineal sub-clans). Within each group, the individual distribution is made on a basis partly of seniority and partly of long-term equality and mutual convenience: if, for example, the bride has 4 mother's



brothers and there are only 2 pearl-shells available for them, the two eldest mother's brothers receive them on the understanding that at some later distribution the two youngest brothers will be recipients in their turn. If, however, one of the younger brothers needs a pearl-shell immediately, an older brother may agree to waive his right at this particular distribution.<sup>23</sup> Of course, the ultimate recipients will have been decided, after weeks of discussion, before the public distribution is made. The important point is that (as in all Mendi inter-group payments) although the inter-group payments themselves are fairly regular in form, the distribution among individuals within each group depends on such a complex of personal factors (degree of relationship, seniority, status, need, size and frequency of past contributions and receipts, etc.) that only the very broadest general rules can be formulated. Informants reiterated that it is not possible to predict who will receive precisely what at any particular distribution until the preliminary discussions have been completed just before it takes place.

Before finishing this section, something should be said about the recipients of bride-price in two special cases: (a) where the bride does not reside with her patrikin, and (b) the re-marriage of a widow.

In the first case, the Mendi answer is clear and unequivocal: "The men who weave her arm-bands and give her pork will take her bride-price." Bearing in mind the significance of

23. This is one of the few occasions on which primogeniture is considered.

these symbolic/services which has just been discussed, the statement means that her bride-price is received by the men who have reared her, sheltered her and fed her: that is to say, by the men of her clan of residence. It is of course possible, in the system of loose affiliation that characterizes clan-membership in Mendi, for a girl to have maintained this kind of relationship with her patrikin while residing permanently elsewhere. Then her patrikin receive some share in her bride-price but the bulk of it still goes to her clan of residence. Thus the rights and duties connected with a Mendi blood-relationship are not necessarily permanent or indissoluble, but can be ignored, neglected or transferred.

With the re-marriage of widows, the situation is rather more complicated. To begin with, the individual character of Mendi marriage is once again emphasized in the absence of any form of levirate. A man does not, in any circumstances, give his brother access to his wife, and when he dies, his widow cannot re-marry within his sub-clan. Indeed, it is considered more proper that she does not re-marry within his clan, although I am aware of a few cases in which this occurred. When a widow re-marries, her bride-price is divided equally among her brothers and her children by her previous marriage or marriages. The payment to the former is seen once again as maintaining the important relationship with her own kin, while that to the latter is a compensation to her sons for depriving them of her labour in their gardens.<sup>24</sup> If the second bride-

24. In one case of this kind, the woman's brother was omitted from one distribution because he had refused to make twem with her late husband, while in another, the son was omitted because he had opposed his mother's re-marriage. In a third case, a step-son of the widow's first marriage was given a small payment because he was living with the clan of the new husband, and because she liked him. (This last example shows how personal the distribution can be.)



price is a large one, further items will go to the woman's sisters and to her late husband's brothers: the former to ensure her an alternative place of refuge should she leave her husband's people; the latter because they had contributed to her original bride-price. This rationale, although stated explicitly, is also expressed in terms of pork-sharing<sup>25</sup>, that is, the importance for the woman of maintaining friendly relations in as many different places as possible. And while the Mendi clans were in an almost constant state of warfare, this matter of potential refuge was a vital one.<sup>26</sup>

25. I told them it did not seem fair that a widow's kin should receive more than one bride-price, for "If A buys a pig from B, who then sells it to C, C will owe B, but not A." They saw the point, and explained patiently that women were not pigs, and then recapitulated the symbolism of pork-sharing.

26. It is possible for the same individual to be both contributor and recipient in the same bride-price.

WEKOM = Ongelum

OL-KENK

Ebera = OMÁLO

Wekom is a non-agnatic resident (and a "rubbish-man") of the same sub-clan of which Omálo is a true agnatic resident. When Wekom married Omálo's wife's sister, Omálo contributed a small amount to his bride-price. At the distribution Ongelum in the usual way, gave a share to her sister who handed it over to her husband, Omálo. The latter had previously contributed to the bride-price of his wife's brother, Ol-kenk. The relationships involved here were exceptional, but the payments nevertheless followed the usual rules.

Position of women after marriage: As we have seen, one of the basic features of Mendi marriage-payments is the maintenance of ties between the woman and her own kin, the people who reared her. The importance of this is stated explicitly and is also symbolized in many ways, not only by the woman's actual distribution of her own bride-price, particularly on her re-marriage, but also by the fact that her husband is expected to make twem with her father and brothers; his failure to do so can, and does, result in divorce. The existence of such friendly ties between a man and his wife's people is regarded as an added inducement for him to treat the woman well. A further constraint on the husband's behaviour is seen in the fact that he has, as it were, "invested" wealth in the woman, and she, by wise distribution of her bride-price, has maintained potential rights of refuge, not only with her own brothers, but with her married sisters as well. The husband would therefore be foolish to ill-treat her, for should she leave him, she not only has a choice of places to go but also, if she can prove cruelty, no bride-price is recoverable. On the other hand, a woman who runs away from her husband for no adequate reason may forfeit the protection of her kin, who will be reluctant to pay back her bride-price.

With these safe-guards, one might expect a Mendi wife to be well-treated, and from my own observation, this does in fact seem to be the case.<sup>27</sup>

27. During the eighteen months I lived in Mendi, I knew of only three cases of wife-beating, and in two of these, the woman temporarily fled.



There follows a list of 20 examples of actual marriage-payments (Table VIII). It must be made clear that the 20 marriages analysed in Tables VIII to XIII have no connection with the 93 marriages in Tables I to IV. The data on bride-price were collected as a random sample from a number of unrelated clan-clusters.

On the matter of currency used in these payments, all informants remembered the major items (pearl-shell and pigs) of their marriage-payments, but many were unable to recall the details of the minor items they had paid or received; for this reason, the latter goods have been omitted from the calculations of averages (Table XIII). Although other kinds of goods (cassowary, oil-bamboos, heirloom shells, etc.) are acceptable as major items in a marriage-payment, it happened that none were included in the 20 examples given.

Spouses are classified as "agnates" or "non-agnates". Agnates are those who are members of the agnatic core of the sub-clans with which they were residing when they married; they include quasi-agnates (i.e. the grand-children of non-agnates). The one bride who was the child of a non-agnate (Table X, Case 4) has been classified as a quasi-agnate because she had double-affiliation (with her father's patri-sub-clan, and with her father's mother's sub-clan where she and her father resided).

From Table XIII, the average bride-price paid in all 20 cases was 11 pearl-shell and 2.1 pigs. Agnatic bride-grooms paid more than this average (13.3 shells, 1.7 pigs) and much more than non-agnatic grooms (4.4 shells, 3.4 pigs). (For reasons given in Table XIII, n.2, the comparison for agnatic brides and non-agnatic brides is not reliable.) Where the

bride is a widow or divorcee, the average price of (3.7 shells, 3.5 pigs) is again much lower than the general average (11 shells, 2.1 pigs), and return-gift pigs were offered in only one of the 4 cases (Case 15).

Not only, therefore, does the average non-agnate contract fewer marriages than an agnate, but Table XIII indicates that he also pays less for his wives.

Widows and divorcees bring lower prices because they are usually past their prime.

In Table VIII, certain individual cases are of interest. Case 5, although the first marriage of two agnates, involved only a small payment with no return-gift pigs. The bride was weak and skinny, and the groom forced a marriage by seducing her and then publicizing the fact. He boasted to me that, having been smart enough to get a cook and garden-worker cheaply, he was then able to afford a more desirable woman (Case 6). Case 17 was somewhat similar, but the groom insisted that it was a true love-match: he and the bride were both very young at the time (he was about 18, and a non-agnate) and the couple had deliberately, by the girl's pregnancy, forced the marriage against the opposition of her parents. The marriage did, in fact, appear to have lasted happily for about 15 years.<sup>28</sup>

28. In such cases (i.e. seduction or elopement) the bride-price is called not in-lap, but ten kômp. It is usually a smaller payment, the return-gift is not made, the bride does not distribute her bride-payment publicly, is not decorated, and the normal month of abstinence is not observed.



TABLE VIII:-

## Bride-price Payments

Case	Groom	Bride	Payment for Woman S. P. M.			Payment for R-G pigs	No. of R-G pigs	Total Payment. S. P. M.		
1.	agn. (M1)	agn. (M1)	8.	0.	24x3	4,2,2,1,1,1,1	7	20.	0.	24x3
2.	agn. (M1)	agn. (M1)	8.			3,3,2	3	16.	0.	?
3.	agn. (M1)	agn. (M1)	10.	2.	34	5	1	15.	2.	34
4.	agn. (M1)	agn. (M1)	15.	2.	?	5,5	2	25.	2.	?
5.	agn. (M1)	agn. (M1)	4.	0.	5	-	-	4.	0.	5
6.	↑ agn. (M2)	agn. (M1)	6.	0.	?	2	1	8.	0.	?
7.	agn. (M1)	agn. (M1)	6.	4.	2x24	5	1	11.	4.	24x2
8.	↕ agn. (M2)	agn. (M1)	14.	2.	24x2	2	1	16.	2.	24x2
9.	agn. (M2)	agn. (M1)	7.	1.	31	5,5	2	17.	1.	31
10.	agn. (M7)	agn. (M1)	7.	0.	?	5,3,1	3	16.	0.	?
11.	agn. (M3)	n-a. (M1)	6.	0.	?	4,3,3	3	16.	0.	?
12.	agn. (M1)	agn. (M2)	4.	3.	24x2	-	-	4.	3.	24x2
13.	agn. (M4)	n-a. (M2)	1.	4.	?	-	-	1.	4.	?
14.	agn. (M1)	agn. (M2)	0.	6.	17	-	-	0.	6.	17
15.	agn. (M6)	↑ agn. (M3)	6.	1.	?	4	1	10.	1.	?

TABLE VIII:-

2.

Case	Groom	Bride	Payment for Woman			Payment for R-G pigs	No. of R-G pigs	Total Payment		
			S.	P.	M.			S.	P.	M.
16.	n-a. (M1)	agn. (M1)	8.	4.	31	2	1	10.	4.	31
17.	n-a. (M1)	n-a. (M1)	0.	2.	6	-	-	0.	2.	6
18.	n-a. (M2)	agn. (M1)	0.	4.	10	2	1	2.	4.	10
19.	n-a. (M3)	agn. (M1)	8.	4.	20	1	1	9.	4.	20
20.	n-a. (M4)	agn. (M1)	6.	3.	34	5,3,2,2,2	5	20.	3.	34

Notes:

1. S = pearl-shell.  
P = pigs.  
M = minor items.

2. ↑↓ = same spouse in more than one marriage.

3. R-G pigs = return-gift pigs.

4. agn., n-a. = agnate, non-agnate.

5. M1 = first marriage, etc.



TABLE IX:-

## Analysis of Bride-price Donors:

Case	Groom	Donors	Gave			R-G pigs	Recipients	Value S.
			S.	P.	M.			
1.	agn. (M1)	H. H.sub-clan	17. 3.	0.	6	7	H.	12
2.	agn. (M1)	No details.	16.	0.	?	3	H.	8
3.	agn. (M1)	H. H.sub-clan H.clan H.cluster H.sub-clan effines H.M.sub-clan	7. 4. 0. 0. 2. 2.	1. 0. 0. 0. 1. 0.	0 11 5 8 7 3	1	H.	5
4.	agn. (M1)	No details.	25.	2.	?	2	?	10
5.	agn. (M1)	H.	4.	0.	5	-	-	-
6.	agn. (M1)	No details.	8.	0.	?	1	H.	2
7.	agn. (M1)	H.	1.	4.	0	1	?	5
8.	agn. (M2)	H. H.clan H.cluster	14. 1. 1.	1. 1. 0.	? ? ?	1	H.	2
9.	agn. (M2)	No details.	17.	1.	31	2	H.	10
10.	agn. (M7)	H.	15.	0.	?	2P. 1S.	H.	9

TABLE IX:-

2.

Case	Groom	Donors	Gave S. P. M.			R-G pigs	Recipients	Value S.
11.	agn. (M3)	H. H.sub-clan affines	4. 12.	0. 0.	? ?	3	H.sub-clan affines	10
12.	agn. (M1)	No details.	4.	3.	?	-	-	-
13.	agn. (M4)	H.	1.	4.	?	-	-	-
14.	agn. (M1)	H.	0.	6.	?	-	-	-
15.	agn. (M6)	H.	10.	1.	?	-	-	-
16.	n-a. (M1)	H. H.sub-clan H.cluster H.sub-clan affines	9. 1. 0. 0.	3. 1. 0. 0.	8 14 ? 5	1	H.	5
17.	n-a. (M1)	H.	0.	2.	6	-	-	-
18.	n-a. (M2)	H.	2.	4.	10	1	H.	2
19.	n-a. (M3)	H.	9.	4.	?	1	H.	1
20.	n-a. (M4)	H.	20.	3.	19	5	H.	14



**TABLE X:-****Analysis of Bride-price Recipients:**

Case	Bride	Recipients	Received S. P. M.			R-G pigs	Donors	Value S.
1.	agn. (M1)	No details.	20.	0.	6	8	?	12
2.	agn. (M1)	No details.	16.	0.	?	3	?	8
3.	agn. (M1)	w.sub-clan w. m. sub-clan	13. 2.	0. 2.	? ?	1	w.sub-clan	5
4.	ch.of n-a. (M1)	w.F.sub-clan w.F.m.sub-clan w.F.sub-clan affines w.m.sub-clan	15. 8. 2. 0.	1. 0. 0. 1.	? ? ? ?	2	w.F.sub-clan	10
5.	agn. (M1)	w.sub-clan	4.	0.	5	-	-	-
6.	agn. (M1)	No details.	8.	0.	?	1	w.sub-clan	2
7.	agn. (M1)	w.sub-clan w.sub-clan affines w.m.sub-clan affines	4. 6. 1.	2. 1. 1.	? ? ?	1	w.sub-clan w.sub-clan affines (shared)	5
8.	agn. (M1)	w.sub-clan	9.	0.	?	1	w.sub-clan	2
9.	agn. (M1)	w.sub-clan w.clan w.cluster w.m.sub-clan affines w.sub-clan affines	9. 5. 1. 2. 0.	1. 0. 0. 0. 0.	19 6 1 2 3	1 1	w.sub-clan w.clan	5 5
10.	agn. (M1)	w.sub-clan w.clan w.m.sub-clan w.sub-clan affines	13. 2. 0. 1.	2. 0. 1. 0.	? ? ? ?	3	w.sub-clan	9

TABLE X:-

2.

Case	Bride	Recipients	Received S. P. M.			R-G pigs	Donors	Value S.
11.	n-a. (M1)	w.sub-clan affines w.m.sub-clan w.m.sub-clan affines	6.	0.	?	3	w.sub-clan affines	10
12.	agn. (M2)	w.H <sup>1</sup> .sub-clan w.H <sup>1</sup> .sub-clan affines w.m.sub-clan affines	2.	2.	?	-	-	-
			1.	1.	?			
			1.	0.	?			
13.	n-a. (M2)	w.sub-clan affines	1.	4.	?	-	-	-
14.	agn. (M2)	w.sub-clan w.H <sup>1</sup> .sub-clan w.H <sup>1</sup> .sub-clan affines	0.	4.	14	-	-	-
			0.	2.	0			
			0.	0.	3			
15.	agn. (M3)	No details.	10.	1.	?	-	-	-
16.	agn. (M1)	w.sub-clan	5.	1.	9	1	w.-sub-clan	2
17.	n-a. (M1)	w.sub-clan w.sub-clan affines	0.	0.	2	-		-
			0.	2.	4			
18.	agn. (M1)	w.sub-clan	2.	3.	10	1	w.sub-clan	2
19.	agn. (M1)	w.sub-clan	9.	2.	?	1	w.sub-clan	1
20.	agn. (M1)	w.sub-clan w.m.sub-clan w.sub <sup>2</sup> -clan affines w.m.H <sup>1</sup> .sub-clan (w.m.sub-clan affines)	11.	0.	?	2	w.sub-clan	5
			7.	1.	?	2	w.m.sub-clan	7
			2.	0.	?	1	w.sub-clan affines	2
			0.	2.	?			



**TABLE XI:-**

<u>Analysis of Donors (2):</u>	Total: (15 cases)	husband an agnate (10 cases)	husband a non-agnate (5 cases)
	S. P. M.	S. P. M.	S. P. M.
husband	113.33.48+	73.17. 5+	40.16.43+
husband's sub-clan	8. 1.31+	7. 0.17+	1. 1.14+
" clan	1. 1. 5+	1. 1. 5+	- - -
" cluster	1. 0. 8+	1. 0. 8+	- - -
" sub-clan affines <sup>1</sup>	14. 1.12+	14. 1. 7+	0. 0. 5+
" mother's sub-clan	2. 0. 3+	2. 0. 3+	- - -

**Notes:**

- 1 sisters' husbands (usually).  
other wives' brothers.

**TABLE XII:-****Analysis of Recipients (2):**

		<b>Total:</b>	<b>agnatic wife</b>	<b>non-agnatic wife</b>	<b>wife non-agnate's child</b>	<b>widow or divorcee</b>
		<b>(16 cases)</b>	<b>(12 cases)</b>	<b>(3 cases)</b>	<b>(1 case)</b>	<b>(3 cases)</b>
		<b>S. P. M.</b>	<b>S. P. M.</b>	<b>S. P. M.</b>	<b>S. P. M.</b>	<b>S. P. M.</b>
wife's sub-clan		94.16.59	58.15.57	0. 0. 2	15. 1. ?	0. 4. 14
" clan		7. 0. 6	7. 0. 6	- - -	- - -	- - -
" cluster		1. 0. 1	1. 0. 1	- - -	- - -	- - -
" sub-clan affines <sup>1</sup>		18. 7. 7	9. 1. 3	7. 6. 4	2. 0. ?	1. 4. ?
" mother's sub-clan <sup>2</sup>		10. 5. ?	9. 4. ?	1. 0. ?	0. 1. ?	- - -
" " " affines <sup>3</sup>		13. 3. 2	4. 3. 2	9. 0. ?	- - -	1. 0. ?
" father's mother's sub-clan		8. 0. ?	- - -	- - -	8. 0. ?	- - -
" first husband's sub-clan		2. 4. ?	2. 4. ?	- - -	- - -	2. 4. ?
" " " sub-clan affines		1. 1. 3	1. 1. 3	- - -	- - -	1. 1. 3

**Notes:**

- 1 Sisters' husbands.  
 2 Mother's brothers.  
 3 Mother's second husband.  
    " " husband's son.  
    " " brothers.



**TABLE XIII:-****Average Payments:**

Status of parties	No. of cases	Total			Average		
		S.	P.	M.	S.	P.	M.
All cases	20	221.	42.	?	11.	2.1	?
Agnatic groom	15	199.	25.	?	13.3	1.7	?
Non-agnatic groom <sup>1</sup>	5	22.	17.	?	4.4	3.4	?
Agnatic bride	17	214.	35.	?	12.6	2.	?
Non-agnatic bride <sup>2</sup>	3	7.	6.	?	2.3	2.	?
Bride a widow or divorcee	4	15.	14.	?	3.7	3.5	?

**Notes:**

- 1 Of these 5 cases, 4 were successive marriages of the same man.
- 2 Of these 3 women, 1 was a widow, and 1 married a non-agnate: in both of which cases a smaller bride-price would be paid, regardless of the affiliative status of the bride.

Cases 17 to 20 are successive marriages of the one man. He is a non-agnate who has a wide reputation as a powerful sorcerer. The fees he received for his sorcery have enabled him to play a major part in the economic exchange system, which in turn has given him a position of some eminence in the group with which he resides. His rise in status is illustrated by the progressively larger payments he was able to make for his successive wives. Table IX shows that he was able to make all his marriage-payments without contributory assistance.

The lists of bride-price donors (Tables IX and XI) show further differences between the marriage-payments of agnates and non-agnates. From the 15 payments in which details of contributors are available, the husbands themselves contributed 80.7% of the shells, and 91.7% of the pigs.

From the 10 cases in which the husbands were agnates, they themselves contributed 74.6% of the shells and 89.5% of the pigs. Of the 5 marriages of non-agnatic men, the grooms personally contributed 97.6% of the shells and 94.1% of the pigs.

The agnatic grooms were assisted in their payments by their own sub-clan and 4 other categories of kin or affines; the non-agnatic grooms were assisted by their own sub-clan and, to a minor degree only, by one other category of relatives.

Tables IX and XI indicate, therefore, that non-agnatic grooms (a) pay less for their wives than do agnates; (b) must provide a larger proportion of the bride-price themselves; and (c) can look for contributory assistance from a narrower range of kin and affines.

This contrasts with the Mendi's own assertion that non-



agnates suffer no social disability; and it will be shown throughout this paper that, in all circumstances involving ceremonial exchanges, the economic disadvantage of non-agnates, as a category, is clear and consistent. Moreover, because participation in these exchanges is the only way of acquiring prestige, a non-agnate is at a general social disadvantage also. Certainly, some non-agnates do achieve high social status through the economic system, but, although no personal discrimination is ever exercised against him, a non-agnate finds more difficulty in becoming a "big man" than does an agnate.

From Tables X and XII, in a total of 16 cases for which details of recipients are available, 66.2% of the shells and 44.4% of the pigs were distributed among the bride's cluster. The clusters of agnatic brides received 72.5% of the shells and 53.6% of the pigs. But for non-agnatic brides, no shells or pigs went to the patri-cluster; all major items were taken by members of the sub-clan of residence.

As was pointed out above, the sample is inadequate to show a difference in the respective size of the payments received by agnatic and non-agnatic brides, but it does demonstrate the truth of the people's assertion that a woman's bride-price goes to those who reared her rather than to her biological kin: "the men who weave her arm-bands and give her pork will take her bride-price". The figures also indicate that, just as agnatic bride-grooms can call for contributions on a wider range of kin and affines than can non-agnatic bride-grooms, so agnatic brides distribute their bride-price among a wider range of kin and affines than do non-agnatic brides.

Divorce & Separation: The distinction between divorce and separation is not always clear-cut. It is certainly a divorce when the bride-price has been refunded; but there are certain other cases in which the husband waives the return of bride-price,<sup>29</sup> or his claim expires,<sup>30</sup> or the refund is refused and he is not strong enough to enforce it. In each of these cases, the marriage is permanently dissolved and there is no sanction to prevent the woman re-marrying.

A separation in Mendi, moreover, may be permanent or temporary, and may be instigated by either party, with or without mutual agreement. It is necessary, therefore, to distinguish three kinds of marital separation:

1. De jure divorce: a bilateral abrogation of the marriage in which the husband's claim for a refund of bride-price (a) is met, either wholly or in part; (b) is waived; or (c) has lapsed.

2. De facto divorce: a unilateral abrogation of the marriage, in which, despite the husband's assertion that she is still married to him, his ex-wife has gone through a form of marriage with another man; i.e., her kinsmen have accepted

29. Case 4, Table XIV, p. 117.

30. Some women, after being dutiful wives for many years, and having borne their husbands children, simply decide to go home; in such cases return of bride-price is not claimable, as it is held that over the years the husband has received full value from the woman.



another bride-price for her.

3. Separation: (a) the wife has gone to live with her kin (or elsewhere) and may or may not return to her husband; or (b) she is cohabiting with another man who either has not offered bride-price for her, or has had his offer rejected by her kin.

Reasons given for a man's dismissal of his wife are: nagging, "eating" him sexually, or because she is unlucky. (An old man told me he had dismissed one wife for adultery, but she probably eloped, for women found guilty of adultery were usually executed by drowning.) A woman may leave her husband permanently because she cannot get along with her co-wives (particularly if she is younger and more attractive than they), but this is not very common because incompatible wives are usually given separate establishments; another reason given is that her husband disgusts her physically; or she may elope with another man. A run-away wife may or may not be pursued by the husband, depending on circumstances.<sup>31</sup>

31. In the only two cases of wife-pursuit I actually witnessed the husband chased the wife with one brother, and alone, respectively. In each case, the woman was stripped naked for public shame, but the husband who came alone was not strong enough to drag his wife home. In both cases, the women got no physical assistance from their hosts, for the latter were not their own kin, and, although they were willing to mediate between the couple, they would not bring the dispute to a group level by positive interference. Marriage disputes, like marriage itself, were felt to be

Far commoner is the case of the wife who returns home because her husband has failed in certain economic obligations to her or to her kin. There are at least 5 such payments that a husband should make;

I. Twem with wife's father or brothers (a compulsory feature of every marriage, symbolizing the friendly relations a man should have with his affines).

II. Payment to his wife for bearing him a child.<sup>32</sup> This is an honorarium which the woman passes on to her brothers. It involves a minimum of one pearl-shell per child, but may be more if the husband is an important man.

III. Compensation for the death of an infant. (In this context, it is an infant which has miscarried or died within its first 2 or 3 years; the compensation is then one simple payment and is an individual and not a sub-clan matter. Death of an older child involves the usual complex of funeral payments and counter-payments, and is no longer confined to the

primarily an individual matter. In both these cases, too, the women had sought refuge with a married sister rather than with their own kin, for the latter had refused to refund bride-price and had ordered the women back to their husbands. In a third case, which came to the government court, the father of the run-away wife was fond enough of his daughter to offer an immediate refund, which the husband refused to accept. If one can speak at all of a general rule in such circumstances, it seems to be that each case is worked out individually by the three parties: the husband, the wife and her kin. It is only if the girl's people refuse to return either woman or bride-price that the husband will bring his own kin into the dispute. The result could be war, but I was assured that such an extreme development was almost (but not quite) unknown.

32. See : Chapt. IX, p. 222.



relations between husband and wife. These payments will be discussed in a later chapter.

IV. Tet-mbert, or compensation for physical injury, whether deliberately or accidentally inflicted.

V. Shumba tenk mowá, or compensation for a breach of the affinal-avoidance rules.<sup>33</sup>

Both I. and II. are made publicly and ceremoniously. Such payments do not, however, constitute an "occasion" in themselves, but may take place as an adjunct to some larger and more general payment such as one of those preceding a big pig-killing. Hence, the husband's failure to meet these obligations is tantamount to a public repudiation of his relations with his wife's kin: an insult which the wife can meet only by leaving him.

If the husband fails in any of these payments, his wife withdraws her services and returns home until such time as he redeems her by making good the missing payment. In deciding how temporary or permanent this separation will be, we must consider the husband's motives. The usual reason given for such defaulting is that he just does not have the goods available; but it is sometimes added that the wife was a lazy shrew, anyway, the implication being that he failed more or less deliberately to make the payment and has no immediate intention of redeeming her. In one case, a further explanation was offered. A man who is ambitious, and bent on establishing himself as a "big man", may over-reach himself, and

33. See: Oceania, Vol. XXIX, pp. 112-114.

become involved in a tangle of payments, twem-exchanges, and other commitments greater than he can handle, so that he is temporarily forced to retrench. The failure to render an obligatory payment to one of his wives, therefore, will suspend his economic relations with her kin until such time as he is ready to resume them. In this way, he can relieve himself of a whole group of his financial commitments by placing them, as it were, in "cold-storage", but without permanently impairing the relationships involved.<sup>34</sup>

It is easy to imagine how this kind of economic pressure could lead to a form of blackmail, with the wife threatening to go home unless the husband made repeated payments to her kin. I have observed one case of this: the woman ran away a number of times, and each time her husband brought her back. He eventually tired of this, so that when the woman was induced to return from her last flight (fully intending to run away again) she found herself, to her great surprise, being publicly executed in a particularly nasty fashion. When I asked about the reaction to this of the girl's kin, the reply was: "Kombaba (the husband) was a rich man: he paid the full death compensation. Anyway, our clan had beaten theirs in a recent fight; they weren't strong enough to do anything." I was told that this situation would normally have been settled by divorce with refund of bride-price, but that the girl's kin had refused a refund and were party to the extortion.

34. In this case, there would, of course, be the possibility that the wife might refuse to return, or might contract another marriage. The husband pointed out, however, that he had five other wives and was prepared to take the risk.



Refund of Bride-price: Apart from the exceptions already mentioned, a marriage is properly terminated by the return of at least some portion of the bride-price, but the amount cannot be predicted with any exactness. It must be remembered that, although the original bride-price was arranged in formal and amiable circumstances which tended to inhibit argument, the social atmosphere at its returning is very different and the parties argue every point in the dispute. It is, therefore, possible to give only a rough indication of the sort of refund that might be expected, bearing in mind that the final details will, as always, be the resultant of the interaction of individuals.

First, the people agree that all negotiations to recover bride-price are primarily the concern of the husband alone, accompanied, perhaps, by a brother or close friend. Second, cases of complete refusal to refund are rare, and only then does the sub-clan or clan become involved, with the possible result of a clan-war.

As we have seen, a Mendi bride-price is thought of essentially as a payment to the woman for certain services she renders to her husband: gardening, pig-tending, sex and child-bearing. If she leaves him soon after the marriage (if, that is, his benefit from these services has been negligible) he may claim the return of his bride-price in full (less the value of the return-gift pigs, and less any debts he may owe her family). If, however, the marriage has lasted an appreciable time, the girl's kin say that, as the husband has enjoyed her services for some time, there must be a corresponding reduction in the bride-price refunded. The husband admits this general principle and the argument carries on from there. The

return, unless the marriage is recent, involves only the pearl-shell and pigs; minor items are seldom claimed. If the wife has borne children, a further deduction is made: and although opinions differ, it is fairly agreed that the bearing of three children completely eliminates a refund. (This deduction for children, it should be noted, has nothing to do with the child-birth gratuity mentioned earlier.)<sup>35</sup>

The above rules apply, whether the marriage is terminated by husband or wife.

Adultery often leads to violence (stemming as much from the husband's shame as from the loss of services). But if the husband can be persuaded to negotiate, he may claim his refund from his ex-wife's kin, who then take bride-price from the woman's lover, if she marries him. The two men seldom

35. The following dialogue was part of such a discussion, and illustrates the general procedure. This marriage was about one year old, and was the wife's second marriage. She alleged cruelty and returned to her kin. Her husband came later to claim a refund of his bride-price. The discussion was public.

Husband: 'She is an old woman' (she was about 35) 'she has borne me no children....look at her, she couldn't anyway!'. ....and I want the whole price back.'

Wife: 'He beat me every day: he should only get one shell!'

Husb: 'All right. I'll give back the return-gift oig if I get all my things back.'

Wife: 'He beat me! I'll never go back to him!'

Husb: 'She's a useless old bitch, and too old to bear children.'

Wife: 'He was always hitting me! Just look where he hit me!'

Husb: 'And I caught her olayinz around with another man out on the track.'

Wife: (dragging forward another man): 'This was the man: he's my brother-in-law.'

The discussion continued in this vein for several hours. The husband received most of his bride-price, with a deduction for injury-compensation to his wife.



**TABLE XIV:-****Reasons for Divorce or Separation:**

Case.	Reason.	Duration.	Refund.
1.	(a) wife left husband because he refused to <u>twen</u> with her brother. (b) husband sent wife home for nagging.	P	yes
2.	As 1(a).	T	no
3.	(a) wife left husband because he refused to make funeral payment for her dead baby. (b) husband had no shell for the payment, so sent home wife until he got it.	T	no
4.	(a) As 3(a). (b) husband sent wife home because she "ate" him.	P	no
5.	Wife left husband when he refused her injury-compensation ( <u>mberr</u> ) after beating her.	T?	no
6.	Wife eloped, after frequent beatings.	P	yes
7.	Wife returned home after frequent beatings.	P	yes
8.	Wife bullied by senior co-wife; went home, taking infant with her.	P	no
9.	Wife eloped.	P	yes
10.	(a) wife sent home for suspected adultery. (b) wife eloped.	P	no

TABLE XIV:-

2.

Case.	Reason.	Duration.	Refund.
11.	Wife left husband to assist in the gardens of an unmarried son by a previous marriage.	T?	no
12.	Wife sent home because husband considered her unlucky.	P	yes

Notes:

1. P = permanent; T = temporary.
2. Alternative reasons given for the one divorce represent the versions of each party.



have direct dealings with each other, for this would imply both equality and friendliness. If, however, the husband and the adulterer belong to the same group of political allies, some attempt is made by other members of their respective groups to smother any open dispute between them. They try to persuade the adulterer to pay, and the husband to accept, a compensatory payment called ten kôbô; for a dispute is a breach in a social relationship, which only a prestation of wealth can mend.

Finally, when a husband receives a refund of his bride-price, he does not hand it back to the original contributors, as he had previously arranged the manner of their repayment, which is allowed to stand.

Table XIV gives details of 12 cases of divorce or separation. For these 12 separations, 15 reasons were given:

5 involved failure of husband to make some obligatory payment to his wife's kin.

3 elopements.

3 quarrels with husband (cruelty, nagging, etc.).

1 " " co-wife.

1 mutual agreement (the woman was old).

1 adultery (doubtful).

1 wife considered "unlucky".

The duration of separation was:

8 permanent (with bride-price refunded in 5 cases).

2 extended, possibly permanent.

2 temporary, pending payment of husband's obligation.

The sample is too small to give more than a general selection of reasons for marital separation; but it is significant that, of the 15 reasons given, 5 involved the husband's failure to meet his exchange obligations to his affines. All social relationships in Mendi must be marked by economic exchanges, and failure to maintain such exchanges is in itself sufficient to break the relationship.

It is perhaps significant also that, of the 12 cases in Table XIV, all the husbands were agnates who had more than one wife living at the time. A man with only one wife is naturally more anxious to keep her than he would be if he had had several others.

The reason for the smallness of the sample in Table XI is that Mendi husbands consider the departure of a wife to be a reflection on their own adequacy: to some extent sexual and social, but more politically economic. (The fact that the husband's story of the cause of separation so often differs from the public version is significant in this regard.) Information on broken marriages is therefore most difficult to obtain, for the subject can seldom be approached directly with the deserted husband; even those men who discuss freely their marriages past and present, tend to omit all mention of runaway wives. The fiction is preserved that a good man's wives do not leave him. This fact regrettably makes it impossible to offer any reliable data on the frequency of divorce or the stability of marriage. Of the 12 separations in Table XIV, only 8 may truly be classified as "divorce", and these occurred in a sample group with a total of 120 marriages (see Tables II and IV). This gives a divorce figure for the group of 6.6% of all marriages contracted. For



the reasons just given (and for others, too) I believe this figure to be far lower than the reality, and I include it only as a minimal estimate.

### Summary:

I. A Mendi woman, even after marriage, preserves strong ties with her own kin. A married woman's affiliation and loyalties remain with her own patri-clan or clan of residence and are not transferred to that of her husband. On the latter's death, she is free to return to her own kin and usually does so.

II. Mendi marriage must be considered on two levels: as a personal contract between two individuals, and as an affinal alliance (which is essentially political) between two groups. The personal elements in the arrangement are indicated by (a) the freedom of the individual in the choice of spouse (almost complete for men, and somewhat less so for women); (b) the man's relative economic independence in amassing his marriage payments (particularly in his later marriages); and (c) the discretion exercised by the woman in the redistribution of her bride-price. On the other hand, that marriage is also a political alliance is shown by the mandatory twem-exchanges which must take place between the husband and his wife's father and brothers. In many instances, this inter-group obligation is extended to include not only the wife's actual kin but also those men who have been major recipients of her bride-price. Twem with affines thus represents and supports a network of friendly inter-group alliances brought about by, and focused upon, the marriage.

III. Political alliances, like all friendly relationships, must be marked by economic exchanges. Exchanges can occur only among friends, and all friends must exchange. That is why the pattern of marriage-payment (and, as we shall see, of all other inter-group payments also) stresses the element of exchange by requiring a return-gift from the recipients. Thus, the institution of bride-price in Mendi is not only a payment for the services of the woman, but it is also a ceremonial exchange of goods marking the establishment of amicable relations between two hitherto separate groups. These relations must be reaffirmed at frequent intervals by further economic exchanges for as long as the marriage persists.

IV. The data of bride-price recipients (Tables X and XII) show that a considerable proportion of a marriage-payment goes to various affines of the bride's sub-clan. In other words, any marriage is seen not only as the establishment of a new set of affines, but also as an opportunity to reinforce, by economic prestation, all the affinal ties already existing between the bride's sub-clan and other groups.

V. The ability to make a marriage-payment is ultimately dependent on the institution of twem.

VI. Contrary to the people's own assertion, agnates are in a better marital position than non-agnates.



## CHAPTER VI:-

### DEATH, & MORTUARY EXCHANGES:

#### Part I : Causes of Death, & the Allocation of Responsibility.

As with most New Guinea peoples, the recognition of pure accident as a cause of death is limited. The possibility of fortuitous death is admitted, and deaths of a violent nature with obvious physical causes come into this category. But the term "accidental" in this context means only that the death is not ascribed to any personal agency, either human or supernatural, and all deaths, regardless of cause, are marked by some kind of ceremonial exchange of wealth. The agency of death, therefore, is held to be in large measure distinct from the social responsibility for it. There has been a tendency among anthropologists to speak of mortuary payments only in terms of "compensation". The too general use of this term in such a context can, I think, be misleading. To describe mortuary payments as "compensation" implies an acceptance by the compensators of responsibility for the death, and, hence, a particular kind of relationship between the two parties. I shall try to show in the

course of this chapter that certain kinds of mortuary payment cannot be interpreted in this way. In certain circumstances in Mendi, notably in prestations made for the death of an ally in a fight, mortuary payments are seen, quite explicitly, as a recompense by one group to another for the death of one of its members, and the term for such a transaction is ol peya ("man-making"). The idea of "compensation" applies also to the payments accompanying accidental deaths. But the payments following an ordinary death are described by another term ('ngiria) and their size and form are quite different. These payments are made by the patrikin of the deceased to his maternal kin, and there is no evidence to indicate that they are regarded in any way as a form of compensation. Their true function is quite different. Whereas an 'ngiria or "funeral payment" occurs after every death, an ol peya or "inter-group compensation", occurs only after accidental deaths, or deaths associated directly or indirectly with warfare, and is always preceded by the ordinary funeral payment.

Considered from the point of view of mortuary payments, four kinds of death are distinguished by the Mendi.

1. Death by ancestral ghosts: The Mendi believe that each individual has within him both a "spirit image" (woshe) and a "ghost" (temô). Beliefs about the spirit image are vague: it is one's reflection in water or a mirror) and it is also Tylor's "anima"; the part of the self that travels abroad in dreams. It is generally distinguished from the ghost which is released only after



death.<sup>1</sup> The ghost is always malevolent,<sup>2</sup> but its powers are confined to its spouse and to members of its own sub-clan. Even within the latter group, its malevolence is in direct proportion to the degree of kinship: it is more dangerous to its closest living relatives. Although it can inflict mild illness on its more distantly related fellow sub-clan members, it is thought to be mortally dangerous only to its spouse and to its own direct descent-line, as far as this is traced. The most malign ghosts are those of the recently dead, so that parents' ghosts are more to be feared than those of grandparents; the ghosts of children are not an immediate menace, but are thought to become so later when the ghost "grows up". In other words, the malevolence of ghosts varies inversely with the generational distance of the deceased. As Mendi genealogies rarely extend beyond 5 generations, one would expect the malevolence of ancestral ghosts to become ineffectual beyond that level: and such is in fact the case. There is some vague notion that ancient ghosts retire into

1. There is some difference of opinion about this, certain informants holding that spirit-image and ghost are one and that the entity which is a spirit-image during life becomes a ghost after death.

2. Ghosts also give information in dreams, and predictive or divinatory dreaming is not uncommon; certain individuals achieve a reputation for dream clairvoyance by ghostly communications. No attempt is made to reconcile this benevolent function of ghosts with their general malevolence.

the earth or into the sacred ancestral stones, but in general, beliefs concerning the ghosts are not clearly formulated. When asked why a man who loved his children in life would wish to kill them immediately he died, people showed a certain confusion: this appeared to be a point they had not previously considered. It was at length tentatively suggested that the ghost is an entity existing in every individual, but which does not necessarily have anything in common with its "host's" personality, and which is released at death to pursue its work of destruction. Obviously, they were unaccustomed to rationalizing their beliefs even to this stage, so that it was pointless to pursue the matter further. The only unanimous, and therefore relevant, belief about ghosts is in their malevolence to their own descendants (i.e., sub-clan). Every death from sickness or disease is attributed to the bite of a ghost, and it would seem that the word "bite" is to be taken literally. The payment made after such a death is an 'ngiria or funeral payment.

2. Death by misadventure: This category includes those deaths which were defined above as "accidental"; that is, deaths with an obvious physical cause, in which no human or supernatural agency could be supposed. The question here is that of the allocation of responsibility: if deaths must be paid for, who is going to pay? The deciding principle relies on a concept similar to that of the "invitee" in English law. If a man has invited the victim of the accident into the situation which led to his death (or injury), then the invitor (and hence



his sub-clan, or wider social group) is liable for any compensation that may be incurred. To give some examples:

I. A invites B to assist him in some task (tree-trimming, house-building, etc.) in the course of which B meets with a fatal accident through his own carelessness. A is liable.

II. A invites B to accompany him on a journey on which B is killed. A is liable.

III. A's house collapses, killing B while the latter is visiting him. A is liable.

IV. A burn's down B's house, and C dies in the fire. A compensates B, who compensates C.

V. A, an epileptic, has a fit while sleeping in B's house and rolls into the fire, burning himself badly. B is liable.

(It should be borne in mind, however, that we are speaking here of liability for damages, and that this does not necessarily imply personal or moral responsibility. A's liability is shared by his entire sub-clan; for ceremonial compensations are organized on a sub-clan basis)

A common category of accidental death is that of drowning, either at a ford or through the collapse of a bridge. Creeks and rivers are often fast-flowing and dangerous and for this reason, tend to form boundaries between different clan territories. There is a general agreement that bridges are maintained equally by the people living on either bank, and the same people share responsibility for any accidents that may occur. Similarly, responsibility for drownings at a ford are accepted

by the clans or sub-clans living on either side of it. The same groups usually have a reciprocal arrangement whereby they compensate each other for the drowning of one of their own members. Such an arrangement must assume, of course, that friendly relations of some stability exist between the groups concerned; and this point will be discussed in more detail later. Occasionally, again by mutual agreement, full responsibility for all drownings may be accepted by the people on only one side of the bridge or ford.

When a stranger is drowned inside a clan territory, responsibility rests with the clan or clan-cluster occupying that territory. The actual organization of the payments, however, is taken over by one particular sub-clan; which sub-clan is decided by general discussion. The role of compensator is not a burden, but rather, an honour which will lead to great prestige and which is accepted readily (even volunteered for) by any sub-clan which feels that it has access to sufficient wealth to undertake it successfully. The payments for death by misadventure take the more elaborate form of the ol peya or death compensation, preceded, as usual by the 'ngiria, or funeral payment.

While discussing accidental death, some mention might be made of compensation for injury. The general term for such a compensation is mberr, and a distinction is made between tet mberr ("a fight wound") and mberr orera ("an ordinary, accidental injury"). In the examples given above, if the accident is not fatal, injury compensation is paid. The payment is usually small, consisting of one



minor item (e.g. a small pig, a gourd of oil, a tomahawk). Its final value is determined by discussion between the parties concerned; there is no prescribed scale according to the degree of injury. As the payment is small, it is usually organized on an individual and not a group basis. Should the victim die of his injury, however, a full death-compensation must be made, regardless of whether injury compensation has previously been paid. The tet mberr, or war-wound compensation, is handled somewhat differently, and will be discussed in more detail below.

3. Death in a fight: As with accidental death, death in a fight is followed by compensation in addition to, and quite separate from, the ordinary funeral payments. Every fight has what is called its "fight-base":<sup>3</sup> this is the nucleus of a fight, the people who actually started it and whose interests are most closely involved in its outcome. The term can be applied, according to context, to an individual, his sub-clan, clan or cluster. There is a fight-base on each side in any fight. These people are distinguished from outsiders or allies (regular or casual) who have come to assist them. Fights are described as "belonging to" the members of the fight-base, and the composition of the fight-base must always be taken into account when determining the form and mode of compensation for a fight-death.

The largest political group in Mendi is that which I

3. shont-te: shont ("a fight"), te ("the lower trunk of a tree").

have called the "clan-cluster": a group of clans linked by agnatic, cognatic and affinal ties, occupying a defined and discrete geographical area, and among which exist nominally amicable relations and fairly frequent and regular social intercourse. In defining the term "political group", I follow Nadel: "... the aggregate of human beings who co-ordinate their efforts for the employment of force against others and for the elimination of force between them, and who usually count as their principal estate the possession and utilization of a territory".<sup>4</sup> In other words, a political group is one which recognizes some community of interests as opposed to other similar groups, and within which there exist mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of disputes. The clan-cluster is a fairly (although not completely) stable unit, and disputes within it are usually smoothed over, not by any formal system of arbitration, but by the intervention of other members of the cluster who feel that it is to their own and the general interest to preserve the unity and harmony of the larger group. Such intervention, however, is not always successful, and intra-cluster disputes do occasionally get beyond control and result in serious injury or death. The cluster, besides being the largest political group, is also therefore the largest group that, on occasion, can act as a fight-base; that is, it is the largest social group which accepts shared responsibility for death-compensation; but, as we shall see shortly, it

4. "Foundations of Social Anthropology": p.187.



assumes that role only in inter-cluster fights which have led to deaths in other clusters.

Mendi distinguish two types of fight: the big inter-cluster fights and those within the cluster itself; there are important differences in the kinds of compensation associated with each, so that it is necessary to consider them separately:

I. Intra-cluster fights: Following the usual pattern for segmentary societies, the mechanisms for the settlement of internal disputes are effective in inverse ratio to the social range of the disputants. Disputes within a sub-clan are not common, and serious injury or death arising from such disputes are so rare as to be almost inconceivable; the people would not even speculate on such an occurrence. Within a clan, they conceded the possibility, but insisted that all possible pressure would be brought to bear to keep the dispute at an individual level. Some informants had heard rumours of one case of fatal intra-clan dispute: the killer had been banished permanently to another kin-group and his sub-clan had paid full compensation to the victim's sub-clan. Had the killer been a first-generation non-agnatic resident, he would have forfeited the protection of his sponsors and only immediate flight would have saved his life. (They added, however, that this was mere speculation, as they were unable to imagine any non-agnatic clan guest stupid enough to abuse his hosts' hospitality in this way.) Between clans of the same cluster, however, the possibility of a fight-death was not so remote. In the earlier analysis of the structure of clusters, it was seen

that kinship ties were often so weak that inter-marriage was in many cases still possible, and that between certain clans in the group there need exist little or no direct kin-relationship at all. The unity of many clusters is maintained in large measure by certain sub-clans which form marginal groups with bridging relationships between the various clans composing them. In a cluster dispute, marginal groups acted as intermediaries to "smother" the quarrel and their efforts were reinforced by the influential members, or "big men" of the group. This kind of intermediary activity was generally successful because, for obvious reasons, not the least of which was defense, the survival of the cluster as a political entity was to the advantage of the majority of its members. Defense in warfare, and hence survival, is, it must be reiterated, dependent on the unity of groups larger than the clan, and one of the most important methods of achieving and maintaining such larger group unity is the establishment of a network of protracted economic exchanges not only among the individual units of the group, but also between the cluster and other groups of a similar order. Despite these "built-in" precautions, fatal intra-cluster disputes can and (although infrequently) do occur. Such a dispute, however, is not allowed to go beyond the cluster, and even though the intermediary or bridging groups may have failed to prevent the fatality, they are nearly always successful in bringing into operation the repairing mechanism of compensation payment. On the rare occasions when they are unable to do this, the cluster breaks and reforms in another pattern of alliances. Such disintegration was, however, so rare that I am unable to



describe any predictable pattern of cluster realignment. The single instance I heard of concerned two clusters which had amalgamated into one and which separated, after an unresolved dispute, into the two original clusters; in this case, it was apparent that their unity was both recent and tentative and was hence more susceptible to disruption than a more long-standing and consolidated alliance would have been.

The people assert, however, not only that inter-cluster deaths are rare, but that, if the cluster is to maintain its cohesion, there will not be more than one death. This is in marked contrast to inter-cluster disputes, where one death is avenged by another in the usual pattern of feud. Should this happen inside the cluster, it would suggest that the group is basically unstable and sooner or later will break up anyway.

Assuming, then, that the cluster is stable, that its component clans seek to maintain it as a political unit, compensation for the death will be paid by the sub-clan of the killer to the sub-clan of the victim, and the form and size of the payment will be that of the usual death-compensation. If, as sometimes happens, the killer's sub-clan (possibly through other commitments) is unable to make the payment, then other sub-clans of the killer's clan may agree to take it over instead. If this is impossible, the entire clan of the killer combines to make the compensation. In such a case the sub-clan or clan of the killer would be the fight-base.

What I have been describing as an "intra-cluster" fight-death can, in certain circumstances, involve individuals or groups outside the cluster. Mention has been

made elsewhere of amialt or "brotherhood" clans. This term is applied generally to any friendly clan, but more specifically it means regular and recognized fighting allies of the cluster.<sup>5</sup> They usually occupy a territory either adjacent to that of the cluster, or separated from it by the territory of other allies; in the usual pattern of Mendi warfare, it would not be feasible for fighting allies to be separated from each other by enemy territory. A cluster's allies, therefore, are certain other clusters who live in the vicinity. A number of personal exchange relationships (twem) are normally maintained between their members although on an entirely individual basis, and some marriages may have been contracted between them so that certain of their sub-clans are affinally connected. On a cluster level, however, the relationship between them is maintained by the expectation of mutual assistance in inter-cluster warfare, which in turn is symbolized and preserved by the agreement to compensate for deaths incurred in each other's fights. As the relationship, except for a few individualities, is usually an entirely political one, the mechanisms for the settlement of disputes between allied clusters, while similar to those within the cluster, are much weaker. As within the cluster, there are some (although fewer) bridging relationships, but the main factor of cohesion is the desire on the part of both clusters to maintain an agreement of mutual assistance in warfare.....an agreement which would always be useful and which might well be necessary for survival. Allied clusters, therefore, do not constitute a united

5. It should be noted that, for simplification, this discussion is centred around, and constantly referred to, one hypothetical cluster. In fact, each cluster has its own allies who in turn have their allies, and so on, in an unbroken network over the whole of the Mendi, Lai and Nembi Valleys, and probably much further.



social group; outside of warfare, their activities tend to be separate. Thus there is more possibility of disputes leading to injury or death occurring between individuals of allied clusters than there is of such disputes occurring within the cluster itself. As with intra-cluster fights, death in disputes between allied clusters will always be few in number; indeed, if it is at all possible, the fight will be stopped after the first fatality. Compensation follows the same pattern as for intra-cluster fight deaths: the killer's sub-clan compensates the victim's sub-clan. Assistance, if necessary, may be sought from the other sub-clans of the killer's clan, or even, in emergency, from the rest of his cluster.

II. Inter-cluster fights: The cluster, together with its recognized allies, represents the limiting range within which death compensation is paid by the killer and his kin. This group is also the widest circle within which there is any possibility of the peaceful prevention of settlement of disputes, or within which any community of interest or amicable relations (at a group level) are generally recognized. All political groups outside this range are actual or potential enemies. †

In the matter of compensation payments, however, there are two basic principles explicitly stated by the people:

First, with the exception of injury and death caused by ancestral ghosts, all injury and death must be compensated for by someone.

Second, compensation payments, like all ceremonial exchanges, can take place only among friends.

The first rule illustrates the restriction in native thinking of the concept of "accident" and that accident, even if unforeseeable and unpreventable, does not absolve from liability.

The second rule is a reasonable concomitant of the elaborate form taken by inter-group payments. The ceremonies of death compensation are both complex and protracted, and compensation for one death takes a decade or more to complete. Their organization is such that, in their present form, it would in fact be almost impossible for them to take place between enemies. This relationship between economic exchange and friendship is by no means fortuitous, and their mutual validation and reinforcement constitute a most important structural principle, an understanding of which is essential for any analysis of Mendi society. This point will be discussed in some detail later; for present purposes it will be sufficient merely to state the general principle.

"Warfare" in Mendi, as I shall describe elsewhere, does involve the occasional formal "battle", but for the most part, it consists of a state of hostility, indefinitely prolonged and interspersed with frequent and sporadic guerrilla raids, ambushes and assassinations. While hostilities continued, deaths were redressed by vengeance, and the feud continued, often for generations. The making of peace was an equally gradual process, so that during the progress of the war any direct compensation between the groups of killer and victim was out of the question. The prospect of suspending hostilities, even temporarily, for this purpose, was never envisaged.



But, since deaths still had to be paid for, another procedure was followed.

In inter-cluster disputes (the only kind of fights in Mendi which can truly be described as "war") it is the custom to compensate not for the enemies who have been killed, but for the allies who have suffered injury or death while assisting in the fight; and it is here that the concept of the "fight-base" really becomes important.

When a cluster becomes involved in a serious war, it calls in the assistance of its regular allies (those clans and clusters which it calls amialt). These people are fully involved, and are expected to fight for the duration of the battle. In addition, other groups and individuals may offer some assistance: affinal sub-clans, individual affines, sister's sons, or even exchange partners, may all lend intermittent help; but their role in the fight is circumscribed. It is generally accepted that, although they have come in response to certain ties of kinship, their obligation to assist in the fight is not binding, and that they have come for the sport rather than because it was expected of them or because any sanctions would be applied against them. The people themselves make the distinction between "true allies" and "those who come to fight for fun". Sometimes, the latter find themselves in a conflict situation when they are assisting one kinsman in a fight and are opposed to other kin among the enemy; such a situation is resolved by mutual agreement between opposed kin that they will avoid injuring each other. The same circumstances can arise even between regular or committed allies, who,

finding themselves opposed to kinsmen, behave in the same way.<sup>6</sup>

Apart from the regular and casual allies described above, assistance may also be rendered in a fight by what may be termed "second degree allies". The fight-base, that is the cluster whose member (or members) started the original dispute, calls in its regular allies. The fight is joined by the casualties mentioned above. But wars of this kind tend to "snow-ball", with each side calling in more and more assistance. The death of a casual, for instance, can bring in the rest of his sub-clan, or clan, or cluster. Moreover, allies of the original fight-base can call in their own allies, and so on. The war can, therefore, include a great many clusters on each side and can cover a wide area, and all the deaths which occur must be compensated for by the fight-base cluster of the side they were assisting, unless the latter has previously repudiated liability.<sup>7</sup> "It is their fight, so they must compensate".

This situation, obviously, could involve a cluster in

6. See: Chapt. X, p.15.

7. With this situation, it might be asked what factors operate to limit the spread of hostilities.

I. Regular allies are usually summoned only for formal battles, and rarely for raids or skirmishes; and, similarly, it is only on the larger and more exciting occasions that the casual allies appear. Frequent or regular fighting is normally confined to the nuclear cluster or fight-base... and, to a diminishing degree, to its immediate neighbours.

II. As the Mendi Valley is long and narrow, and aligned



more death-compensations than they would be able to meet for many generations. It is possible, however, for a fight-base cluster to indemnify itself against compensation claims from certain of its allies. This is done by making to certain allies a large payment of pearl-shell and/or pigs, known as ebu. The acceptance of this payment means that the recipients will help the donors in their fight, while absolving them from all claims of compensation for death or injury suffered by the recipients. This indemnity, moreover, is extended to cover all deaths among second-degree allies called in by the recipients. In other words, a cluster accepting indemnity promises in return to "bury" its own dead and those of its allies; as far as compensation is concerned, it thus functions as another fight-base.

In relieving a fight-base cluster of a number of probable death compensations, the indemnity payment has

approximately north/south, alliances tend to fall in the same direction. That is, when two clusters declare war, one calls its allies from the north and the other calls theirs from the south. Or else alliances tend to form up on either side of some topographical barrier (very often the Mendi River).

III. Any cluster's degree of involvement in a war is usually in inverse ratio to its distance from the territory of the fight-base cluster, and the frequency of its participation in battles will be influenced by the time and trouble necessary to reach them.

These three factors: the mode of warfare, the pattern of alliances, and problems of travel and communication due to the terrain, all tend to place a limit on the size within which a war can be efficiently waged.

an undoubted economic significance. But its commoner and more important function is political, for the allies who offer their help for pay are usually those whose other general social relations with the fight-base are slight or non-existent: compensation supposes friendship, and these people are not really friends. It is not surprising, in these circumstances, that the indemnity payment frequently operates as a sort of political blackmail. After prolonged hostilities, a fight-base cluster may be hard pressed and in difficulties (in fact, many of its allies may have withdrawn their assistance and "left the sinking ship"). In desperation, they call upon (or are approached by) an outside cluster which agrees to assist them in return for a large indemnity; the proposition is reinforced by the threat that if the payment is not made, not only will there be no assistance, but that a similar proposition will be made to the other side. This kind of arrangement, although a recognized procedure, seems to have been infrequent, and I was able to obtain the details of only one such transaction. It is therefore not possible to indicate the actual average size of an indemnity payment, and informants stated that, theoretically, there was no average: as it tended to be extorted by blackmail, the price was as high as the victims could pay. The one example I was given involved the payment of eight "heirloom" shells (which normally are not used in exchanges) each worth from 8 to 10 ordinary pearl-shell. Since there are no counter-exchanges in this kind of payment, this represents a large amount of wealth to change



hands at the one time. My informants, who had themselves extorted this payment some years previously, boasted that it was exceptionally large but admitted they had been lucky because the circumstances at the time had favoured them.

Occasionally, a neutral is killed in error while visiting or passing through the territory of a fight-base cluster or of one of its regular allies. The owners of the territory compensate. Such an event, however, may also bring in the kin of the victim as full or casual allies of the fight-base for, as I said elsewhere, the Mendi are always ready to fight (outside their own political group) and the chance of avenging the death of a kinsman is a recognized excuse.

The principal sanctions enforcing the compensation of allies are fairly obvious. Failure to compensate regular allies means repudiation of the alliance and forfeiture of all military assistance for the future; or even, possibly, the creation of a new set of enemies.

For casual allies, the consequences of default are not quite so clear-cut. Regular alliance (amialt) implies a fairly permanent relationship between clusters, and the refusal to fulfill the obligations of such a relationship automatically severs it. But casual assistance in a fight operates, as I have indicated, very largely on a personal level: men go to fight for their kin or their affines or even for their twem-partners. If the fight-base refuses to compensate for such deaths, it is mainly the personal (or, perhaps, inter-sub-clan) relations which will suffer. This is not absolutely true, however, for such enormous

importance is attached to these exchanges, that a defaulting group suffers a loss of prestige over a wide area, which affects its relations with other actual and potential allies. The same prestige attached to payments operates also as a more positive sanction in that, in order to gain prestige and a reputation for wealth and power, fight-bases compensate willingly if they possibly can. It is true, of course, that prestige attracts allies, but the acquisition of prestige seems in many cases to be a motive in itself even without this additional political consideration. Economic exchanges symbolize and reinforce social and political relationships which are very much dependent on them, but in addition, such is the elaboration of economic exchange in this area, they have become in large measure an end in themselves and one of the main preoccupations of Wendi life.

Another, although probably minor, sanction against fight-payment default is the practice of carving wooden images on the pillars of the poranda, the ceremonial house associated with the major pig-killings (ink). These may be full human figures (about half life-size) or merely crude representations of the "cossock-hat" ceremonial wig. They represent uncompensated cluster-members killed in other people's fights, and their sole function is the public shaming of those fight-bases who have failed to compensate their allies.

There is a further sanction. At important inter-clan dances, there appear certain individuals known as ol timp ("poor men" or "rubbish men"). They are distinguished by the grotesque shabbiness of their dress which, with clay



and ashes, dead leaves, torn aprons and broken weapons, is deliberately made as dirty and ugly as possible. Sometimes they wear hideous gourd masks. Their costume is designed as the apotheosis of poverty. Their dancing is ludicrous and undignified, their gestures are malevolent and sometimes obscene: they represent the negation of all the Mendi virtues. The man who appears thus is a close kinsman of a dead man who has not been compensated for. A fails to compensate B for the death of B's kinsman in a fight. He has dismissed B's claim by stating contemptuously that B is an ol timp, and hence not worthy of compensation. Henceforth, at all public functions which A attends in full regalia, he finds B dressed as an ol timp dancing around and threatening him. I was told that this public humiliation is quite often effective in inducing A to remember his obligations. The rationale is much the same as that behind the human images carved on the poranda columns.<sup>8</sup>

These sanctions are strong enough to make it almost unthinkable that a fight-base would flatly refuse to compensate its allies. What does happen, however, is that, decimated and debilitated by constant fighting which has completely disrupted their normal network of inter-personal exchanges (and it is these that make the group exchanges possible) some fight-base clusters are economically unable to meet their obligations. By this stage, they are usually on the brink of defeat, and will shortly fragment and disperse (in the manner previously described<sup>9</sup>), ceasing

8. See: Chapt. IX, p. 213.

9. See: Chapt. II, p. 35.

to function as political entities.

The general principles of inter-cluster fight-death compensation may be summed up thus: for one death (virtually impossible) payments are the responsibility of the sub-clan that started the fight; for few deaths (uncommon) the deaths are allotted to the sub-clans of the fight-base clan; for many deaths (most usual) liability is shared out among the sub-clans of the fight-base cluster. If there are more deaths than there are sub-clans in the cluster, then certain sub-clans may undertake more than one compensation; or more than one victim in the same allied cluster may be paid for by the one series of exchanges. The latter case is significant as an indication that it is not the actual amount of wealth paid that is important, but rather the fact of payment being made, an alliance confirmed and a political relationship cemented.<sup>10</sup> The modes of fight-death compensation, therefore, are isomorphic with and emphasize the levels of segmentation and the political structure of Mendi society.

I have described briefly the principles of compensation for fight-deaths of allies. But all deaths must be paid for, "all dead must be buried", so there is still to be considered the question of compensation for members of the fight-base cluster itself. The practice here is for each sub-clan of the fight-base to compensate some other sub-clan for the loss of one of its members. Following

10. Multiple fight-compensations are rare; I was present at only one, and, for reasons given later, the precise details of the payments made were impossible to record.



the fight-base principle to its logical conclusion, one would expect the sub-clan whose member or members were originally involved in the fight to be responsible for deaths incurred by other sub-clans in the cluster. Informants agreed that ideally this would be proper, but that in practice there were invariably more deaths within the fight-base in an inter-cluster fight than any one sub-clan could possibly pay for and that, moreover, after a long period of fighting with many deaths on each side, the instigator's cluster-brothers were so deeply involved that the fight had, in fact, become theirs. Deaths within the cluster, consequently, were treated in the same way as deaths of allies, and the compensation liabilities were shared out among the cluster sub-clans. The method of allotment, too, was similar: a sub-clan which felt able to do so volunteered to compensate a death within the cluster, while another sub-clan agreed to cover theirs. The pattern of which sub-clan compensated which was not prescribed but was agreed upon after prolonged general discussion. It followed no defined rules save the general one that all deaths must be compensated for by someone.<sup>11</sup>

11. Informants could recall no specific instance of an intra-cluster death-compensation, and I have doubts as to whether they were, in fact, usually made. I have two examples of death-compensation paid by the deceased's patri-kin to his maternal kin as an extension of the ordinary funeral payments. In other words, the funeral exchanges which would have been made in any case were turned into a death-compensation to which the whole clan contributed. I was also told that this would happen if the deceased's patri-sub-clan had previously been compensated by a fight-base outside the cluster; but again, I am not able to check this with examples.

Compensation for non-fatal injuries inflicted by an enemy, whether in open fight or by attempted assassination, is arranged in much the same way: the directions of payment and counter-payment are the same as for a death.

Only permanently incapacitating injuries are paid for, such as the loss of an eye or a limb, or a crippling body-wound. Beyond these limits there is no recognition of degree of injury: loss of both eyes or all limbs deserves no more compensation than does the loss of one; a man is either eligible for war-wound compensation or he is not.

The question of compensation for a war-wound does not arise until at least three months after the event, and even then it must seem probable that the victim will be incapacitated for life. Should the wound heal after compensation is paid, no refund is expected. The sudden death (even years later) of the victim of a war-injury leads to payment of full death-compensation regardless of whether wound compensation has previously been paid or not; but in such cases it must be established that death was in fact due to the original injury. The kind of "proof" offered to link cause and effect in these circumstances is rarely objectively verifiable, and if the point were disputed, relations between the groups concerned could well become strained. The sanctions operating here will be discussed in more detail later.

The only important difference between a war-wound compensation and a death compensation is that the payments of the former tend to be considerably smaller, and, consequently, the subsidiary, individual exchanges which prepare the ground for them are fewer in number. In general



form, the two kinds of compensation are similar.

We have been speaking so far of deaths which are the direct result of physical injury inflicted by an enemy. But deaths attributed to sorcery are often regarded as fight-deaths and are compensated for in exactly the same way. This does not apply to all sorcery deaths, but probably to most.

When a death by sorcery is diagnosed, a second divination ceremony is held in order to identify the clan of the culprits. As in all other Mendi divination rituals, this means that a culprit is selected from a small number of previously decided suspects; it is thus, in effect, a validation of popular suspicion which falls, as a matter of course, on the group's most recent and bitter enemies. These are the usual circumstances in which a death from sorcery is held to be a war-death which must be compensated for by the fight-base according to the normal pattern for war-deaths.

There is reason to believe that deaths in warfare were frequent. Four years after the Administration had banned fighting, there were still very few men alive over the age of sixty, and not many in their fifties. Even allowing for a short life expectancy due to harsh living conditions and the prevalence of such diseases as dysentery and pneumonia, one might still expect the average age-level to be higher than it was. The collecting of genealogies in 1954-5 revealed that every family in the sample had lost at least one of its members in warfare. If, as the Mendi say, all such deaths must be followed by the full cycle of compensation payments, which, as I said, takes

several years to complete, it might be asked why all the time and energy of a Mendi clan is not entirely absorbed in a constant series of compensation exchanges with a number of still-to-be-paid-for deaths stretching back into the distant past. Although it is true that death compensations are of the greatest importance and involve, directly and indirectly, a good deal of exchange activity, nevertheless, they do not occur with nearly the frequency to be expected from the high fight-casualty rate.

The reason for this seems to lie both in the nature of Mendi warfare and in the basic political significance of the compensation exchanges themselves. As already mentioned, when a clan or cluster suffers a decisive defeat, the enemy usually expels it from its territory. The group breaks up into small fragments (individuals or single families, or, occasionally, a small sub-clan) each of which takes refuge in the territory of some kinsman with whom amicable relations have been maintained against just such an emergency. The original group is thus completely dispersed and its territory laid waste by the victorious enemy. The group may reassemble many years later on its original territory after formal peace has been made; or, on the other hand, the various refugee fragments may amalgamate permanently with their respective hosts. In any case, after such a defeat, the victims cease to exist, for a long time if not permanently, as a political group. Moreover, their ultimate defeat is usually preceded by quite a long period of gradual decline during which their allies desert them, their numbers are depleted, their gardens neglected and their food-stocks low. During this period, the personal exchange-relationships, or twem, of



members of the group begin to dwindle, for outsiders can foresee the final collapse, and all the individual inter-group supports which are necessary to sustain a Mendi political group are gradually withdrawn. "Nothing succeeds like success" and this is as true of Mendi society as of any other. Long before the group's final dispersal, therefore, their socio-economic status has been declining; and when at length the moment of their final defeat and flight arrives, they are in no position even to consider the possibility of death compensations to their former allies. And because, in all probability, the latter have withdrawn their support some time before the end, they have forfeited compensation anyway. In other words, if my suggestion is correct that the primary significance of death compensations is the maintenance of inter-group political alliances, then one would not expect these payments to be made when the relationships they were designed to maintain had already lapsed. To sum up briefly, a dispersed fight-base is economically unable to pay compensations, and the political sanctions which would normally induce it to do so are no longer operating. If, as sometimes happens, it were to reconstitute itself as a political entity at a later date, it would be obliged to re-establish its patterns of inter-group alliances; but the people themselves are not certain just how far this would involve the revival of old death compensations.

The patterns of group structure being so remarkably flexible, it is unlikely that a shattered group would reconstitute itself with precisely the same internal and external relationships as it had before. Moreover, not only is the dispersed fight-base relieved of its compen-

satory obligations, but it also forfeits any outstanding compensations due to it; as it is no longer a political entity, other groups see no point in maintaining relations with it. In other words, when a political group is dispersed in warfare, it moves (either temporarily or permanently) out of the system of death-compensation, both as a giver and as a receiver. It should be noted, however, that this applies only to "compensation" payments which we distinguished earlier from the ordinary "funeral" payments; the latter, being much smaller and simpler, are still made.

From the foregoing, it would appear that, although the Mendi state firmly holds that all deaths must be compensated for, yet in fact they compensate only those groups whose continued friendship may be of political advantage to them.

### Summary:

Three categories of death are distinguished:

1. Death by the bite of an ancestral ghost, which incurs a funeral-payment to the deceased's maternal kin from his patrikin.

2. Death by misadventure, which incurs a death-compensation to the deceased's patrikin from the group held responsible.

3. Death in a fight:

- I. Intra-cluster fights: the patrikin of the killer pays death-compensation to the patrikin of the victim. Such payments are a means of mending breaches



within a political group.

II. Inter-cluster fights: one of the "fight-base" sub-clans pays death-compensation to the patrikin of the victim. The allocation of responsibility for the death is based on segmentary structural principles.

Inter-cluster death compensation represents political alliance, and where the alliance is no longer effective, the compensation is not paid.

## CHAPTER VII:-

### DEATH, & MORTUARY EXCHANGES.

#### Part II : Funeral Payments.

It was explained in the previous chapter that mortuary exchanges fall into two categories: those made for deaths attributed to the bite of an ancestral ghost, and those for all other deaths. Deaths in the former group are followed by a funeral payment only, whereas the others incur both a funeral payment and, later, a death compensation. It will be necessary to consider the two kinds of payment separately.

Funeral Rites: News of a death is spread quickly. Because walking is arduous in such a terrain, the Mendi, as many other mountain peoples throughout the world have done, have developed a most efficient system of communicating with high-pitched, yodelling calls. Ordinary language is used, and the words can be clearly heard (particularly at night) for a mile or more. Important news is picked up from group to group and relayed along the valley. This method is used to convey news of any



large inter-clan gathering, but it is most often heard announcing a death to the more distant relatives of the deceased.

The burial rites are much the same for man, woman, or child. The deceased is brought immediately to his house-yard where he is laid out: tied, with legs flexed, to a wooden platform suspended from a horizontal pole about three feet from the ground. The body is stripped of all ornament. Here it is exposed for one to three days, depending on status. During this time, it is caressed and keened over by the women while the close male kin wail intermittently. The visitors who have come to mourn sit around the area in no prescribed order.

When the time of exposure is over, an autopsy is usually performed. This is done if there is no physical injury or other visible cause of death; but it is never done for infants and is often omitted for the aged. The autopsy takes place in the scrub out of sight of the funeral gathering. It is performed by one or two men noted for their skill, not necessarily kin to the deceased, who will be rewarded for their services with a small "burial fee". They are assisted by three or four representatives of the patrilateral and matrilateral kin of the deceased. Briefly, the operation involves the vertical splitting of the sternum with a wooden mallet and chisel and the opening up of the entire rib-cage. The chest-cavity is examined for certain signs which indicate the cause of death: sorcery, "poison" or ghost-bite. If the last, further signs indicate which ghost, whether the father's kin or the mother's. The corpse is then taken to the burial site where the grave is prepared.

There are four types of burial:

I. Ground grave: A hole 3 feet by  $1\frac{1}{2}$  feet. The corpse rests on a wooden platform about 2 feet below the surface of the ground. The grave is filled in, the earth flattened, and the spot not marked in any way.

II. Stake grave: The corpse is placed on its back, legs flexed, in a small bark and leaf sarcophagus. The whole is surrounded by a stake palisade to keep the pigs out. The "tomb" of a very important man may be covered by a thatched lean-to shelter.

III. Rock burial: The body is placed in a cleft in a rock or cliff-face, where it is wedged or propped firmly in place in a kind of "built-in cupboard" of bark. This kind of burial is confined to those clans whose territory is situated near the valley wells where suitable rock formations are to be found. These people practice the other kinds of burial as well.

IV. Tree burial: Similar to a rock burial, but the corpse is placed in the living trunk of a large, hollow tree. This type of burial is rare.

The people say that the mode of burial has no special significance and is purely a matter of personal choice. I and II are by far the most usual. When a senior or important member of a sub-clan dies, his son often removes his skull from the grave after about a year, and places it in a small, thatched box in the dead man's former house-garden. This structure, called ol ashumban ant, or "skull house", becomes one of the residences of the dead man's ghost, and pigs are occasionally sacrificed



there. A corpse whose skull it is intended to preserve in this way would not be buried in the ground as in I. As only the skulls of important men or women with many descendants are kept, the type of burial is, to this extent at least, a reflection of status. It might be added that the Mendi ethos is intensely egalitarian, so that they tend to deny distinctions of status which in fact exist.

The actual interment usually takes about two hours and is performed mechanically, without ritual.

While the body is exposed, the first funeral payment is made to the maternal kin of the deceased.

Mourning: After the burial, the close kin (usually the entire sub-clan) of the deceased go into mourning seclusion for a month. The women smear themselves with grey river-clay and put on the mourning beads of Job's Tears (tr. Maydeae, sp. Coix lacryma-jobi) and the voluminous, reed skirts. There is a scale of mourning behaviour correlated quite closely with the degree of kinship with the deceased, but influenced also by the nature of the personal relations that had been maintained with him. These factors govern both the degree and duration of mourning-dress assumed by the various women, and also the completeness of the month's seclusion undergone by all members of the deceased's sub-clan. The rest of the clan mourns at the "house of death" for about a week, and little ordinary work is done in this time. The other members of the cluster are not obliged to undertake any formal mourning, but many of them spend a few days visiting

the bereaved group. It may be said, therefore, that the patterns of mourning are in part structurally determined. The sub-clan of the deceased is expected to do no work at all for the month of seclusion. Water and fire-wood are brought to them by their children; food is supplied by the wives of the other clan and cluster members, and also by the mourners' twem-partners and their wives who will later be repaid for this service at a special pork-distribution. Provision of "funeral food" to a twem-partner is one of the obligations of this relationship, and is quite independent of considerations of kinship.

In addition to the usual seclusion and (for females) funeral dress, certain of the very close kin of the deceased may display their grief by self-mutilation. Usually, the people who do this are parents, children and spouse, but it is sometimes done by kin outside this range, especially if they are to figure prominently in the funeral payment. Mutilation is optional and consists of the lopping of a finger-joint or the slicing off of an ear-lobe. Women do it more often than men (for a fighting-man needs the full use of his hands), and I have seen at least one woman with six finger-joints missing. The people themselves say they do it solely to indicate the sincerity of their grief, and from personal observation I am inclined to believe this; although the mere fact that the practice is so widespread would in itself constitute some degree of indirect pressure on individuals to conform.<sup>1</sup>

1. The Mei Enga (around Webag) have a similar practice of mourning mutilation which they say is also intended to placate the ghost of the newly-deceased. I have no evidence of such a belief from Mendi.



A mourner who mutilates himself (provided that he is not a member of the group making the funeral payment) receives a small "ear-" or "finger-appreciation gift" in addition to any other payment he might have been due to receive.

If a man dies while away from his home territory, his body is carried back for burial either by his traveling companions or by kin who go to fetch it. If this is not possible, he is buried (in Style I) on the spot; but his string pubic-apron and clippings of his hair (if obtainable) are brought back to his home ground. These, wrapped in bark, are placed on a pole about three feet high, stuck in the ground. The funeral is held near this "memorial" and the appropriate payments made. The object is left there until it rots away.

The Funeral Payment: In describing the form of the funeral payments, I shall present, first, the model, or ideal, form it is considered proper for these exchanges to take. When we come to consider cases of actual funerals, however, it will become clear that theory and practice rarely coincide completely, and I shall attempt to analyse some of the reasons for the deviation.

The whole of the funeral payment to the maternal kin of the deceased is called 'ngiria'. To summarize briefly a longer linguistic analysis:

'ngiria = am kebólt

am = 'mother'

kebólt = (in general terms) the mutual rights and obligations associated with a particular kin-category.

'Ngiria, therefore, means the relationship which exists between a man and his maternal kin, expressed, as Mendi relationships are, in terms of gift-exchange between the two groups. Apropos of relationship with the maternal kin, the term am kebólt is normally used but, in the context of funeral payments, the alternative synonymous form, 'ngiria, is used to describe the sum total of payments made by the patrikin of the deceased to his maternal kin.

The 'ngiria, which I shall refer to henceforth as the "funeral payment", consists basically of three transactions:

I. ebera onde: This is a "satisfaction-gift" and consists of major items of currency: pearl-shell or pigs. Not only does it form the bulk of the payment, but it also signifies that the donors are willing and able to fulfill their mortuary obligations.

II. ke kondisha:<sup>2</sup> A return gift of pigs from the recipient group to the donors. Its size is determined, theoretically, by the size of the first gift: it should be roughly half. But, as in all these exchanges, an element of "lifemanship" creeps in. The ke kondisha asserts that the recipients are worthy of the compliment being paid them and that they are, at the least, the economic equals of the compensating group. The size of

2. ke = "a fore- or hind-quarter of pork"; kondisha = "(food) to be shared out".



this payment, therefore, varies according to the means of those making it. It is not, however, thought of as a "potlatch" in which one group tries overtly to outdo the other: the return gift must always be less than the original payment.

III. ti uni:<sup>3</sup> This is the final payment from the patrikin of the deceased to his maternal kin, and it normally completes the 'ngiris ("the obligation to the maternal kin") or the ol tonga ("the burying of the man"). It consists of minor items only (axes, salt, cowrie-shells, etc.).

The first payment is contributed by members of the patri-sub-clan of the deceased. Other sub-clans of his clan or cluster may join his own sub-clan in making the third payment, and further assistance may come from outside twem-partners of his sub-clan. The ke kondisha, or counter-payment, consisting of pigs only, is used to pay back, in pork, all the people outside the deceased's sub-clan who have contributed to the ti uni or final payment. As the return-gift pigs are seldom enough, a few more are added by the donor sub-clan to make up the necessary recompense.

All three of these payments are usually made at the funeral itself, while the corpse is still exposed, but, owing to "financial difficulties", the third and final payment is occasionally delayed. If this happens, the exchange is kept open by a series of counter-prestations,

3. Lit: "sawdust", "wood-chips"; hence "scraps", "oddments".

called tò powé, or shapu powé ("path clearers"), from the recipients to the donors. These gifts are thought of as maintaining the relationship and "keeping the path open" for the exchanges still to come. They are more common in death compensations, which are invariably delayed, and they will be discussed more fully in that context.

If the dead person is of sufficient importance, and if his funeral payments are big enough, another class of payment is made, called ol omúlu. Ideally this consists of a single item given to each of the other sub-clans of his clan, to each of the clans in his cluster, and to each of the sub-clans outside the dead man's parish with which he recognized kinship ties. It is rare for a funeral payment to involve enough wealth to allow all these payments to be made, but the fact that ideally they should be made is of significance. Although the main emphasis of funeral payments is on the affirmation of the relations between the dead man's patrikin and his maternal kin, the occasion of a death is also seen as an opportunity to emphasize the ties between the dead man's group and all other groups of the same order with which it enjoys amicable relations. In contrast to the payments associated with a fight-death, which underlines the political structure, the emphasis here is on the ceremonial affirmation of kinship ties, which also serve to link inter-territorial groups, but in a different way. This is yet a further example of the manner in which the relationships which make up Mendi social structure are invariably expressed in terms of gift-exchange.

In purely hypothetical discussions, the Mendi say that



the normal size of a funeral payment is 2 or 3 pearl-shell, 2 or 3 pigs, and 24 minor items. In fact, as we shall see when we consider examples, the size of the payments is decided by the status of the deceased and the wealth of the compensating sub-clan. Although a funeral payment is often attended by disputes and by the complaints of those who feel that they should have been paid (or paid more), these are usually individual grievances. The important thing is that the payments are made, and made in approximately the prescribed form; for then the dead man's patrikin are felt to have discharged, even if inadequately, their social obligations.

I have indicated that the status of the deceased plays some part in the elaboration of the mourning ritual and in the size of the funeral payments. This, although true, should not be over-estimated. Important or "big" men (and this, as in most parts of the New Guinea Highlands, means men with more than the usual number of personal exchange relationships) are mourned a little longer than lesser men; the attendance at their funerals is greater, as is the economic disruption caused by their death. Their funeral payments too are perhaps a little larger than the average, but the size of payment is never predictable: it depends entirely on what the dead man's sub-clan has available at the time: not only what is to hand, but what credits are immediately realizable. Payments for women and children are said to be not less than those for adult men. For the death of an infant, however, the mother receives one small payment only. This, while coming under the general heading of 'ngiria or "maternal kin payment", is also known as naik mol or "child settle-

ment". The simplicity of this exchange is due to the high rate of infant mortality,<sup>4</sup> which has led to the idea that a child's hold on life for its first few years is too tenuous for it to be considered a full member of the social group. Normal funeral payments are not made for children under the age of about 4.

The general rule that funeral payments are made by the patri-sub-clan of the deceased to his mother's patri-sub-clan is subject to certain exceptions: (a) a married woman, if still resident with her husband, is "buried"<sup>5</sup> by his sub-clan on his land, and the exchanges take place between the latter group and the woman's patri-sub-clan who then hand over part of the goods received to her maternal kin; (b) if the deceased, male or female, is permanently resident and completely affiliated with a group not his patri-sub-clan, his group of residence may take over the funeral payments. In the latter case, payments may be made to both the paternal and maternal kin of the deceased, and a great deal of discussion is devoted to arranging a nicely proportioned distribution in terms of the strength of the relationship that the deceased has maintained with each of his two kin groups. The funeral payments for non-agnatic affiliates will be discussed in more detail below.

4. About 70% of children under the age of 3 years. (My estimate from genealogies.) Estimate from government medical census: 52% under the age of 1 year.

5. The usual term for the funeral and the mortuary exchanges associated with it.



Provenance of Funeral Payments: Because funeral payments, in comparison with the other inter-group exchanges, are small, the sub-clan of the deceased seldom has much difficulty in raising them immediately. If, as is usual, they do not have the goods to hand, they call, individually, on their twem-partners who make every effort to oblige them. The partners, if not kin to the deceased, are repaid with "backing" and "interest" according to the usual twem procedure. If they are kin to the deceased, they may elect to come into the funeral as mourners, in which event they are repaid in pork, without interest, at the killing of the ke kondisha or "return-gift" pigs. Further contributions (usually of minor goods) are solicited from other members of the clan or cluster. These contributions, too, are repaid in pork. There are thus two fairly distinct classes of contributor to a funeral payment: outsiders who are generally no kin to the deceased and whose contribution is treated purely as a business arrangement; and patrikinsmen of the deceased, who contribute for that reason, and who receive only token repayment (in terms of intrinsic value) of pork at the funeral feast.

No individual is obliged to contribute to any particular funeral payment and he could, theoretically, withdraw from them entirely: but this would mean withdrawal from participation in many of the relationships that make up the social life of the group. A "good" man, and more especially an ambitious man, contributes to as many payments as he possibly can. In purely economic terms, contributions to the burial of one's own dead (like those to the bride-prices of one's own men) balance over a period

of time; for each group of patrikin is, at the same time, someone else's maternal kin, and while they must pay at their own members' funerals, they will receive at others.

When a man dies, those valuables such as pearl-shells, pigs and knives which are actually in his possession at the time of death (and not merely in the form of credit)... his "liquid assets"....are as a rule shared equally among his sons except for minor distributions to other of his closer kin. It is permissible for part or all of these goods to be put into the funeral payment. Thus, it follows that a man could pay his funeral dues in his own lifetime, and indeed, rich men sometimes do this. Such funeral presentations are usually made at an ink or "major pig-killing",<sup>6</sup> among the conglomeration of other exchanges which always accompany such an occasion. The reason for pre-payment is given as the fear that the man's sons "may not bury him properly".<sup>7</sup> but it is obviously felt to be a grand "retiring gesture" on the part of one who has played an important role in Mendi socio-economic life. The recipients of pre-death funeral payments are expected to carry on the sequence with the usual counter-exchanges, and since this is, more

6. See: Chapt. IX.

7. It is said that a refusal to make a funeral payment would cause the maternal kin to carry off the corpse to their own territory for burial, saying, "If you sons of dogs can't afford to bury him properly, we'll do it for you!" They would see that the incident was broadcast, and the humiliation could well lead to open warfare. If the groups were already at war, of course no funeral payment would or could be made to the true maternal kin who would normally have received; in that case, some compromise group of more distant maternal kin would be nominated as recipients.



than the ordinary funeral payments, a prestige display, it tends to be longer, and the series of prestations and counter-prestations tends to approach the elaboration of an ol peya or compensation. After death, however, the ordinary sequence of small funeral payments is made, regardless of anything that has gone before. Should the recipients of the pre-death funeral payment be unable or unwilling to carry out their obligatory counter-prestations, the matter will be dropped, but an entirely different group will receive the later posthumous funeral payments. A satisfactory interpretation of this practice is not easy to suggest. Although it is confined to rich men (the only ones who could possibly manage it) and although it is undoubtedly a prestige mechanism not only for the individual but for his whole group (for one cannot stress too heavily that prestige and status in Mendi are measured almost entirely in terms of contributions to ceremonial exchanges) yet, in at least one instance, a man, assisted by his four sons, elected to make pre-death payments for his wife and not for himself.<sup>8</sup> The counter-exchanges were not forthcoming, so the woman herself, before she died, nominated the recipients of her second, posthumous, payments. From this it would seem that the nature and direction of inter-group payments are sometimes of secondary importance; a public demonstration of one's ability to make them is their justification.

The role of the deceased's daughter's husband in

8. See: Case 13, Table XV, p. 168.

funeral exchanges is curiously ambivalent: he can either give or receive. As he is associated affinally with the patrikin and not at all with the maternal kin, he should logically be one of the donors; he is, however, more often a recipient. For this, there would appear to be two complementary explanations. First, inter-group payments are seen, both by the outside observer and by the people themselves, as an affirmation of certain inter-group relations; they therefore desire to spread them (within the prescribed formal framework) over as many groups as possible, so that the one occasion can be used to reinforce ties with more than one group. Thus, by making a small token prestation to the daughter's husband, the patrikin are emphasizing their connection not only with one group of affines (the sub-clan of the deceased's mother) but also with a second (the sub-clan into which his daughter has married). Second, as will be shown presently, the ideal pattern of inter-group payments can rarely be achieved. So flexible is Mendi social structure, and so important are the complex patterns of inter-personal relations, that the people often find it difficult to determine unequivocally just who should give and who should receive. It is therefore convenient for them to recognize certain kin categories whose role in these contexts may be either one or the other. An example of this is Case 20, in which the deceased had only one son, a youth; the daughter's husband volunteered to assist him by becoming the major donor and organizing the entire funeral on his behalf.

Destination of Funeral Payments: Funeral payments,



when all contributions have been collected, are usually made formally by the father, brother, eldest son or husband of the deceased. They are handed over to his senior actual mother's brother, or the latter's son, who redistributes them. The major items go to the providers of the ke kondisha or return-gift pigs, then to the closest kin of the deceased's mother, and so on, in widening circles of kinship, through the minor items. The recipients' redistribution, however, is not determined strictly by degree of kinship. The people with first claim are those who have contributed regularly to previous funeral payments, and in this way, a degree of economic balance is preserved. In the course of his lifetime, an individual receives just about as much from funerals as he contributes; and this is true of all the inter-group exchanges.

It has been stressed that funeral payments reflect the status of the donors within their own group, and that the size of the payments is in some degree a measure of the donors' prestige in the society as a whole. "Big men", generally speaking, pay more than poor men; the fact that they can do so is demonstrated publicly as evidence of their wealth and generosity. It must not be thought, however, that the desire for status and prestige are the only factors encouraging contributions to funeral payments; certain purely economic factors must not be overlooked. It usually happens that the goods to be received from a funeral (or any other) payment have been promised elsewhere by the recipient before the actual distribution takes place. They may be intended to repay old debts, to instigate new twem partnerships, or to contribute to other inter-group payments. Most people are aware of certain future

marriages and funerals in which they can reasonably expect to receive, and they nearly always mortgage their contingent interest. When this happens, a disappointment in an anticipated payment can have awkward consequences: if the quantity or quality of goods received is below expectations, the "mortgagee" may refuse them, thus jeopardizing the whole relationship.

There follows a list of 26 examples of funeral payments (Table XV), with analyses of donors and recipients (Tables XVI to XIX). I was present at only four of these funerals, and for the rest, relied on the recollection of various informants who had themselves been involved in the payments. Funeral payments, like all the inter-group exchanges, include a number of irrelevant transactions not directly connected with the central occasion: goods change hands, and disputes arise and are settled, with a speed that defies recording. The payments actually witnessed became comprehensible in detail only after long discussions with a number of the people who had taken part. Even then, my informants belonged to the group of either donors or recipients, so that it was seldom possible to follow the payments through both groups. The goods were usually handed over by one or two individuals, to one or two individuals; the donors had no more knowledge of, or interest in, their ultimate destination than the recipients had of their original provenance. For this reason, most of the 26 examples provide full details of one side of the transaction (donors or recipients) only; it must therefore be realized that the ensuing discussion is based on a composite and overlapping sample.

The sample of 26 cases includes 5 hypothetical deaths.



In the absence of genuine examples, these were included to indicate the direction of payments in certain equivocal circumstances, but the details of participants in these cases (where they were offered) have not been included in the quantitative analysis. The hypothetical cases are actual people, although still living.

It should be noted that women can be "channels" for the transfer of goods, but do not actually own them. Mendi women have, in theory at least, the right of disposal of goods passing through their hands: that is, they can nominate the men to whom they will redistribute the goods. But women must redistribute any goods they receive, and they cannot use them for their own purposes; indeed, as women neither make twem nor kill pigs, there are no purposes for which they could use the goods. When a woman formally gives or receives in an inter-group exchange, she does so as the point of linkage between two affinally related groups: the true donor or recipient is usually her patrikin or her husband. For this reason, in Tables XVIII and XIX, where the deceased's daughter, sister, or father's sister is either a donor or a recipient, she is listed under "father's sub-clan" if unmarried, divorced, or widowed, and under "affines of father's sub-clan" if married.

TABLE XV:--

1.

Examples of funeral payments:

Case.	Deceased.	Donors.	Recipients.	Payment.		
				S.	P.	M.
1.	adult (Male)	1 B. 4 half-B. 2 F.B.S. 1 sis.H. 1 widow	1 m.B.	9	4	17
2.	adult (M) <sup>1</sup> (pre-death)	self	1 m.B.S.	10	1	4
3.	adult (M)	1 S. 4 B. 2 B.S. 2 F.sis.H. 2 sis.H. 1 w.B.	1 m.B.S.	6	1	5
4.	child (M) <sup>2</sup>	F.	2 m.half-B. 1 m.st-m.H <sup>2nd</sup> 1 m.F.B.S.	1	2	8
5.	child (M)	F.	1 m.B. 1 m.B.S.(class.)	9	-	-
6.	child (M) (hypothet- ical case)	F	1 m.B.	2	4	48 <sup>3</sup>
7.	child (M)	1 F. 2 F.B. 2 B. 1 F.B.S. 1 F.B.S. (class.)	3 m.B.	5	1	15



TABLE XV:-

2.

Case.	Deceased.	Donors.	Recipients.	Payment.		
				S.	P.	M.
8.	child (M)	1 F. 1 F.B. F.F.sis.S.	1 m.B.	1	3	3
9.	child (Female)	F.	7 m.B.(class.) m.B.S. " m.sis. " m.sis.S." m.B.w. m.m.	-	7	14
10.	child (F)	F.	1 m.F. 2 m.F.B.S. 2 m.F.sis.d. 3 m.F.B.S.w.. 2 half-sis. 2 m.F.B.S.S.	-	4	5
11.	child (F)	F.	m.B.	-	3	13
12.	married woman	1 H. 1 S.	2 B.	1	1	10
13.	married woman	1 H. 4 S.	1 d.H. 1 d.H.B. 1 d.H.F.	1	1	6
14.	married woman	1 H. 1 S.	1 B. 1 sis. 1 d.H. 1 d.S.	-	1	20
15.	adult (M) widower (residence: matrilocal; affiliation: dual) 4 (hypothetical case)	1 B. 1 F.B.	3 m.B. 1 m.sis.S. 1 m.sis.d.	?	?	?

TABLE XV:-

3.

Case.	Deceased.	Donors.	Recipients.	Payment.		
				S.	P.	M.
16.	adult (M) (res:matri- local; affil.: matrilateral- dual)	B.	1 m.B.S. 1 m.B.S.(class.) 1 m.sis.S. " 1 m.B. "	-	3	4
17.	adult (M) (res: matri- local; affil.: matrilateral- dual) (hypothetical case: F.of 21)	1 B. or 1 B.S.	1 M.B.	?	?	?
18.	adult (M) (res.:matri- local; affil.: matrilateral)	dec.estate } 2 M.B.S. } 1 half-B. }	{ 1 F.B.S. } { 2 M.B.S. } <sup>5</sup>	{ 5 { 3	1 ?	? ?
19.	adult (M) (res.: matri- local; affil.: matrilateral) (hypothetical case; half-B. of 18)	1 S. } 1 m.B.S. }	{ 1 m.B.S. } { 1 F.B.S. } <sup>5</sup>	{ ? { ?	? ?	? ?
20.	adult (M) (father's:- res.: matri- local; affil.: matrilateral- dual)	1 d.H. 1 S. 2 B.S. 1 F.sis.S.S. 2 sis.S. 1 sis.S.S.	4 m.B.S. 1 m.B.S.(class.) 1 m.S. H <sup>2nd</sup> 6 1 m.H. <sup>2nd</sup> B.S. 5 F.F.S.S.	2	1	22
21.	child (F) (father's:- res.: matri- local; affil.: matrilateral- dual)	1 F. 1 sis.H. 6 F.m.B.S.	1 m.B.	2	4	8

TABLE XV:-

4.

Case.	Deceased.	Donors.	Recipients.	Payment.		
				S.	P.	M.
22.	child (M) (father's:- res.: matri- local; affil.: dual)	1 F. 1 F.F.sis.S. 1 F.B.(class.) 3 F.m.B.S. (class.)	1 m.B.	1	1	10
23.	married woman (husband's:- res.: matri- local; affil.: dual) (wife of 15)	1 H. 1 H.B. 1 H.m.B.S. & others	1 B.	-	4	20
24.	twice-married woman (husband's:- res.: dual; affil.: dual) (hypothetical case)	1 H <sup>2nd</sup> 1 H <sup>2nd</sup> m.B.S. 2 S.(H <sup>1st</sup> ) 1 H <sup>1st</sup> B.S. 1 H <sup>1st</sup> F.B.S.S.	1 B.S.	?	?	?
25.	twice-married woman (husband's; res.: S(H <sup>1st</sup> ); affil.: patrilateral)	1 H <sup>2nd</sup> 2 S(H <sup>1st</sup> )	1 B.S.	1	4	?
26.	child (F) (father's:- res.: uxori- local; affil.: sis.H.)	1 F. 1 F.sis.H.	1 m.B. 1 m.half-B. 1 m.F.B. 1 m.F.B.S. ? m.B.(class.)	-	3	7

Notes:

1. See p. 162.

2. Deceased's mother, an orphan reared by her step-mother, accompanied the latter, on her re-marriage, to her second husband's house. She stayed there until her own



marriage. Her step-mother and step-mother's second husband reared her as quasi-parents. Her step-mother's second husband was the principal recipient of her bride-price, and, later, of the funeral payment for the death of her child.

3. This hypothetical payment is not included in calculations of average. The child's father is a "big man" but the amount of 48 minor items seems, by comparison, to be an exaggeration.
4. "Dual residence" = separate households in each of father's and mother's territories.  
"Dual affiliation" = equal participation in the social life of both groups.  
"Matrilateral-dual affiliation" = social life centred on mother's group, but contact and amicable relations maintained with patrikin; implies matrilocal residence.  
"Matrilateral affiliation" = complete transfer of affiliation to maternal kin, and severance of ties with patrikin.
5. Two separate payments made for each death.
6. Deceased's mother twice married: deceased her child by the first husband.

**TABLE XVI:-****Analysis of Donors (1):**

Case.	Deceased.	Donors.	S.	P.	M.
1.	adult (M):	deceased's father's sub-clan	8	2	6
		" " clan			10
		" widow's sub-clan		2	
		" sister's husband	1		1
		<u>Total:</u>	9	4	17
2.	adult (M):	" father's sub-clan	10	1	4
		<u>Total:</u>	10	1	4
3.	adult (M):	" father's sub-clan	3		4
		" widow's "		1	
		" sister's husband	2		
		" father's sister's husband	1		1
		<u>Total:</u>	6	1	5
4.	child (M):	no details			
5.	child (M):	deceased's father's sub-clan	9	-	-
		<u>Total:</u>	9	-	-
6.	child (M):	hypothetical: no details			
7.	child (M):	deceased's father's sub-clan	5	1	7
		" " clan			8
		<u>Total:</u>	5	1	15
8.	child (M):	" father's sub-clan	1	3	2
		" " clan			1
		<u>Total:</u>	1	3	3

TABLE XVI:-

2.

Case.	Deceased.	Donors.	S.	P.	M.
9.	child (F):	no details			
10.	child (F):	" "			
11.	child (F):	" "			
12.	married woman	deceased's husband's sub-clan " " clan	1	1	1
		<u>Total:</u>	1	1	9
13.	married woman:	no details.			
14.	married woman:	" "			
15.	adult (M): (non-agnate)	hypothetical: no details.			
16.	adult (M): (non-agnate)	no details.			
17.	adult (M): (non-agnate)	hypothetical: no details.			
18.	adult (M): (non-agnate)	deceased's father's sub-clan " " mother's "	3 5	1	? ?
		<u>Total:</u>	8	1	?
19.	adult (M): (non-agnate)	hypothetical: no details			



TABLE XVI:-

3.

Case.	Deceased.	Donors.	S.	P.	M.
20.	adult (M): (child of non-agnate)	no details.			
21.	child (F): (child of non-agnate)	deceased's father's sub-clan " " mother's " " sub-clan " " sister's " " husband	2	4	7 1
		<u>Total:</u>	2	4	8
22.	child (M): (child of non-agnate)	" father's sub-clan " " clan " " cluster " " mother's " " sub-clan	1	1	4 1 2 3
		<u>Total:</u>	1	1	10
23.	married woman: (w. of non-agnate)	no details.			
24.	twice-married woman:	" "			
25.	twice-married woman:	deceased's 1st husband's sub-clan " 2nd " sub-clan	1	1	? ?
		<u>Total:</u>	1	4	?
26.	child (F):	" father's sub-clan " " sister's " " husband		3	4 3
		<u>Total:</u>		3	7

**TABLE XVII:-**

**Analysis of Recipients (1):**

Case.	Deceased.	Recipients.	S.	P.	M.
1.	adult (M):	no details.			
2.	adult (M):	" "			
3.	adult (M):	" "			
4.	child (M):	deceased's mother's sub-clan	1	1	5
		" " step-mother's husband		1	3
		<u>Total:</u>	1	2	8
5.	child (M):	" " sub-clan	9		
		<u>Total:</u>	9		
6.	child (M):	no details.			
7.	child (M):	" "			
8.	child (M):	" "			
9.	child (F):	deceased's mother's sub-clan		4	7
		" " clan		2	6
		affines of " sub-clan		1	1
		" " mother			
		<u>Total:</u>		7	14
10.	child (F):	deceased's " sub-clan		4	3
		affines of " "			2
		<u>Total:</u>		4	5

TABLE XVII:-

2.

Case.	Deceased.	Recipients.	S.	P.	M.
11.	child (F):	no details.			
12.	married women:	" "			
13.	married woman:	daughter's husband's sub-clan	1	1	6
		<u>Total:</u>	1	1	6
14.	married woman:	father's sub-clan			12
		daughter's husband's "		1	8
		<u>Total:</u>		1	20
15.	adult (M): (non-agnate)	hypothetical: no details.			
16.	adult (M): (non-agnate)	mother's sub-clan		2	4
		" cluster		1	
		<u>Total:</u>		3	4
17.	adult (M): (non-agnate)	hypothetical: no details.			
18.	adult (M):	mother's sub-clan	3		?
		father's "	5	1	?
		<u>Total:</u>	8	1	?
19.	adult (M): (non-agnate)	hypothetical: no details.			



TABLE XVII:-

3.

Case.	Deceased.	Recipients.	S.	P.	M
20.	adult (M): (child of non-agnate)	mother's sub-clan " clan affines of " sub-clan father's sub-clan of origin	1 1	1	8 3 10 1
		<u>Total:</u>	2	1	22
21.	child (F): (child of non-agnate)	no details.			
22.	child (M): (child of non-agnate)	" "			
23.	married woman: (wife of non- agnate)	" "			
24.	twice-married woman:	" "			
25.	twice-married woman:	" "			
26.	child (F): (child of non-agnate)	mother's sub-clan affines of " "		2 1	7
		<u>Total:</u>		3	7

**TABLE XVIII:-**

**Analysis of Donors (2):**

	adults (M) & children (M) & (F) (10 cases: nos. 1,2,3, 5,7,8,18,21,22,26)	agnatic adults (M) (3 cases: nos. 1,2,3)	non-agnatic adults (M) (1 case: no. 18)	children of agnates (3 cases: nos. 5,7,8)	children of non-agnates (3 cases: nos. 21,22,26)	married women (1 case: no. 12)	twice-married women (1 case: no. 25)
	S. P. M.	S. P. M.	S. P. M.	S. P. M.	S. P. M.	S. P. M.	S. P. M.
father's sub-clan	40.16.31	21. 3.14	3. 1. ?	15. 4.9	1. 8. 8		
" clan	20	10		9	1		
" cluster	2				2		
affines of father's sub-clan	4. 3. 6	4. 3. 2			4		
father's mother's sub-clan	2. 10				2. 10		
mother's sub-clan	5.		5.				
husband's sub-clan						1. 1.1	1. 1.?
" clan						9	
" cluster							
2nd " sub-clan							3.?

**TABLE XIX:-**

**Analysis of Recipients(2):**

	adults (M) & children (M) & (F) (8 cases: nos. 4,5,9,10, 16,18,20,26)	agnatic adults (M) ( <u>no cases</u> )	non-agnatic adults (M) (2 cases: nos. 16,18)	children of agnates (4 cases: nos. 4,5,9,10)	children of non-agnates (2 cases: nos. 20,26)	married women (2 cases: nos. 13,14)	twice-married women ( <u>no cases</u> )
	S. P. M.	S.P.M.	S.P. M.	S. P. M.	S. P. M.	S.P. M.	S.P.M.
mother's sub-clan	14.13.34		3.1. 4	10. 9.15	1. 2.15	12	
" clan	2. 9		1.	2. 6	3.		
" cluster	1.		1.				
affines of mother's sub-clan	1. 2.13			3	1. 2.10		
mother's mother's sub-clan	1.			1.			
" step-mother's 2nd husband	1. 3			1. 3			
father's sub-clan	5. 1.		5.1				
" " of origin	1						
affines of father's sub-clan					1		
" " husband's sub-clan						1.2.14	



TABLE XX:-

Average Payments:							
Deceased.	No. of Cases.	Total			Average		
		S.	P.	M.	S.	P.	M.
agnatic adults:	3	25	6	26	8.3	2	8.6
non-agnatic adults:	2	8	4	4	4	2	2.
children of agnates:	7	16	20	58	2.3	2.9	8.3
children of non-agnates:	4	5	9	47	1.2	2 2	11.7
married women: <sup>1</sup>	5	3	11	56	.6	2.2	11.2
Total:	21	57	50	191	2.7	2.4	9.1

1. Includes all married women. It would undoubtedly have been desirable to separate "wives of agnates", "wives of non-agnates" and "twice-married women", but unfortunately the sample is not large enough to justify such refinement. In the light of other results, it is probable that funeral payments for wives of agnates would be more than those for wives of non-agnates; all the data available indicate that in inter-group payments non-agnates, as a category, if not as individuals, are consistently at a disadvantage.

The quantitative data tabulated above enable some assessment to be made of funeral payments in relation to the status of the deceased.

It would be more convenient for comparison purposes to reduce these payments to a single denomination of currency, and where possible, this has been done. In the two cases in which payment was made with an heirloom pearl-shell (Cases 1, 5) the value of the latter has been given as equivalent to 8 ordinary shells, which, with some variation, seems to be the usually accepted value. An oil-bamboo (Case 2) has a standard value of 2 pearl-shell, and a cassowary (Case 18) is worth about 5. It has been explained elsewhere<sup>9</sup> that two minor items are considered to be worth one pearl-shell, yet the two denominations are not interchangeable: no amount of minor items can in fact be exchanged directly for a pearl-shell, and I have therefore not attempted to make the conversion. Pigs are frequently exchanged for pearl-shell, but the value of a pig depends on its size and it was impossible to obtain an estimate of the size of more than half a dozen of the 50 pigs involved in these payments. It has therefore been necessary to leave the records of payments in three categories of currency.

The average payment for adult male agnates (Table XX) was 8.3 pearl-shell, 2 pigs, 8.6 minor items, while that for children of agnates was 2.3 pearl-shell, 2.9 pigs, 8.3 minor items. The average payment for adult, male non-agnates was 4 pearl-shell, 2 pigs, 2 minor items, and for

children of non-agnates, 1.2 pearl-shell, 2.2 pigs, 11.7 minor items.

Payments for the deaths of children, therefore, seem to be appreciably less than those for adults; and this is contrary to the statement of the people themselves who assert that there is no significant difference.

Informants also said that, in this context, as in all others, non-agnates were under no social or financial disability; but this statement, too, would seem to be inaccurate. The payments for non-agnatic adults are less than those for agnatic adults, and those for children of non-agnates less than for children of agnates. This would seem to support the argument that the Mendi have an egalitarian society which does not recognize formal distinctions of status, but that, nevertheless, the system of residential and affiliative mobility, which the society does recognize, gives rise to a class of individuals who, deprived of the support of their patrikin, are consistently at an economic disadvantage; and as status is economically determined, these non-agnatic immigrants are in fact of lower social status than are the hosts who have given them refuge. It can, and does, happen that a non-agnate (and, more often, the child of a non-agnatic) establishes the necessary economic relationships to become a "big man", even among his sponsors. Of the 4 children of non-agnates, one (Case 20) was an adult, and a fairly "big man"; his payment was the largest in this category, although still not as large as the average for children of agnates, and appreciably smaller than that for adult male agnates. The smallest payment in this group of 4 is Case 26, the child of a father who is



affiliated with affines and who has severed all relations with both patrilateral and matrilateral kin: the people upon whom he would normally have called for contributory support.

Funeral payments for married women are the smallest of all: (average .6 pearl-shell, 2.2 pigs, 11.2 minor items).

Table XX also indicates, for the several categories of deceased, a shift in the form of currency used for payments. For adult male agnates, the payment is predominantly in shells, but with the lesser categories, the emphasis changes to pigs and minor items. Every married man, regardless of status, owns at least a few pigs (indeed, most men own one or two pigs from the age of about 15). It is almost always possible, too, for even a poor man to solicit contributions of minor items from his residential or affiliative group. But pearl-shells, the "key-stone" of the Mendi economy, are accessible in quantity only to men who have extensive personal exchange relationships: who enjoy, in other words, secure social and economic status. The predominance of pearl-shells in a funeral payment, therefore, affords a further sign of the status of the donors. Non-agnates, as we have seen, tend, as a group, to lack the necessary economic connections, and their funeral payments indicate this by their reliance on pigs and minor items rather than on pearl-shells.

The lists of donors (Tables XVI and XVIII) show further differences between the funeral payments of agnates and non-agnates. The 3 payments for the deaths of adult male agnates totalled 25 shells, 6 pigs, 26 minor items, and of these, payments by the father's cluster totalled 21 shells, 3 pigs, 24 minor items; that is, for the deaths

of adult male agnates, 84% of the pearl-shell, 50% of the pigs and 95% of the minor items were contributed by the patri-cluster of the deceased. The patri-clusters of the adult non-agnates, on the other hand, contributed only 37% of the pearl-shell, but 100% of the pigs.

For the death of an agnate's child, the patri-cluster contributed the whole payment in each of the 3 cases, but for the death of a non-agnate's child (3 cases), they contributed only 33.3% of the pearl-shell, 100% of the pigs and 44% of the minor items.

From this it would seem that, in order to raise the necessary funeral payments, agnates receive the greater part of their contributions from within their patri-cluster, but that non-agnates are compelled to call for contributions on a wider range of kin and affines. As might be expected, the more complete the change of affiliation, the less the obligation of the patrikin to contribute. Two extreme cases may serve to illustrate this point. In Case 18 (Table XV), the deceased and his half-brother had been brought as children to their common mother's territory, and neither had maintained any contact with their respective patrikin. On the death of the deceased, two payments were made: (a) from his mother's sub-clan (with which he was then completely affiliated) to his father's sub-clan, and (b) from his half-brother (who, for this occasion, was given an ambivalent role) to his mother's sub-clan. This represented an ad hoc adjustment in which the normal roles of donor and recipient were reversed. In Case 26, the deceased's father had been reared from infancy by his married sister and her husband and had become fully affiliated to the latter's sub-clan. The sister's husband had,

in effect, become a quasi-father: he was the main contributor to the boy's bride-price and also to the funeral payments for the death of his child. No contributions were made by other members of the deceased's father's cluster.

The figures for recipients are unfortunately incomplete, as no details were obtainable for the distribution of funeral payments for adult male agnates. It can probably be assumed, however, that the distribution patterns for agnates and for children of agnates will not be dissimilar. For the death of an agnate's child (4 cases), the deceased's mother's cluster received 100% of the pearl-shell, 84.7% of the pigs, and 77.7% of the minor items. For the death of a non-agnate (2 cases), the same group received 37.5% of the pearl-shell, 75% of the pigs and 100% of the minor items. For children of non-agnates (2 cases), the mother's cluster received 50% of the pearl-shell, 50% of the pigs and 59.4% of the minor items.

It is apparent, therefore, that the pattern of distribution to recipients is similar to that of contributions by donors, and for the same reasons suggested above. The discussion of the one applies equally to the other.

In general, the system of payments illustrated by the 21 examples accords fairly closely (for agnates and their children) with the ideal pattern described by informants. When, however, funeral payments for non-agnates and their children are considered, a divergence from the ideal becomes apparent. The Mendi think of themselves as a patrilineally structured society, and it is clear that the principles of funeral payment are based on an assumption that patrilineal affiliation and patrilocal residence are the norm. There is, however, a great deal of mobility in both affiliation and residence, so that inter-group payments



must be adjusted accordingly. But even in the most eccentric examples (e.g. Cases 4, 18, 19, 26), the "submerged norm" may still be discerned: in other words, it is clear that these cases are in fact deviant, and the norm from which they deviate is still apparent.

There may perhaps seem, at first sight, to be two distinct patterns of funeral payments: those made for adult males, unmarried girls, and all children, and those made for married women. The former, essentially, are from the deceased's patrikin to his maternal kin, while the latter pass from the deceased's husband's kin to her own patrikin (who later hand over informally to her maternal kin some of the goods they have received). But these apparently dual principles can be unified in a single proposition. Funeral payments, as I observed earlier, are essentially a formal and public affirmation of relationships between groups of affines. Furthermore, a group which acquires a woman by the payment of bride-price is also obliged to make the funeral payment for her and for her children; and the group which received the bride-price for one of their women will also receive the funeral payments for her and her children. To present this more specifically:

I. A man of Group A marries a woman of Group B.

Then:- bride-price:	A ———> B
the woman's funeral payment:	A ———> B
her children's " " :	A ———> B

The same principle is carried through in the case of

the woman's widowhood and re-marriage into another group.<sup>10</sup>

II. A man of Group A marries a woman of Group B. Her husband dies, and she re-marries into Group C.

Then:-

bride-price:

ch.by A → B (1st marriage)  
A ← B ← C (2nd " ) (a)

woman's funeral  
payment :

ch.by A → B ← C (b)

funeral payment  
of her ch.by A:

A → B → C (c)

funeral payment  
of her ch.by C:

A ← B ← C (d)

Here:- The composite pattern of the two bride-price payments is duplicated at the woman's funeral (b). (The payment from C to A, in (a), is a small token made only if the woman had had children by her first husband, and it is not duplicated in the funeral payments).

For the death of a child by her first husband, however, the pattern is not fully reproduced (c). The group of the deceased gives the funeral payment to the deceased's mother's patrikin (i.e. to the group to whom they had originally paid her bride-price) who redistribute part of it

10. She cannot re-marry into her first husband's sub-clan, and rarely re-marries into his clan or cluster although this is permissible.

to the woman's children by her second husband. It would seem logical to suppose that the payment should come from C to B, instead of from B to C. To account for this apparent inconsistency in the pattern, I can only suggest that part of the payment from A to B (which is as expected) would have been received by the woman herself, had she been alive; she would automatically have passed this on to her second husband or their son. If the woman herself were dead when the payment took place, then her son by her second husband would still receive.<sup>11</sup> This tentative explanation receives some support from the fact that the two payments, A to B, and B to C, although they took place almost simultaneously, were regarded as two distinct transactions.

For the death of a woman's child by her second husband, the expected pattern of payments is restored (d): the deceased's patrikin, C, pays the mother's patrikin, B, and also a token payment to her children by her first husband, A. That is, Group C makes funeral payments to the two groups to which it had previously paid bride-price.

Although, in terms of groups, the normal pattern of distribution serves in all cases as a general guide, nevertheless, as was suggested earlier, the individual recipients of funeral payments are not determined strictly by

11. In the only example I recorded of such a payment (Case 20), the first husband (the father of the deceased) was a non-agnate. This fact may have distorted the normal pattern of payments.



degrees of kinship, but also by unpredictable personal relations. In Case 9 (Table XVII), for example, an unusual number of recipients were not members of the deceased's mother's sub-clan. She herself had dictated the distribution, and the recipients were those who had been "nice" to her<sup>12</sup> from the time when she had been orphaned as a child until her marriage. (She had nominated the same people for a share in her bride-price. Indeed, any observations made about the distribution of bride-price apply equally to the distribution of funeral payments.)

In Case 10 (Table XV), if kinship were the sole criterion, the redistribution by the mother's father of the deceased seems almost capricious: several actual mother's brothers were passed over in favour of sub-clan affines; of a group of three brothers, one received and two did not; and so on. In all cases in which I was personally acquainted with the recipient sub-clan, this pattern (or absence of pattern) was usual. Whenever I asked why X received and Y did not, the answer was always in terms of past personal relations.

The Mendi have a system of "special friends",<sup>13</sup> a relationship symbolized by the use of private names, by

12. i.e., had shared pork with her and woven her arm-bands: the symbolic significance of these actions was discussed in Chapt.V., p. 100.

13. See: D.J. Ryan, "Names & Naming in Mendi". (Oceania, Vol.XXIX, 1958, p.114.

the formal sharing of food, mutual assistance, and contributions to each other's bride and funeral payments. In the hypothetical Case 24 (Table XV), the deceased's H<sup>1</sup>F.B.S.S. was given as a major donor because he is a "special friend" of the deceased's son and the two men always contribute to each other's payments.

### Summary:

I. Funeral payments mark and strengthen the relations between groups of affines, and they are deliberately used by the people themselves for this purpose. In this, they fulfill much the same purpose as bride-price, and, indeed, in the patterns of their contributions and distributions, funeral payments and marriage payments are closely associated.

II. The patterns of contribution and distribution are based on the assumption of agnatic descent as the structural norm. As actual affiliation of individuals deviates from this ideal, so the pattern of inter-group payments is adjusted accordingly; but the underlying, agnatic foundation remains apparent.

III. Analysis of actual and hypothetical cases shows important differences between the funeral payments for agnates and those for non-agnates, and that, in this context, as in all others, the latter, as a category, are at a consistent social disability. This is of particular significance because it is a direct contradiction of the people's own assertion of complete social equality.



# **FUNERAL.**

- (a) The mother mourns over the bier.
- (b) Donning the mourning-beads.
- (c) Beginning the autopsy (beside the grave).
- (d) Building the "sarcophagus".





CHAPTER VIII:-DEATH, & MORTUARY EXCHANGES.Part III : Death Compensations.

Although I am aware that it would be desirable to do so, it will, unfortunately, be impossible to discuss death-compensation in the same way that funeral payments were discussed. There are two reasons for this: first, a death-compensation is a protracted series of exchanges which can take 15 years to complete, and which often takes more than 10, so that it proved impossible to follow through any series from beginning to end. Second, each of the major ceremonial payments in the sequence is immeasurably more complex than are funeral payments and it is virtually impossible for any casual observer to record them even if he is closely acquainted with many of the people taking part; the compensation itself is usually inextricably involved with a number of other exchanges, many of them only remotely connected with the central event. Like the major pig-killings (ink), the death-compensation is a general clearing-house for an assortment of irrelevant debts and side-transactions; and moreover, a number of the subsidiary exchanges which are really involved in a death-compensation

are carried out privately, where it is impossible to observe them. Finally, the Wendi show an astonishing ignorance of, and lack of interest in, any economic or other personal affairs in which they themselves are not involved. For these reasons, it was not possible to obtain a record of any single death-compensation, and although I can present a composite model of the ideal pattern of exchanges, I can offer little in the way of quantitative data for the kind of comparative analysis that was attempted in the discussion of funeral-payments.

When a man dies in circumstances requiring compensation, the group accepting responsibility announces its intention to compensate, and the first payment is made at the funeral. As in funeral payments, this is also called ebera onde or "satisfaction-gift" and consists always of shell or other major items. It is an earnest of good faith, and implies acceptance of responsibility and an intention of fulfilling compensatory obligations. If the compensation is to be made by the deceased's patrikin to his maternal kin, only the one "satisfaction-gift" is made; but if, as is more usual, the death-compensation is to be paid to the patrikin of an ally, then one "satisfaction-gift" is made by the compensators to the deceased's patrikin, while another is made in the usual way by the deceased's patrikin to his maternal kin. Although they have the same name and are made on the same occasion, the two "satisfaction-gifts" should comprise different goods and represent quite different transactions:

donors      —————→      ebera onde  
                                  "satisfaction-gift" —————→ recipients      (1)  
                                  (pearl-shell)

As with funeral-payments, the "satisfaction-gift" is answered by the ke kondisha or "return-gift pigs", signifying the recipients' willingness to take part in the compensation and to undertake the counter-obligations involved. (A failure to make this exchange indicates, as in funeral-payments, that the proposed recipients are not prepared to become involved in such a protracted relationship, and the compensation will stop at this point.)

donors      ←      ke kondisha      ←      recipients      (2)  
    "return-gift pigs"

At the funeral, too, there may or may not be made a payment of minor items, ti uni. In funeral-payments, this is obligatory, but in a death-compensation, it is made only if certain junior or unimportant members of the donor group wish to take part in the subsequent ceremonies. A man may contribute minor items as ti uni if he has no pearl-shell immediately available; it is a way of announcing that he wishes to take part, and will endeavour to contribute to later payments. (It must be reiterated that death-compensations, in their function of cementing political alliances, are of vital importance to a clan's survival; so that willingness to contribute to them is a prime criterion of individual prestige.)

donors      →      ti uni      →      recipients      (2a)  
    (minor items)

Soon after the funeral, the return-gift pigs, together with others added by the donors, are killed at a small,



private feast and the pork distributed to the people who had contributed to the satisfaction-gift and the ti uni.

contributors  
to (1) & (2a) ← return-gift pork ← donors (3)

About three months later, a further payment is made, the ol kom, or "preliminary payment".<sup>1</sup> This consists of pork-sides<sup>2</sup> only. The donors kill, butcher and cook some of their pigs on their own dance-ground. They keep the heads, backs and offal for their own consumption, and ceremoniously present the pork-sides to the recipients.

donors → ol kom → recipients. (4)  
"preliminary payment"  
(pork-sides)

After this, there begins a series of individual counter-prestations, called tò powé ("path-clearers"). These sometimes also occur in funeral payments when the third and last payment (ti uni) is delayed; but they occur in all death-compensations for the payments in the latter

1. ol = "man"; kom = "measurement" or "rehearsal".

2. The butchering of pigs in Mendi follows the common Highland pattern: the four legs, flanks and back are cut off the carcass in one piece. This is then divided into two pieces, or "pork-sides", each consisting of a fore-quarter, a hind-quarter and the flank in between.

are invariably delayed. "Path-clearers", as the name suggests<sup>3</sup>, are designed to "keep open the path" of the relationship between donors and recipients during the long delays between major payments. They are not group payments like the latter, but are conducted on an individual basis. Although I am assured that they always do occur in a death-compensation, they are, nevertheless, at the discretion of the donors, and if the latter demand them the recipients cannot refuse them without endangering the relationship and possibly terminating the compensation. A path-clearer is instigated by any member of the donor group who is himself a major contributor to the compensation. He can either approach a member of the recipient group privately or else call on the group as a whole to supply him with a partner. The partner is then obliged to give the donor in question a pearl-shell or its equivalent on the understanding that, at the next major payment of the series, he will be repaid with one shell as "backing" for the one given (tò powé shon), another as "interest" (tò powé paróli), and, if available, a third as a "bonus" (no-pa-á); or he may receive the equivalent of these in pigs. The path-clearer is thus not a gift but a compulsory loan repayable at interest on a specific date. In form, therefore, it is very similar to a twem, even to the use of the same terms for "backing" (shon) and "interest" (paróli). The rationale of this is fairly clear: because the donors and recipients must be (officially, at least) on friendly terms, it is felt that such friendly relations

3. Lit., tò powé suggests the idea of "steering", "channeling", or "guiding in a certain direction".

should be marked, as they usually are, by a twem relationship; for, as observed earlier, the cardinal principles of twem are (a) twem can occur only between friends, and (b) men who are friends for any other reason should symbolize the fact by making twem. In such special circumstances as a death-compensation, however, the transaction is distinguished from ordinary twem by a special name. (A similar arrangement occurs in the major pig-kill (ink) when a man can call on his brothers-in-law for a compulsory contribution called mók meshal arolt, which is in fact, and is later repaid as, a twem<sup>4</sup>). It might be mentioned that, although the "path-clearers" are, theoretically, to be kept quite separate and distinct from other private twem deals, in actual practice, the two do get confused and lead to many disputes<sup>5</sup>. The number of "path-clearers" to be called for depends on the size of the recipient group and the willingness of the donors to become involved in the extra transactions; each individual recipient can be called on for one, or at the most, two "path-clearers". If the donors' demands are excessive, the whole compensation could break down.

The "path-clearer" may also be regarded as a kind of "entrance-qualification" or "financial reference" for those who wish to be recipients in the death-compensation. In

4. See: Chapt. IX, p. 221.

5. This is another reason why the details of any inter-group payment ceremony are extremely difficult for even a Mendi observer to follow.



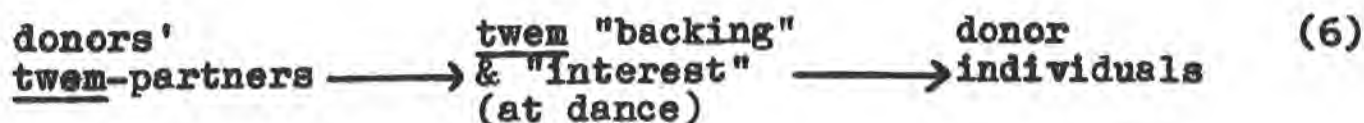
this it resembles the "return-gift pigs" (2), but on an individual rather than a group basis. These partnerships, however, are not arranged in strict, exclusive pairs. The same individual can have an interest in several "path-clearers", or a number of men can combine to share the same one.

The "path-clearer" payments collected by the donors are immediately passed out to those of their own private twem-partners who are not personally associated with the death-compensation, on the usual understanding that they will be returned, with interest, when the donors need them for the next stage of the compensation. Thus, a whole new set of personal exchanges is started, and although these are not directly connected with the central occasion, they are nevertheless depended upon for many of the pearl-shell which are to go into the next major payment.

donors'                      donor                      to powé                      recipients (5)  
twem-partners ← individuals ← "path-clearers" ←

Some years later, (there is no fixed period, but they say 3 to 5 years is usual) preparation, which has been proceeding in a leisurely fashion, suddenly intensifies. During the two or three months preceding the next payments (7) & (8), the donors' group gives a series of small dances. There are an indefinite number of these, and their purpose is to publicize the forthcoming death-compensation. They are also occasions for the public collection and display of previously promised repayments from twem-partners, which will be used to make up the next major payment. Now is the time when the twem obligations contracted in (5) mature

and are repaid, with interest. Since the death-compensation itself is an occasion for prestige to the donor group, these pre-compensation dances (ti-mol) are preliminary demonstrations of the successful preparations for the approaching function: they show how the goods are being delivered on schedule, and the number and status of the donors' twem-partners. At the same time, the donors make a point of attending neighbouring pig-killings and death-compensations, where they do a stamping dance, wearing special head-dress and decorations, as a public boast that they are shortly about to fulfil their political obligations with an appropriate death-compensation. In this period, all the donors' normal daily activities are suspended: garden work is left to the women and children, and is sometimes neglected to the point where the group is actually short of food. The whole of a prospective donor's energies are devoted to collecting the debts owing to him from every source: previously arranged twem debts, newly contracted ones, the sale of pigs; and he will make his presence felt at any funeral- or marriage-payment where there is a possibility of his being a recipient. If he is unable to attend to all this business personally, he sends out his sons or wives as his collecting agents. At the same time, his twem-partners, recognizing the urgency of the occasion, and knowing that sooner or later they themselves will be in a similar position, do everything in their power to help him, even to contracting new obligations with their own twem-partners. This results in an economic flurry whose ripples spread over a wide area.



When the two or three months' dancing has finished, there is a small private payment called ol tom arolt.<sup>6</sup> It takes place the day before the first major payment (8), and is a kind of private "preview" (or pre-enactment) of the latter. The "close kin payment" is made from a selection of the goods that have been assembled for the first major payment. It takes place in the house of the principal donor, and the recipients are the close kin of the deceased: his actual brothers, or his father's brothers' sons. This prestation is conducted in mock secrecy: it is a regular part of the proceedings, and everybody knows it occurs, but those not included are nevertheless expected to pretend that they know nothing about it. The brothers of the deceased are included by right, but recipients in the next degree of kinship (the father's brothers' sons) are determined by status. That is, every true brother receives something from the close-kinship payment, but of the father's brothers' sons, only those who are "big men" (i.e. who are taking a prominent part in the death-compensation) are included. The payment is one major item (one pearl-shell or one pig) per person, and the number of individuals included is determined by the size of the payment that is to follow next day. If it should happen that not enough goods are available to satisfy all the legitimate claimants to the close kinship payment, then some claimants will waive their claim ("I received last time, you take this one")

6. Lit.: "there is the dead man's spear". I could get no explanation of this symbolism. For reasons which will be made clear, I translate it as the "close kin payment".



which is a common way of settling contretemps of this kind. If, on the other hand, relations between donors and recipients were strained, such an inadequacy of payment could be made the occasion of a dispute between the groups. I was assured, however, that if both sides were committed to this stage, they would be willing to compromise because the ensuing disruption would be too awkward for too many people.

No satisfactory rationale of this practice was offered. Informants said the closest kin of the dead man are obviously the most upset by his death, and are therefore those who require extra financial consolation. Whether or not this can be accepted on its face-value it is impossible to say; but this payment does indicate that a distinction is made between close kin and more distant kin in a way that accords with the general patterns of distribution in inter-group payments. In the funeral payments, the actual goods transferred are so few in number that the very size of the payments tends to restrict the range of kin who donate or receive. A death-compensation, on the other hand, involves so much more wealth and so many more people, that it seems necessary to accentuate the focal point of the recipient group, namely the deceased. The close-kin payment performs this function. The foregoing is, of course, largely speculation, but whether correct or not, the close kin payment is of the utmost importance. Notwithstanding the fact that some recipients "yield gracefully" to others, many disputes arise about who is, or is not, included. If the payment is not made at all, or is made with what is regarded as complete inadequacy, then, once again, the death-compensation can founder. Finally, it is not without significance that the second degree of close kin (the father's

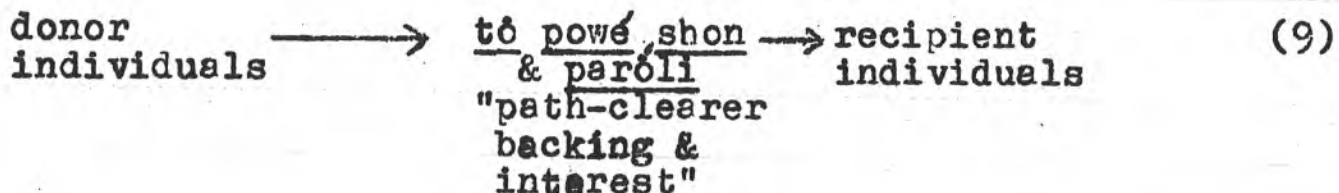
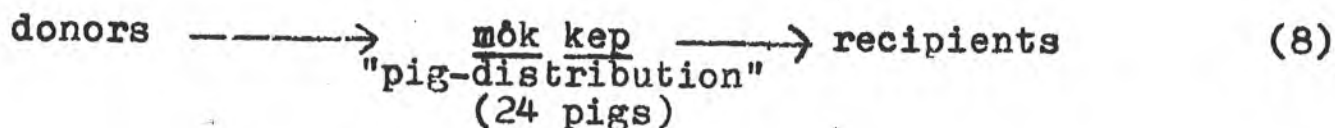
brothers' sons) of whom there are usually a considerable number, are selected as recipients by reason of status. It implies that political considerations, in terms of future alliances, are being consciously considered; and I have previously suggested that this is one of the main ideas behind the whole system of Mendi death-compensations.

donors       $\longrightarrow$  ol tom arolt  $\longrightarrow$  recipients      (7)  
    "close-kin payment"      (close kin  
    (private)                              of deceased)

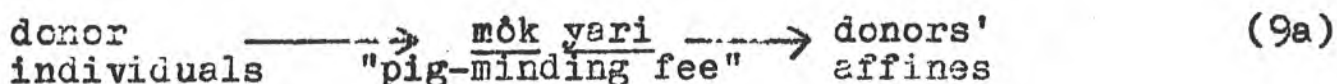
The day after the close-kin payment (7), the first of the two major payments takes place. This is the mök kep, or "pig-distribution",<sup>7</sup> which all informants agreed should consist, ideally, of 24 pigs.<sup>8</sup> The pigs are lined up, counted publicly, and handed over to the recipient group. The occasion is formal, and both sides wear special ceremonial dress. In addition to the 24 pigs forming the nucleus of the distribution, more pigs are provided by individuals as backing and interest for the "path-clearers" (5).

7. No literal translation. In Enga (Wabag), kep = distribution. There is no evidence of an actual borrowing from Enga, and the Mendi word for "distribution" is tumawi; nevertheless, mök kep in this context can be conveniently, and I think accurately, translated as "pig-distribution". The term may have further semantic implications of which I am unaware.

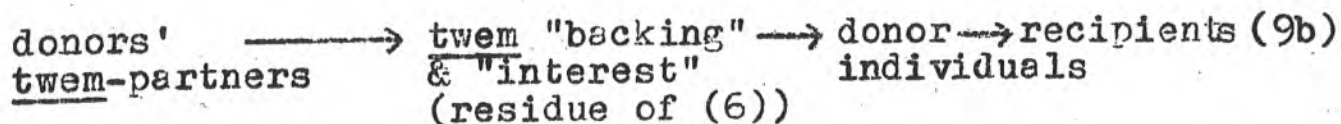
8. They admitted, however, that this ideal was often not reached.



Since payments (8) & (9) consist entirely of pigs, there may also be certain subsidiary prestations like "pig-minding fees" to the donors' wives and married sisters who hand them immediately to their brothers or husbands.



Moreover, certain of the donors' twem-partners who were late with the payments due in (6), may present them publicly on this occasion. They are accepted by the donors who pass them straight on to one of the recipients.



Besides the main payment of pigs, there is another



assemblage of minor items.<sup>9</sup> The name of this payment is ol keyont<sup>10</sup>, and it corresponds to the ti uni (2a) which also consists of minor items only.

donors —————→ ol keyont —————→ recipients (10)  
(minor items)

There is also a repetition of the "return-gift pigs" (2). This has the same significance as before, indicating that the affair has proceeded satisfactorily so far and that the recipients are prepared to continue.

donors ←———— ke kondisha ←———— recipients (11)  
"return-gift pigs"

The ordinary funeral payment is further paralleled by the payment of ol omúlu. The significance of this has already been discussed.<sup>11</sup> It consists of a token payment to each of the sub-clans to which the deceased was agnatically connected. Thus, in effect, this prestation, whether made in funeral-payments or death-compensations, rounds off the

9. The precise number is unspecified but as many as can be raised; in theoretical discussions, the number is always given as some multiple of 24; but this is also true of the funeral-payments and, as we saw there, it bears no relation to practice.

10. Lit.: "the man is paid for".

11. See: Chapt. VII, p. 158.

summary of the deceased's life: it completes the tally of all the groups with which he has shared mutual rights and obligations.

patrikin  $\longrightarrow$  ol omúlu  $\longrightarrow$  agnatic groups (12)  
(as donors of deceased  
or recipients)

When the recipients take over their pigs, they redistribute them on the spot: either the patrikin to their affines and to the maternal kin, or the maternal kin to their affines.<sup>12</sup> Of those retained by the recipients themselves, some are used to repay the contributors to (2), and the rest are shared among the close kin of the deceased (generally those who have already received in (7)). The actual redistribution, like those for the funeral payments, is not predictable in detail: it depends both on the size of the payment and the size and form of the recipient group. The general principles of redistribution, however, seem to be identical.

recipients  $\longrightarrow$  mók kep  $\longrightarrow$  affines  
(patrikin) "pig-distribution" & (13)  
(24 pigs) maternal kin

recipients  $\longrightarrow$  "  $\longrightarrow$  affines (13a)  
(maternal kin)

All these transfers of goods: (8), (9), (9a), (9b), (10), (11), (12), (13) & (13a), take place simultaneously,

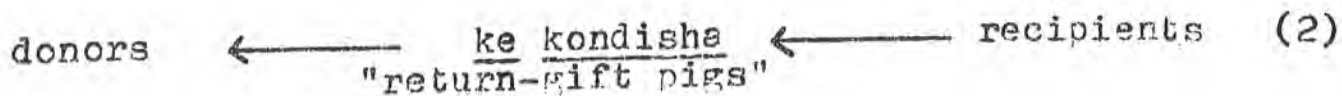
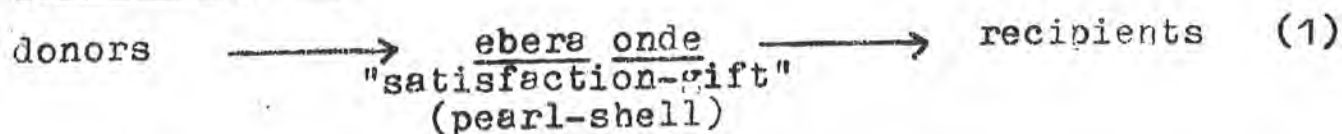
12. Redistributions to affines are called in ldap, which is also the general term for : bride-price.

and although each individual involved knows exactly what he himself is doing, he does not know the details of most of the other transactions taking place at the same time. To the outside observer, the overall picture is one of complete chaos; it is, in fact, like a mosaic whose parts can only be assembled later.

The final payment occurs, they say, 10 to 15 years after the death. It is called momak kep, or "pearl-shell distribution" and is in all respects similar to the pig-distribution, except that it comprises 24 pearl-shell instead of 24 pigs. The preparations for it are exactly the same. The preliminary period is filled with the usual transactions: ordinary twem to collect the pearl-shell, and the special twem, or "path-clearers" (5) & (6) which are repaid with interest at the distribution ceremony. On the eve of that occasion, there is a repetition of the ol tom arolt, or close-kin payment (7). The ceremony itself is an exact repetition of (8) and includes the same conglomeration of subsidiary and incidental payments. The dead man is then said to be "made" or compensated for.

Summary of the payments in a death-compensation:-

At the funeral:





donors → ti uni  
(minor items) → recipients (2a)

A few days later:

contributors ← return-gift pork ← donors (3)  
to (1) & (2a)

About 3 months later:

donors → ol kom  
"preliminary payment"  
(pork-sides) → recipients (4)

Intermittently, during the next 2 to 3 years:

donors' ← donor ← tò powé ← recipients (5)  
twem-partners individuals "path-clearers"

After about 3 years:

donors' → twem "backing"  
twem-partners & "interest" → donor individuals (6)

About 3 months later:

donors → ol tom arolt  
"close-kin payment"  
(pigs---private) → recipients (7)  
(close kin of deceased)

The next day:

donors → mòk keo  
"pig-distribution"  
(24 pigs) → recipients (8)

donor individuals → tò powé, shon & paróli → recipient individuals (9)  
 "path-clearer  
 backing &  
 interest"

donor individuals → mók yari → donors' affines (9a)  
 "pig-minding fee"

donors' twem-partners → twem "backing" & "interest" (residue of (6)) → donor individuals → recipients (9b)

donors → ol keyont (minor items) → recipients (10)

donors ← ke kondisha ← recipients (11)  
 "return-gift pigs"

patrikin (as donors or recipients) → ol omúlu → agnatic groups of deceased (12)

recipients (patrikin) → mók kep "pig-distribution" (24 pigs) → affines & maternal kin (13)

recipients (maternal kin) → " → affines (13a)

Intermittently, during the next 10 to 15 years:

Repetition of (5) (14)

After 10 to 15 years:

Repetition of (6) (15)

About 3 months later:

Repetition of (7)

(16)

The next day:Repetition of (8) to  
(13a) (with pearl-shell  
instead of pigs)

(17) to (22a)

Summary:

From the foregoing model, despite the absence of quantitative data, certain general observations can be made:

I. As the general form of a death-compensation payment is between two groups, channelled through (usually) two individuals, one may assume that the patterns of individual donors and individual recipients resemble those of the funeral-payments which take a similar form: that is, the deceased's sub-clan contributes the bulk of the payment, with diminishing assistance from the clan, cluster and affines, while redistribution among the recipients follows a like pattern.

II. Because death-compensations are much larger than funeral-payments, and because they must, ultimately, be



collected in the same way through personal twem relationships, then the network of subsidiary transactions accompanying a death-compensation will resemble those of a funeral-payment, but in a more extended form.

III. There may be noted many points of resemblance between the payments comprising a death-compensation and those of a funeral-payment; the former may, indeed, be seen as a protracted elaboration of the latter. The essential difference, it is suggested, lies in the identities of the donor and recipient groups: although even here, in certain circumstances, a death-compensation can take place between exactly the same groups of people who would have been involved had the death been an ordinary one. One such actual example is that for the death of a child who was killed in a raid by a hostile clan. His patrikin were not the fight-base who would normally have compensated, but they had accepted an indemnity-payment (ebu) and so had to compensate for their own dead. They therefore compensated the dead child's maternal kin. In this case, the ordinary funeral-payment was simply expanded to a death-compensation and the same parties were involved on each side. Generally, however, a death-compensation is made by a fight-base to the patrikin of the deceased.

IV. A funeral-payment represents a public affirmation of relations between affines. Primarily, it reflects the relations between the groups from whose inter-marriage the deceased was born; but we saw how, in the secondary distributions, relationship was formally acknowledged with other sets of affines also.

A death-compensation, on the other hand, recognizes a much wider set of relations than this. All the affinal

connections stressed in funeral-payments are found here too, but they are relegated to the background. The main emphasis is on political ties, and the dead man is merely a symbol of the common interests of two otherwise unrelated groups. This would explain, too, the larger payments and the more elaborate ceremonial attending their transfer. The relationship between two affinally-connected sub-clans is a matter of small importance to the society as a whole, but the relationship between two large and powerful groups of political allies is one that may not only be crucial to the survival of both, but which can also affect the actions of other equally important groups. In emphasizing and reinforcing such an alliance, therefore, the institution of death-compensation is an important element of political control.

V. The delay in completing a death-compensation is also of significance in this context. Although necessitated to some degree by the very size of the payments involved, it also means that, if the sequence is to run its proper course, the alliance between the donors and recipients must be maintained over a long period, to the advantage of both. That the people themselves are aware of this is shown by the importance given to the "path-clearer" payments (5) which compel individual members of the two parties to contract economic ties in addition to, and strengthening, the relationship already existing between the groups themselves.

VI. Finally, if inter-group relations are indeed the primary consideration in both funeral-payments and death-compensations, then the ol omulu, or payments to agnatically-related groups (12), is of considerable importance. Although mere tokens in size, they serve to fill in a gap in the pattern. Political relations are marked by the payments

between two groups of fighting-allies. Affinal ties are indicated by the redistribution to mother's kin, to wives, and to married sisters and daughters. But there still remain various other kin-groups with whom the recipients acknowledge common agnatic descent. For example, a clan or sub-clan can split and certain of its members establish themselves (by various means) in a new territory.<sup>13</sup> The connection between the two groups is remembered for a long time through antigamy and a common patronym, and, in the funeral-payments and death-compensations, it is recognized in the ol omulu. The series of economic exchanges surrounding a death, therefore, constitutes a recognition and, as it were, a complete summary, of all the social relationships important to the dead man during his life, and of all those relations between his own group and other groups, of which he was the focal point.

13. This is a peculiar but common feature of the Mendi social structure, and is discussed in some detail in Chapt.II.





**DEATH-COMPENSATION.**

Distributing (a) salt,  
(b) pearl-shell,  
(c) oil-bamboo.

CHAPTER IX:-THE MOK INK, & EXCHANGES BETWEEN POLITICAL ALLIES.

Pork is a highly-valued item of Mendi diet, but the killing and eating of pigs are highly ritualized and hemmed about with a number of limitations and prohibitions. Pigs are not only an important item of currency, both in private individual transactions and in the big inter-group payments for marriages and deaths, but they are also the focal point of a series of ceremonies which are, in effect, an apotheosis of the Mendi economy: in the sense that practically every kind of economic transaction known in the area is involved in them, either directly or indirectly. The series of ceremonies culminating in a major pig-killing is known as the ink.

A Mendi can kill his own pigs only in certain circumstances:

1. When sacrifices are required for the ghosts. This occurs either as a group killing of many pigs in the big cult rituals,<sup>1</sup> or as the private sacrifice of a single pig in cases of individual illness; the pig is killed and a

1. See: Chapt.XI, Part I.

portion eaten (at a special ghost-house chosen by divination) by the sick person and the members of his immediate household.

2. At small, private feasts associated with weddings and funerals, when a few pigs are killed and the pork distributed to those who have previously contributed to the marriage or funeral payments. On these occasions, the host and his family eat only the heads; the rest must be distributed to the guests.

3. When a pig or pigs are sick, it is regarded as an emergency. The people are aware that one sick pig can infect the others stalled in the same house, so it is thought best to eliminate the ailing member of the herd before the disease spreads.<sup>2</sup> Although they are not averse to eating a pig that has been found dead, they prefer not to do so because people who eat "dead pig" become infectious themselves, and are consequently obliged, for the following month, to avoid all contact with healthy pigs, either their own or other people's. This means that they are unable to enter their own house-yards or to join their families for the evening meals. Women, because the pigs are stalled in their houses, are forbidden to touch "dead pig" at all. To avoid this inconvenience, a man always kills a sick pig rather than wait for it to die. This leads, of course, to a good deal of cheating, for in a community as meat-hungry as this one, a pig has only to cough once and the owner and his

<sup>2</sup>. For the same reason, the bones of a sick pig that has just been eaten are always carefully disposed of lest they contaminate healthy pigs which come across them while foraging.



family start to get the oven ready. A few guests, kinsmen, or close friends may be invited. On the other hand, the host may save most of the meat to give away: either to existing creditors or for the creation of new debts. When a man has several sick pigs he might, either alone, or in conjunction with other owners of sick pigs, decide to kill them, not in the privacy of his house-yard, but on the public dance-ground. The affair then becomes no longer a private party, but a public function called mòk lusha.

4. The mòk lusha are "minor ceremonial pig-killings". They are usually given by one clan, or sub-clan, although sometimes as many as 80 (or even more) pigs may be killed. A lusha is held when a clan finds that it has a surplus of pigs, and, if it is a year or two since their last killing, they may decide that it is time to have another. The function is arranged, as most things in Mendi are, by general, informal discussion. Everyone is allowed his say, but as the men with most pigs are the ones on whom the ultimate success of the affair depends, their word will carry most weight. A "big man", whose pigs are already committed elsewhere, can block the whole scheme merely by refusing to take part in it. If the proposal is adopted and a date fixed, the various pig-owners involved then set about allotting in advance the pork they will distribute at the killing. First priority goes to existing creditors, many of whose debts would have been made against just such an event. That is to say, a common exchange transaction is made in the form: "Give me such-and-such and I'll repay you with pork from my next pig-killing". There may be other debts, not so specifically stated, which the host also wishes to settle in this way. In addition to these economic commitments, the host is obliged to make other

purely social prestations: to his affines, to his sisters and their children, and to his twem-partners. The pork-gifts in this second category are not exchanges or repayments of debts like those in the first; rather are they goodwill-gifts which serve as a public acknowledgement of a mutually amicable relationship. I have mentioned earlier the enormous significance attached in Mendi to the sharing of pork, and at his pig-killing a man gives pork to his wife's kin not just as meat, but as a symbol of the friendship between their two affinally-related sub-clans. He gives it likewise to his sister and her children because he has shared in her bride-price; this is a public affirmation of the fact that she is still regarded as a member of her patri-clan, that they are watching her interests, that she may if she chooses, or is forced, seek refuge there with her children, and that her sons will be granted land there should they ever need it. (For the same reasons, he will, on other occasions, receive pork from his wife's brothers.) Finally, he gives pork to his twem-partners to emphasize the good-will between them, and this in turn is a public indication of his importance in the local economy and a source of further prestige to himself.

The pork prestations mentioned so far are obligatory from the moment the pig-killing is finally decided upon. Although I have spoken of them as "goodwill-gifts", they are of course reciprocal in the same terms: the host will receive equivalent gifts of pork at the subsequent pig-killings of each of his guests.

But there is a third and more formal category of pork prestations which are at least as important as the others, and indeed, considered from the point of view of purpose,

rather than function, may be said to be the major reason for the pig-killing. When a man decides to kill pigs, he mentally allocates first his debts, then his social obligations. When these allotments have been made, he invites his twem-partners to bespeak whatever pork remains. The rates at which the meat is offered and sold are prescribed: 1 pearl-shell for a haunch or shoulder, and 2 or 3 shells (depending on size) for the whole pork-side, or pāgi.<sup>3</sup> Although it is the host's twem-partners who are invited to take part in this deal, it is not a twem in the normal sense of the word. For the pearl-shell (or smaller goods) which are pledged against the pork to be distributed must be paid before the pigs are killed. A twem is essentially a delayed exchange which creates a protracted credit relationship, while this transaction, called mōg lu ngibi ("pigs killing you-must-give-me", i.e., "the future pig-killing payment") is really a sale of pork, with payment in advance, offered to a limited clientele. Like twem, however, it does imply a permanent relationship, so that the offer, although not a twem in itself, is made only to actual or prospective exchange-partners, who, on their part, are expected, if they can, to accept it. The shells thus acquired are used in two ways, either to buy more pigs, which will in turn be bespoken to increase the size of the pig-killing, or they may be put out into normal circulation to meet the host's twem or other obligations not connected with the pig-killing at

3. These were the prices in 1956, when the effect of the inflation caused by the influx of European pearl-shell was first making itself felt. The price is probably higher now, but even in 1956 the price of Mendi pork, in Mendi, was comparable with that charged by Australian retail butchers.



all. The day before the pigs are killed, all the shells obtained for them are ceremonially displayed, and this is a further contribution to the host's prestige.

The pig-killing itself takes place at dawn on the dance-ground of the host-clan, and the visitors have usually all arrived by 9 a.m. Two long, parallel earth-ovens are dug the length of the dance-ground. Each host has his own killing and distributing area, and each area includes a small, conical ghost-house of kunai grass, known as the shumpen ant ("ancestors" house). The pigs are killed by bashing them on the forehead with a wooden cudgel and a few drops of blood from the snout are allowed to fall inside the ghost-house, where a small fire is lit so that the smell of cooking blood will attract the ghost to its repast. This is because, with strict correctness, no pigs can be killed without being offered, at least nominally, to the ghosts. Since, however, the pig-killing has a purely secular and economic character, the ghost offering is for the most part a symbolic and token one, performed in a quite perfunctory manner, the ghost-houses being erected just for the occasion and ignored once the formality is over. When the pigs are killed they are butchered, loaded into the oven, cooked and distributed.

Each clan dance-ground consists of two or more sections: the main ground, the men's-house yard, and often a sort of "ante-ground". These sections are divided from each other by wooden palisades which in former times served as fighting barricades. The invited guests (those who are to receive pork) are admitted to the main ground where the killing and cooking takes place. Important people and close friends of the hosts are admitted to the sanctum of

the men's-house yard. Outside, in the ante-ground, sit a crowd of visitors of two kinds: one, the "second-class recipients", those who are not themselves due to receive pork from the hosts, but who are kin to those who will receive it, and who have come to receive a portion from their kinsmen, and to see that the latter are fairly treated; two, a number of former enemies with whom truce has been made and of whom more will be said shortly.

A pig-killing also serves as a social gathering which provides opportunities for meeting and making exchange contacts. As no man of importance or self-respect attends a killing at which he is not scheduled to receive, it becomes clear that the system is a self-boosting one. In other words, the more pork-gifts a man makes, the more return killings he is invited to attend, where he makes more new contacts leading to more pork-gifts on his part, and so on. The practical limits to this expanding system of exchanges are determined by a man's ambition and by his physical and economic capacity to maintain them.

The function sometimes ends with a small, spontaneous dance. Only the younger men and the unmarried girls take part, and acquaintances are made which may lead to courting.

Apart from its purely economic significance, a pig-killing may also be seen as a situation of formalized inter-clan relations. A man publicizes his relations with both kinds of affines, his wife's kin and his sister's husband's kin. Furthermore, because twem can be made only with men of friendly clans, the host-clan's pork-distributions to its twem-partners amount to a public listing of its potential allies in the event of war. Finally, the number of

pigs killed, and the propriety and correctness with which the distribution is conducted, are an indication of the clan's wealth and prosperity, and hence, of its usefulness as an ally, and the desirability of keeping it on friendly terms. This is not just an abstract matter of "social prestige"; in Mendi, before the Europeans enforced peace, it was a necessary factor in a clan's survival.

But between clans which are formally at peace there is often a good deal of latent hostility. Although friendly twem relations may exist between individuals of two clans, between other individuals of the same clans there may be smouldering long-standing disputes which have never reached the clan level. So that inter-clan relations frequently have an ambivalent quality of outward, formal friendship, tempered by concealed distrust and even hostility. This is particularly true of clans which have recently been at war. Formal peace has been made, twem relationships have been resumed, inter-marriages have been arranged; but the grievances caused by individual assassinations still remain, and the peace is an uneasy one for some generations to come. This sort of situation too, is apparent at a pig-killing. The former enemies are invited, and certain of their members are received in the main ground, but all those present are conscious of the watchful, armed group of supporters in the ante-ground outside, and the tension is very apparent.

Although the pork-distributions at a pig-killing fall into the 3 categories described above (previous debts, gifts to kin, and bespoke "sales") the category of each particular distribution is not apparent to an observer. All the host states is that A, B, C, etc. are to receive so, and so, and so; but he gives no public indication of



the reason for any individual prestation. The important thing is that the recipient is satisfied; if he is not, he will say so loudly, and it is only then that the background of the transaction will be made public. To ensure that this embarrassing situation does not arise, it is the practice for bespoke pork to be allotted "on the hoof" some time before the pigs are killed. When the prospective buyer pledges his payment, he is shown the exact portion of the particular pig he will receive, and any time he happens to be visiting his host's ground, he may drop in to see how his pig is coming along.

Finally, it should be noted that hosts do not distribute to each other on these occasions, nor to their own patrikin; all the pork killed must pass outside the hosts' clan, or, more strictly, outside their residential group. The pig-killing is an essay in inter-clan relations: not only is it considered bad form to eat one's own pork, it is also, in a social sense, wasting it. Pork is not just protein diet, it is "social cement", and if a man eats only pork that is given to him, he will still eat the same amount of pork, but will, in addition, gain the extra-territorial relationships so valuable to himself and his clan. The hosts and their immediate families are permitted, however, to eat the head, while the intestines are customarily given to the woman who has reared the pig.

I have described the môk lusha, or small pig-killing, in some detail because it is, fundamentally, a very much simplified version of the fifth and last mode of pig-killing, the ink.

5. The ink, or "major ceremonial pig-killing"<sup>4</sup>, is distinguished from the lusha not only by the size of its

4. Ink also means "a taro-garden cycle" and "the common cold". I can imagine no connection linking these three meanings.

organization and the number of pigs killed, but also by the elaborate series of economic exchanges which accompany it. It consists of a series of ceremonial occasions occurring in prescribed sequence, culminating, after about 5 years of active preparation, in one great day when, in the space of about half an hour, from 500 to 1000 pigs are killed, and the pork distributed to several thousand people from as far as two days' walk away.

The ink is organized by an entire clan-cluster. Dating, or the measurement of any long period of time is very difficult in Mendi, but as far as can be estimated, each cluster gives an ink not oftener than every fifteen years; and from the building of the long-houses, which marks the group's initial commitment to the programme, to the final pig-killing, seems to be roughly about five years. The proposal is first instigated in the usual informal way. It is felt that the time is suitable, and, in the course of several months of unhurried, informal discussion, the site of the long-houses is decided. They are built close to the dance-ground of one of the host clans. They are usually erected on either side of the main track approaching the dance-ground, and two or three acres of bush, or if necessary, fallow garden, are cleared to accommodate them. The cleared area is about 50 yards wide, and may be anything from 250 to 400 yards long. The long-houses are about 15 feet wide and 7 feet high to the top of the thatch, but the walls are only 3 feet high. They vary in length from about 60 yards to well over 100 yards. (The longest I measured was 115 yards.) The interiors are segmented into rooms like the compartments of a box-carriage, varying in

length from 15 to 25 feet. Each room has an external door, but there are no internal doors, so that each compartment is quite separate from the others.

Having decided the site of the long-houses, the next step is to share out the responsibility for building them. Each prospective host selects a length of the long-house commensurate with the number of pigs he expects to be able to kill. The compartment of a "big man" may be 25 feet long, so that he agrees to be responsible for the materials and construction of 25 feet of the house. The size of his compartment (or compartments) will be a measure of his status, not only in the number of his pigs but also in the quantity of building material he can provide, and in the labour he can call on to assist him. Building materials can be supplied by the compartment owner himself, or bought by him from kin or twem-partners. They are carried to the site by his kin, whom he rewards by a feast of sweet-potato and bananas, called wem.<sup>5</sup> It is common for all but the biggest men to combine with partners in pledging themselves

5. Apart from prescribed stages of the ink preparation, wem-feasts are also given in the following circumstances:
- (a) by a house-owner for assistance in building his house.
  - (b) by a garden-owner for help in clearing his land.
  - (c) by hosts at dances, to visiting kin and twem-partners; each host gives his party privately in his own house-yard. The harvesting of taro and of komp (a form of spinach) are usually made the occasion for dances, and the taro and komp are served at the accompanying wem-feasts.
  - (d) at the pearl-shell or pig distributions of a death-compensation.
  - (e) by clans required to build government roads, as payment for their neighbours' assistance.



for a long-house compartment. There is no set pattern to these partnerships, but fathers with unmarried sons, and groups of brothers are frequent combinations. Apart from these, they are most often arranged on a basis of personal friendship. When each compartment owner has arranged for his building materials, had them carried to the site and organized his labour, the actual house-building begins. This involves a good deal of co-operation because, although each small labour group is responsible for only one or two compartments, the compartments themselves are all part of one integral structure, and the work is co-ordinated by a group of the "big men" of the cluster. There is, however, no obvious supervision; the Mendi are not accustomed to working under external direction, and as the basic structure of the long-houses is entirely traditional (they are, in effect, extended women's-houses) little supervision is necessary. The final operation in the building of a long-house (or of any other native house) is the thatching, and when this is completed, the long-houses are ready.

This stage marks the formal beginning of the ink and it is a sign that the community is now completely committed. To mark this occasion, a social ceremony called the ink ant shenk ("the ink-house thatching") is arranged. The ceremony may not be held until several months after the completion of the long-houses. About a month before the date fixed, word is sent out, even to the adjoining valleys, that the long-houses are ready, that there will be a big dance, and that the whole world is invited to admire the work

When the guests begin to arrive, the hosts start the ink tomp. This is a rhythmic, stamping march around the

dance-ground, four to six abreast. The dancers are only very slightly decorated: perhaps a little charcoal and oil, some yellow (not red) face paint and cassowary plumes. At this ceremony, the tomp is done by the hosts in silence. Certain groups of visitors, however, may also tomp with more elaborate decoration, marking the rhythm of their stamping with a chant. The significance of this is that the visitors are preparing an ink of their own which is further advanced than that of their hosts. It is customary for any cluster in the valley who are giving an ink to send a representative group to all friendly inter-clan gatherings of certain kinds. These groups go not only to any ink ceremonies given by other clusters, but also to such other inter-clan functions as drum-dances, death-compensations and to ceremonies marking the closing of a ghost-cult cycle. As each group's own ink preparations advance (or, as they say, their ink "ripens") so their men who go out to tomp decorate themselves with increasing elaboration. But each group dresses uniformly and the degrees of decoration are fairly well-defined. We shall return to this a little later. For the present, it will suffice to say that at the "ink-house thatching", the hosts should tomp in silence, wearing the minimum of dance-decoration, because their ink is only just beginning, and has not yet started to "ripen". But from now on, they will be entitled to tomp at inter-clan gatherings given by other groups. The "thatching" continues with another vegetable feast for all the non-resident helpers with the long-house building, and also for all the hosts' more important twem-partners; for the latter are the people on whose continued good-will the whole future success of the ink may depend. The proceedings end with a small secular dance.

The long-houses are fully occupied for one night only: the eve of the pig-killing, about 5 years after they are built. The occasional over-night visitor may use a room, and sometimes a compartment may be occupied by three or four young bachelors, but for most of the 5 years, the long-houses remain completely empty and unused, just waiting for that one night when they will accommodate the visitors who will come to witness the clan's day of triumph. Since, moreover, the cooking-ovens will be dug in two parallel rows between the rows of long-houses, the length of the latter will indicate the length of the ovens, and hence, of the number of pigs to be killed. So that the long-houses have almost no practical use, and serve as little more than a boast of the hosts' grandiose intentions.

The next ceremony occurs from one to three years later, and is concerned with the building of the poranda. The latter is a large ceremonial house 40 to 60 feet square and about 20 feet high, with low eaves and a gable at front and rear. Its distinguishing feature, however, is the double row of huge posts supporting the roof, and forming, as it were, a nave down the centre of the building. Each post is composed of a single tree-trunk 12 to 15 feet high and 3 feet or more in diameter. No available trees of this size grow on the floor of the valley, and it is more than likely that none is growing on the land of the hosts. Consequently, the system has been developed that these posts (called poranda pink) are supplied by friendly clans outside the host-cluster, who also assist in their erection. Among the hosts, a sub-clan or group of sub-clans accepts the responsibility for one post and makes all the necessary arrangements with the external group which will supply it. The number of posts is as many as the hosts can obtain, from



about six to twelve. They are dragged down, with great difficulty, from the timber-land at the top of the valley-wall, and it might take ten days to fell a suitable tree and drag it to the building site. The only direct reward given for this labour is another wem, or vegetable feast. There is, however, great prestige for the suppliers of a poranda-post, and their assistance will be reciprocated at some later date. The occasion is accompanied by more ceremonial stamping and another small dance.

A similar ceremony takes place when the building is completed. This is known as the pem shô, after a special triumphal chant with which the hosts (a little more decorated by this time) accompany their ritual stamping.

Some months later, the final poranda ceremony takes place. This is known as the "poranda possum killing", or the "ebera possum killing". The ebera are forked sticks, looking like old-fashioned hat-racks, which are used as scaffolding or ladders during the building of the house. The removal of these is a sign that the work is completely finished, and this stage in the ink progress is marked by a feast of possum and cassowary. The guests are again all those who have helped in any way with the construction of the building, and also the more important twem-partners of the hosts, who, it is hoped, will buy all their pork. The proceedings close, as before, with another dance. This particular ceremony may be repeated two or three times.

There is one more feature of the poranda that should be noted: sometimes, human images are carved on the great posts. Decorated with wigs made from human hair, and with cowrie eyes and teeth of Job's tears, they represent men of

the host-cluster (and more particularly, of the group responsible for the particular post on which the image is carved) who have been killed in past fights and who have not been compensated for in the proper way. These images are publicly displayed as a disgrace to the clans who have not fulfilled their obligations by compensating for allies killed while assisting them in battle. Another way of indicating the same thing is by extending a poranda-post above the thatch and carving it in the "cossack-hat" shape of a Mendi ceremonial wig. The result looks like a wooden chimney-pot projecting above the roof. In one of the later ceremonies the pearl-shell paid for the ink pork are displayed in the poranda, and this is the only use to which it is ever put. Apart from this, the building, even more than the long-houses, serves no practical purpose whatever. No ritual takes place there; it accommodates nobody; like the long-houses, it is merely a conspicuous monument to the ink hosts.

Now the ink-site is ready: two rows of long-houses lining a cleared space about 50 yards wide, providing an extended perspective culminating in the poranda at the end; and it remains thus for another two or three years.

The significance of this last group of ceremonies is that they represent purely arbitrary, but objectively measureable stages in the preparation of the ink; as though the hosts were saying: "You don't have to take our word for our progress; you can see it before your eyes".

After the completion of the site, the next stage is the ink pomba; and it is here that the full complexity of the series starts to become apparent. The pomba is a special kind of ceremonial parade: a quick shuffle, accompanied by a whooping cry: "oo ooo - ooh!" It amounts to a ceremonial

statement by the hosts that their ink is "ripening" nicely, the site is ready, their pigs are increasing and fattening, and their twem-partners are pouring in the shells for their pork.

During all the earlier preparations, the hosts have been doing the tomp stamp at other grounds and inter-clan gatherings. At first, as befitted people who were just beginning their ink, it was done in silence and with the minimum of personal decoration. Later, when their long-houses were built, their tomp was accompanied by a triumphal chant, and their decoration came to include red bird-of-paradise feathers. After the completion of their poranda, they appeared wearing ceremonial wigs decorated with plaques of lorriquet feathers supporting rosettes of white cockatoo feathers mounted on flexible cane rods, bodies blackened and oiled, and faces painted in red and yellow stripes. When their ink reaches the stage of pomba, however, they adopt full ceremonial regalia: the "cossack" wig, elaborate triple head-dress of feathers<sup>6</sup>, stone axes and decorated bows and arrows. This last dress, first worn at their own pomba, is the one they will wear to all external, formal, social functions until the killing of their pigs. As I have already mentioned, these functions will include not only other people's ink ceremonies, but also death-compensations, drum-dances and similar inter-group ceremonial occasions.

At the pomba, the parade, led by the hosts, is joined by their guests, also stamping in groups, the costume of each group denoting the stage to which their own ink has

6. See: Chapt. X, p. 249.



progressed: indeed, by looking at an ink parade, an experienced bystander can tell:

- I. which members of the host-clan intend to kill pigs,
- II. who are going to buy their pork,
- III. what other clusters have an ink in progress,
- IV. roughly how far advanced each of them is with its preparations.

All this one can tell from the parade at an ink pomba, and much of it one can tell from the parades at the earlier ceremonies.

One episode I witnessed connected with a long-house ceremony should be recorded. A party of messengers had come over from the adjoining Lai Valley to invite the Mendi people to their "thatching". The date was given for two weeks hence: we were to come on the Friday, dance on Saturday, and return home Sunday. For us, it was to be a purely social occasion, for we were neither giving an ink nor buying their pork. When we arrived late on Friday afternoon, after climbing over a 1500 feet pass, we were very cross to find that they had changed the date; the dance had been held that day, and the whole affair was on the point of folding up. Several members of our party, who were all quite young, expressed their displeasure by running amok through a couple of their hosts' gardens, which they dug up, tossing all the sweet-potato into the scrub. The next day, still annoyed, they went on the rampage, and wrecked two more gardens, hacking down bananas and sugar-cane. The two garden-owners raised voluble protest and the Mendi gang manhandled them, stealing their axes, bows and arrows, feathers, and even their tail-leaves.<sup>7</sup> The local people

7. The bunch of cordyline leaves inserted under the back of a man's bark belt to cover his buttocks.

protested about this outrage but took no physical action because (a) they were the hosts, and as such were expected to put up with some nonsense of this kind, which I am told is of quite frequent occurrence on these occasions, and (b) the ink, with its associated festivities, is supposed to be a time of special friendship, when people just do not fight. This practice of wrecking hosts' gardens can occur at all dances (except those connected with death-compensations or the secret ghost cult) and it is expected to be taken calmly and philosophically by the hosts. It was stated that the reason for the second and more serious outbreak was the intolerant attitude of the garden-owners who declined to enter into the spirit of the thing.<sup>8</sup> I was given several accounts of similar outbreaks. If one can generalize from such scanty data, the practice would seem to be (a) a recognized outlet for the high spirits normally associated with a dance: this episode was carried out almost entirely by the youngsters of the party, and recounted later as a tremendous "rag"; or (b) a ritualized expression of latent hostility between "foreign" groups; or (c) a response to the challenge implicit in the hosts' invitation: "Come and see the work we've done, aren't we marvellous?"... "Well, let's see how Big you really are!". I think it is probable that all three elements entered into it.

8. I cannot deny the possibility that one reason the affair did not develop into a major brawl was my own presence with the party (although I had left before the scene took place) and the fact that the Mendi are in the habit, when they travel to adjoining valleys, of claiming to be the "kiap's (European administrator's) sons", and to be under his protection.

Certain other features of the pomba ceremony might be mentioned in passing. Besides the pomba shuffle and the tomp stamp, the parade includes a third kind of movement called yashma. This is a shuffle similar to the pomba but accompanied by a number of well-known chants of a hostile and boastful character; e.g.:

"The wind has spread our fire onto your land, and nothing is left growing there but kunai-grass."

or "When we kill our pigs, you can stand and watch the smoke."

or "We've left all our pearl-shell at home; we didn't bother to bring them here."

and so on.

The point is that the yashma is done only by visitors, and only by those whose clans were formerly at war with the host-clans. This ritualized persistence of earlier hostility is quite common in Mendi; it is a long time before true friendship follows peace.

Apart from the yashma and other types of formalized hostility, ceremonial boasting with contemptuous challenges to do better are an important feature of the ink pomba. The formal parade ends with a march through the poranda-house, and as each group reaches the entrance, its leader strikes the door-post with his axe and makes a brief, linguistically stylized<sup>9</sup> speech; e.g.:

"We have all built this great house; where once we were at war, let us now sit in true peace."

or "On this ground we have built a great house; with our own digging sticks we have cleared it; we challenge you all to do better than this!"

9. On ceremonial occasions, the Mendi use a kind of "verbal shorthand", quite different from their ordinary vernacular.



After this, the hosts distribute to their twem-partners food, mainly sugar-cane, from high platforms erected for the occasion. The function then continues as a secular dance.

The ink pomba, then, may be summed up briefly as an occasion of publicity to mark the progress of the ink, accompanied by triumphant boasting on the part of the hosts, together with displays of their wealth and generosity and of their importance in Mendi society as fighting allies and trading partners. The hosts' relations with neighbouring groups are also underlined, and the undercurrents of latent hostility which accompany most inter-clan relations are allowed ceremonial expression. At the pomba, the date of the final pig-killing is announced for the first time.

In the next few months, the pearl-shell which have been promised start to come in. Then the hosts hold a ceremony called the "pearl-shell distribution" in which all the shells which they have been paid for their pork are lined up on display in and around the poranda; whence they are publicly handed out in settlement of all the debts each host has contracted, directly or indirectly, in connection with the ink.

Before attempting to describe these extremely complex transactions, I must explain that, in describing the ink (as I have done hitherto) as an exchange of pigs for pearl-shell, I have been stripping it down to the barest essentials. Although the ink is, indeed, basically that, its real importance lies in the vast network of minor exchanges that have been taking place between the hosts and their twem-partners.

When a clan-cluster decides to hold an ink, their affairs are quite prosperous and their pigs are breeding

well. But they do not, at that time, have anything like the number of pigs they will need for the occasion, nor is there much prospect that they will, without outside assistance, have nearly enough when the time comes to kill. Consequently, they must not only attend to the rearing of their own pigs, but they must so arrange their external transactions that their debts are repayable in pigs, and will mature at the same time as their ink. Furthermore, during the period of preparation, they will have all the normal economic obligations of a Mendi clan: marriage- and mortuary-payments in which they are either donors or recipients, participation in other people's inks, and so on. In other words, their normal economic life continues over the five year ink period, but is intensified, planned and directed wherever possible, in one specific direction: to obtain as many pigs as possible by a certain date. This increased and specialized activity is passed on to the hosts' twem-partners who are forced to adjust their own exchange relations so that they can produce the appropriate number of pearl-shell on the date of the pig-killing. Thus, a "big man", who would normally have in his houses about 12 or 15 pigs, must so arrange his affairs that, by the time of the killing, he has 24 or more. He must have at least this number if he is to maintain status; and one of the main features of the ink is that everybody's status is on public show. For assistance in an ink, a man looks, as we have seen, to his twem-partners; but this is principally for the buying of his pork. For augmenting his supply of pigs, however, most help is found among his affines, and between him and them there is a series of clearly-defined, mutual obligations connected specifically with the ink.

The display-ceremony is known as ink-nda momak tunawa ("the final ink pearl-shell distribution"), and the shells themselves which have been paid in by the prospective pork-buyers are the mòk lu ngibi ("the future pig-killing payment").

The principal payments made at such a distribution are:

I. When a man first embarks on an ink, he calls on each of his brothers-in-law for a pearl-shell, the mòk meshal arolt ("that which is put on the pig's back") which he agrees to repay with principal (shon) plus 100% interest (paróli) at the ink pearl-shell distribution. This is identical in character with a twem, and indeed, in the normal course of events, his brother-in-law will also be his twem-partners. But this transaction is regarded as separate from any other deals in progress between a man and his wife's brothers (or sisters' husbands) and these affines are obliged, if they possibly can, to contribute in order that their brother-in-law's ink may be a success; for his prestige is indirectly theirs. A man may make similar arrangements with his various twem-partners, but only this special, obligatory deal with his brothers-in-law is called the mòk meshal arolt; the others are just twem.<sup>10</sup>

II. A straight sale of a live pig is called mòk ósha, but if an ink host is given a pig by his brother-in-law, on the understanding that he will rear it and later kill it at his ink, the transaction is regarded as a loan, for which the brother-in-law will be compensated at the pearl-shell

10. See: Chapt.VIII (Part III), p. 183.



distribution by a payment known as mók yari. A pig obtained in this way is known as a mók we m'arane ("a farmed-out pig"); the particular transaction is restricted to brothers-in-law in an ink, and the price of the pig is less than it would be if bought outright from a stranger.

III. An ink host is starting to amass more pigs than he or his wives can manage; so he farms them out to his married sisters, his wives' sisters, his wives' brothers' wives or his twem-partners' wives. These pigs too are known as mók we m'arane, and the women who look after them will receive pearl-shell at the distribution in return for feeding and rearing the pigs. Their payment is also called mók yari ("the payment for the pig's leg-rope").

IV. The last prescribed payment at the pearl-shell distribution is the nunk-naik shenk. This is paid by the host to his own wife as a reward for any children she has borne him. It should be noted that this is not a "child-endowment" in the sense of being a fixed payment for each child. The amount is determined by the wealth of the husband with a minimum of one shell per child, but it may be two or more, and it may be paid several times, on several different occasions, for the same child. The "child payment", therefore, amounts to a public declaration, in the presence of her kin, that the woman has been a good wife and that her husband not only appreciates the fact, but is important and rich enough to demonstrate his appreciation in a worthy manner. If these payments are not made, the omission can be, and often is, a cause for divorce.

All payments made to women, whether mók yari for pig-minding, or naik shenk for child-birth, are, although

formally accepted by the woman herself, handed over to her husband or brothers, so that they represent formal social relations, not between a man and his wife, but between a man and his affines.

To any payments made at this distribution, a rich man may add a bonus. This is a no pa-â ("that which is eaten up") and means that he is so generous that he is including it as an extra, over and above his minimal obligation, and that no additional debt will be created by it.

In addition to these formal and obligatory payments, the ink pearl-shell distribution includes a general debt-settling: a mess of minor payments, some of which are only remotely connected with the ink itself. Any shells left over are used to buy yet more pigs.

To complicate the scene still further, the shells, from the moment they are received, go into immediate circulation among the spectators, and any single shell presented by the hosts may change hands a number of times before it finally leaves the dance-ground. It is quite impossible for an observer to follow even a substantial part of these secondary transactions.

By now, the ink series is nearing its end. There is still to come the môk<sup>ya</sup> pi or "pig line-up", in which all the pigs to be killed are tied up to rows of stakes and loudly and ceremoniously counted by one of the leading hosts. Besides being a public boast, this has much the same purpose as the line-up in the lusha: it provides an opportunity for prospective recipients to inspect, on the hoof, the pork they will eventually be given.

The last stage is the killing itself. Fenced yards

are built in front of each host's long-house compartment, fire-wood, oven-stones, bracken, banana-leaves, bamboo pots and all the paraphernalia for cooking are collected the day before. The pigs are brought to the long-houses and the visitors begin to arrive. The killing starts at dawn, and the same perfunctory ghost-offerings are made as in the lusha. The cooking and distribution are usually finished by mid-afternoon. The pork is carried home, where most will be eaten, but some will be redistributed in settlement of other debts. The actual killing, although the most spectacular of the ink ceremonies, is also the simplest and most straight-forward; there is little more to be said about it.

The long-houses and poranda are left to fall down, with people helping themselves to their materials as they want them.

### Summary:

The ink, the largest and most complex inter-group gathering, summarizes in various ways the Mendi pattern of inter-group relations: the compulsory exchanges symbolizing relations with affines and maternal kin, the roles of potential fighting allies and of ex-enemies, and so on. But all this, while describing certain characteristics of the institution, is hardly an "explanation" of it. It gives little indication of the nature of the driving force that leads people to embark on this kind of activity. After all, the social relationships which receive ceremonial expression



in the ink are emphasized in many other fields also, while the twem exchanges are going on all the time, and are just as necessary to certain other activities as they are to the ink.

I would suggest two possible explanations for the unique importance of the ink in Mendi socio-economic life.

First, an historical one. I was told that in the old days, before the white man came, pearl-shell were much scarcer than they are now. They came in from the north-east, from the direction of Mt. Hagen, and the ink was their specific mode of entry. It was, therefore, a kind of exchange market through which the highly-prized and non-indigenous pearl-shell were introduced into the economy in return for pigs. The Mt. Hagen area is the undisputed centre of the Highland pearl-shell complex and the people there have attained a degree of refined connoisseurship that the Mendi have not even begun to approach. Long-houses have been reported from the Kaugel Valley (by Leahy) and from the Kandep (to the north of Mendi) by Meggitt. They also occur to the west in the Lai and Wagi Valleys. If we accept that the ink was introduced as a trade "clearing-house" for a particular commodity which was as valuable as it was scarce, then being able to conduct such a "market" on one's territory was obviously a most desirable objective, and one well worth devoting a great deal of time and trouble to achieve.

The second explanation I suggest is an economic and political one. Having accepted the ink as a desirable institution, the people would have found that its presence gave rise to what may be described as "eddies of economic turbulence" in the area that was involved with it. I have tried to give some idea of the intense economic activity

inspired by an ink and of the vast network of minor exchanges directly or indirectly associated with it. In this context, the ink represents a "shot in the arm" to the whole Mendi economy, it causes an increased and accelerated circulation of exchange-goods, and hence provides an occasion for inter-clan contacts which otherwise might not have been possible. Even though the ink is no longer strictly necessary as a source of pearl-shell, this latter reason alone, together with the complex of ceremonial and emotional excitement that has grown up around it, is enough to justify its existence in Mendi eyes, and will probably be enough to keep it going for some time to come.



**MINOR PIG-KILLING.**

- (a) The pork distribution.**
- (b) Visitors discussing future exchanges.**



CHAPTER X:-WARFARE, & THE PSEUDO-EXCHANGES OF TRUCE.

Most of those aspects of Mendi warfare connected with the general topic of this paper have been discussed elsewhere in the contexts to which they are relevant. The purpose of this chapter is the description of certain economic exchanges and pseudo-exchanges to which warfare gives rise. On the subject of warfare, a brief general description should suffice.

The Government ban on warfare: One of the first actions of the Australian Administration on establishing its influence in a new area is the declaration of a total ban on all fighting. Such a ban was not imposed in Mendi until 1950, and up to that time fighting seems to have been almost chronic. Fighting, at one place or another, was constant: those not engaged in their own fights were assisting others in theirs. This is the general picture given by informants, and the official reports from government patrols in uncontrolled areas seem to confirm it. Every clan had its enemies with whom hostile relations had existed, in many cases, from beyond living memory.

By the time I arrived in 1954, open hostilities had ceased for several miles around the government station,

although occasional skirmishes still broke out beyond the controlled zone. As the district was considered unsafe, the movements of Europeans were restricted to the area in which fighting had been stopped. Consequently, I was never able to witness an armed fight at first hand nor had I any personal contact with a community where hostilities were still in progress. I must rely, therefore, on the memories of informants who had themselves taken part in many fights before the coming of the white man. By the time of my last visit in 1958, government control of fighting had been more or less established over the whole of the Mendi Valley, over a large section of the adjoining Lei Valley to the west, and was extending into the Nembu Valley beyond.

"Control", of course, does not mean that fighting has ceased completely: fights still occasionally occur quite near the Administration Headquarters; but today they are rare, and disputes which would formerly have led to inter-group hostilities are being brought with increasing frequency to the government court for arbitration. Although most of the fighting itself has ceased, it could not be expected that the traditional hostilities underlying it would be removed overnight: "Even if we no longer fight them, they are still our enemies and their minds are bad". Active hostility is now confined mainly to sorcery.

It must not be thought, however, that when fighting was prevalent, the people lived in a constant state of fear and insecurity. To some extent, this may have been true for the women, but the men derived the greatest excitement and pleasure from fighting, and its abolition deprived them of what was, in effect, their only physical sport: "Oh my brother, my brother! Every day, every night!

We never slept at night: we'd be sitting in our house when someone would say: 'Let's go and raid the Tungenjup!' So we'd grab our shields and our bows and arrows and off we'd go. Now we just sleep at night."

There is reason to accept the men's assertions that fighting was constant and that casualties were high. Of the many genealogies I collected, all, without exception, included one or more deaths directly or indirectly attributed to warfare. I can recall no Mendi of my acquaintance who had not lost a father, brother, or child in this way. It would seem, therefore, that warfare was an important factor in limiting the population. This prevented any shortage of land,<sup>1</sup> which in turn had its effect on the social structure. In the discussion of clan-organization (Chapt.II) it was shown that, although the accepted norm is agnatic affiliation with patrilocal residence, nevertheless, the system is extremely flexible so that both affiliation and residence can easily be changed. It was also shown that the main cause of such deviation from the structural norm was warfare. This leads to the further suggestion that residential and affiliative mobility were dependent upon a plentiful supply of land which warfare, by limiting the population, made available. This argument will be further developed in the course of this chapter.

1. By the official census figures in 1958, the population of the Mendi Valley was 8398 over an area of 150 square miles: or 56 persons to the square mile. Informants said that, because of warfare, the population had fallen within living memory. There is no way of knowing if this is true, but the Mendi population density is lower than in most other Highland areas.



Causes of warfare: In a discussion of this kind, it is usually desirable to attempt some tabulation of disputes leading to inter-group warfare in terms of their frequency of occurrence. Something of the sort would be possible in Mendi, but would, I feel, be more misleading than helpful. Although I have used, and shall continue to use, the term "warfare", it must be understood to mean not the closed sequence of dispute...fight...peace, but, more often, a state of traditional hostility between groups who are hereditary enemies. In this respect, it resembles feud, but it also involves formal battles with all the usual political alliances which are associated with "warfare". It thus becomes pointless to attempt an analysis of "causes of war": any trivial dispute can lead to war if the parties belong to groups who are traditional enemies, just as a serious quarrel can be smoothed over if it occurs among friends. There is no constituted authority whatever for the settlement of inter-group disputes, and the mechanisms of social and political control operate at that level only in terms of the previous relations existing between the groups concerned. An intra-clan dispute is settled always (and an intra-cluster dispute usually) without recourse to violence; but the same dispute between groups with no tradition of political alliance is a hair-triggered affair that can easily blow up into open warfare. When asked how any two groups became enemies, the Mendi are explicit enough: "They" (it is always "they") "did so and so, so naturally we did such and such, and then they did....", and so on. It is obvious that such statements are rationalizations, and further questioning always revealed that the parties had been recognized enemies for an indefinite time before the alleged casus belli took place.

To give 3 examples, as related to me:

I. Cluster A was fighting Cluster B, defeated them and laid waste their land. B was dispersed, and its various members took refuge in the usual way with their kin and affines in other territories. One man of B took refuge with Cluster C who had not been in the fight, and a raiding-party from A came over and fired at him, but missed. A group of young men from C formed a raiding-party to avenge this impertinence and one of them killed a man from A. War was declared between A and C, which lasted many years. Both parties called in allies and finally A drove C from their land, burned their houses and laid waste their gardens. C dispersed, and its fragments took refuge with their kin and affines; they did not return to their former territory for another ten years when a formal truce was negotiated.

II. A man of Clan X married a woman of Clan Y. She went home soon afterwards, and the deserted husband claimed a refund of his bride-price, which was refused. He then killed a man of Y. Y retaliated and war was declared. Both sides called in allies, and, if the Administration had not arrived the fighting would still be going on. The last episode was in 1958, when X accused Y of killing two of their men by sorcery, Y proudly admitted it, both groups came to blows and most of their men were put in jail.

III. Cluster P claimed that Cluster Q had killed one of their men by sorcery. They called in allies to help them retaliate and drove Q from their land. Q are still dispersed and P's allies are gardening their land. This was an unusual affair in that Q was a small, weak group between two strong neighbours who obviously wanted the land which they claimed had formerly been taken from them by Q. The true facts of the case were impossible to disentangle, and

the history of hostile relations went back indefinitely.

Other ostensible causes of fighting are:

1. garden boundaries
2. ownership of pandanus trees, pigs, edible fungus, etc.
3. theft of pigs, food from gardens, timber, etc.
4. rape
5. adultery
6. rivalry over a woman's affections
7. default in some financial obligation (e.g. non-payment of death compensation)
8. allegations of sorcery
9. miscellaneous personal quarrels.

The important point about all these "causes of war" has already been stated: any minor squabble between individuals can develop into large-scale inter-group warfare. Whether or not it does so depends on the social range between the disputants. All the above offences can be settled peacefully by payment of an appropriate compensation, and if the disputants belong to the same kin or political group (sub-clan, clan, cluster or fight-alliance) then there is every probability of the affair being settled in this way. The narrower the social range, that is, the lower the segmentation level of the smallest common group to which both parties belong, then the more likelihood there is of an amicable settlement. Mortal disputes within a cluster are rare, within a clan almost unknown, and within a sub-clan inconceivable.

If, on the other hand, such disputes occur between parties whose groups have no political connection at all,



they are much more difficult to resolve; and if the groups concerned have already a long background of mutual hostility, then any of the excuses listed above can cause such latent hostility to become overt and active.

In most wars, however, no original cause can be remembered, and the majority of the participants take part because they have political commitments obliging them to assist their allies. Neutrals are brought into the affair if a refugee is attacked while sheltering on their territory and hence under their protection, as in the example given above.

Briefly then, any understanding of the causes of war must look to the background of inter-group political relations rather than to specific wrongs, grievances or incidents.

Types of fighting: The fighting itself took two forms: occasional formal battles which do not seem to have been very frequent, and a guerrilla warfare which went on constantly with raids, ambushes, skirmishes and assassinations. Favourite modes of attack were: waylaying members of the enemy along the tracks leading to their territory; or sneaking up to an enemy men's-house at night and firing an arrow or two into the group assembled around the fire; or setting fire to a women's-house and picking off the women and children from cover as they crawled through the two-foot doorway.

There was never any compunction about the killing of women and children, for, it was argued, "women supply the enemy clan with children, and children grow up to be fighting-men who will one day attack us". Raids were often made

on women and children drawing water or working in isolated gardens. It was usual, therefore, for an armed kinsman to accompany them as body-guard during any task to be performed in an isolated part of the territory. Because most of the gardens are fairly secluded and scattered throughout the cluster territory, a good deal of a man's time was formerly spent standing armed watch over his women-folk. This is no longer necessary, and a number of men now find that time hangs heavy on their hands.<sup>2</sup> I have been told, but have no way of checking, that the increase in male leisure has led to an intensification of economic exchanges, both individual and inter-group.

Open skirmishes between small parties of warring factions did occur but were usually avoided. Although it was exciting sport, the real object of a raid was to kill as many of the enemy as possible, so that clearly, it would have been foolish to take any unnecessary risks.

The form of fighting referred to above as a "formal battle" was sometimes a large, daylight raiding-party which had been preceded for a day or two by the calling of challenges and insults. It contained no surprise element as did the other forms of fighting, and both sides were fully prepared. The defendants on such occasions usually sent their women, children and pigs to safety with other kin or affines. Allies were notified and began to gather on the defendants' territory. The attackers arrived with their allies. They were met by showers of arrows from the defendants. Formerly, the entrances to all Mendi dance-

2. The government has done something to relieve this situation by the institution of compulsory road-work, but the Mendi do not regard this as a satisfactory substitute.

grounds were fortified with heavy wooden palisades which formed a last wall of defence, and the attackers endeavoured to fight their way past them and to capture the dance-ground itself. The defendants met them on the borders of their territory, and the fighting, in a series of hand-to-hand skirmishes, began there. If the defendants were beaten back, they finally took refuge on the dance-ground behind their palisade. If they could hold out there till dark, they usually had some respite, for battles of this kind were fought only by daylight and the enemy, if not immediately successful, withdrew until the next day when the whole performance was repeated. The fighting continued in this way for three or four days, and if, at the end of that time, it appeared that no final decision would be reached, the attackers withdrew and the "cold war" was resumed.

A variation of this form of battle occurred when both sides agreed to meet on a recognized battle-ground (shont omap). Most commonly, the battle-ground was a stretch of land lying between two mutually hostile clusters who disputed its ownership. This land would be occupied first by one, and then by the other of the warring groups. Hence, it was also known as webi shu ("captured land"). In this kind of war, the land was the ostensible cause of hostilities, while feud-vengeance was the factor which kept them alive. The land itself was not of vital importance as each side usually had more than enough for its own subsistence. But the side which was not in possession at any time considered itself "one-down", and this was a position that had to be redressed. After several generations of this, it was totally impossible to determine which cluster were the



original owners, and so the struggle went on, with mutual enmity reinforced by each successive death.<sup>3</sup>

For obvious reasons, battle-grounds could not safely be gardened while their ownership was still under dispute, and they therefore remained as wasteland; usually exposed areas covered in kunei-grass.

The battles which took place on these sites were essentially the same as the "daylight raids" described above. A fight on a battle-ground was a fight on land which was itself the alleged object of the dispute, and since the parties to the dispute nearly always lived on either side of the land in question, this was the obvious (indeed, the only possible) place to do battle.

The Mendi have, as has been indicated, a completely acephalous society in the sense that there are no permanent, prescribed offices of leadership.<sup>4</sup> There are, therefore, no constitutional fight-leaders. There were, certainly, skilful and successful warriors whose advice on martial

3. In disputes of this kind, the Administration took the only course possible and froze all land-rights from 1950, so that each cluster was deemed the legal owner of the land it actually occupied at that date. This has not, however, stopped the disputes which were still (in 1958) being brought to the Administration court.

4. The only exception is that of the ritual leaders in one of the ghost-cults. This is a prescribed office, but is not permanent. It will be discussed in another chapter.

matters was regularly listened to; but they had no power to direct a unified campaign nor to enforce any orders they might give. Military tactics, such as they were, were the subject of group discussion in which every male capable of bearing arms had equal say. The advice of experienced men was heard with respect and often followed, but no one was obliged to follow it, and even in the height of battle groups of friends and close kinsmen tended to pursue their own plans. There was, of course, prestige in bravery, and men tried to display it ostentatiously without, however, taking any undue risks. Ambitious youths, even as young as 10 or 12 years, would try to infiltrate the enemy ranks and kill one of their important men from behind, with their small, but still lethal, bows and arrows.

It might well be wondered how, with such complete lack of co-ordination, any military efficiency was achieved at all. From all accounts, the answer seems to be that it wasn't. The Mendi are an intensely individualistic people, unaccustomed and resistant to any kind of external discipline or authority. As fighters, they appear to have been cautious, cunning, ruthless and unorganized.<sup>5</sup>

Weapons: In the minor skirmishes and raids, the

5. The foregoing account of a Mendi battle is a synthesis of informants' recollections, eye-witness accounts from Patrol Reports, and the observation of a mock-battle staged by two friendly clans for my benefit.

weapons used were: bows and arrows<sup>6</sup>, tomahawks, and knives, while small, decorated shields (uláyaborr) were carried. In the larger battles on open ground, the same weapons were used, with the addition of 8-foot spears tipped with human femur. Some bowmen carried the larger decorated shields (worrumbi) while spearmen carried the biggest and heaviest shields of all (shômô).<sup>7</sup>

Fight-magic & sorcery: When fighting-arrows are made, they are bespelled by the owner. No ghost or spirit agency is involved. The spell itself is the operative power and works automatically to guide the arrow to its mark. Such spells are the property of individual families, are passed from father to son, and normally are not paid for. A man without spells of his own, or one who feels that another's spells may be more efficacious, can buy them for a small abult (the general term for a "ritual payment") consisting of one minor item. The fact that in such circumstances protective magic must be paid for might seem mercenary when one realizes that the survival of the group depends on the survival of its members. But it must be remembered that in Mendi, prestations are relationships and relationships involve prestations; every favour or act outside the normal routine must be balanced by some counter-favour: the action has no value and the magic would be

6. Bamboo shafts, unfletched, with tips of fire-hardened wood, human tibia or, more rarely, cassowary bone.

7. See: D.J. Ryan, "Some Decorated Fighting Shields from the Mendi Valley, Papua." (Mankind: Vol.5, no.6, 1958).



useless if not paid for.<sup>8</sup>

The arrow-magic just described is not taken very seriously, and to some extent is thought of by the people themselves as a "morale-booster". More serious forms of war-magic are the two types of sorcery known as tôm and huld-temô.<sup>9</sup> Both sorcery techniques can be used for private grudges, but are also used in warfare; the sorcery is directed against important men among the enemy, and can thus be described as a "war-weapon". (When operating in this way, the sorcerer is engaged by the group as a whole, and his fee is paid by general contribution.)

War alliances: Every cluster enters into relations of political alliance with certain of its neighbours. (The details of these arrangements were discussed in Chapter VIII.) It will be recalled that the two opposed groups forming the core of a fight are known as the "fight-bases", and each fight-base calls in its own allies for formal battles but not for small raids.

8. An extreme example of this type of thinking was observed in the mission first-aid post. A man with a bad leg-ulcer appeared and said, "What will you give me if I let you bandage my sore?". The sister-in-charge understandably said, "I'll give you nothing!" The man replied, "Then I'll take my sore away." And he did. When questioned later, the people explained that this was quite reasonable: "The mission asks us to let them bandage our sores; they are asking us a favour, and favours should be paid for."

9. See: Chapt. XI (Part II), p. 288.

The death of an ally can bring in more of his kinsmen who had not previously been concerned with the fight, and in this way, a kind of "chain-reaction" takes place and the fighting embraces many more than the two originally hostile groups.

Conflict of loyalties: Enemies do not inter-marry. The elaborate and protracted exchanges on both group and individual levels which takes place between the kin of bride and groom would not be possible between groups which were at war. Ceremonial exchanges of all kinds are affirmations of friendly alliance: they can take place only between friends, and all friends must engage in them. Affines are intrinsically friends, and this relationship is supported not only by the payment of bride-price, but also (as we saw in the discussion on "Marriage") by a constant series of personal twem exchanges between individuals of the two affinal groups. A break in the payments means a break in the relationship, and this often terminates the marriage. Clearly, no such persisting economic relationship could exist between enemy groups because, apart from contradicting the whole spirit of ceremonial exchange, it would be impossible to maintain in physical terms alone. As one informant said, "You can't make twem with a man in the daytime when your brother is trying to kill him at night.". Thus, while the relations of two clusters are openly hostile, no marriages are, or can be, arranged between them.

It does happen, however, that fights break out between affinal groups, and this places the wives of such marriages in an awkward position. When the two affinal groups are

themselves the fight-base (that is, the original parties to the dispute) any marriages between them break up, and the women return to their patrikin. If they elected to stay with their husbands, it would mean severing all ties with their own kin and committing themselves for ever after to the protection of their husband's kin. Mendi women are rarely, if ever, willing to do this.

A commoner conflict occurs when two affinal groups who are not members of either fight-base find themselves opposed, as it were, on the perimeter of the fight. That is, each group is summoned as the ally of each of the respective fight-bases. In this case, there is generally some kind of compromise. Groups that are on amicable terms with each other but which are politically obliged to assist opposed allies can arrange to avoid each other in the course of the fight. In such circumstances, affines do not shoot at each other. If, of course, the marriage linking them breaks up, this dissolves the affinal relationship and the friendship it implies, and hence removes the need for restraint.

This convention of avoidance applies even more strongly when a man finds himself opposed to his mother's kin. If wife's kin and mother's kin are the respective fight-bases, he does not fight at all.

In every fight, there are regular political alliances organized on a group basis, in which certain clusters can expect assistance from certain other clusters. Moreover, each side will be joined by more distant allies who come in on an individual rather than a group basis. These allies, generally affines who are "distant" both geographically and



in degree of kinship, come for the sport rather than through any social or political obligation. As participation in the battle is entirely a matter of individual choice, it often happens that members of the same clan or sub-clan fight on opposite sides. They set out together in the morning, separate at the battle-field and return home together in the evening. Even half-brothers (sons of the same father but different mothers) may fight on different sides when the groups of their respective mothers are opposed. In such cases, of course, avoidance is specially careful.

In warfare, therefore, there are to be distinguished three kinds of participant: members of the fight-base who are fighting for survival; their regular allies who are fulfilling specific political obligations; and those relatives of either fight-base or allies, who assist without real obligation, merely for the fun of it, but who, in doing so implicitly acknowledge individual ties of kinship or affinity. The analysis of mortuary payments showed how these several categories of military assistance are acknowledged and preserved by means of specific forms of ceremonial exchange.

No economic exchanges can take place between enemies. We have already seen that this is true of marriage and mortuary payments. These inter-group exchanges ultimately depend on twem transactions between individuals; and these, too, cannot be undertaken by enemies. The people themselves state this explicitly when they define the criteria distinguishing peace from war: "People are friends again when they start to make twem and marry each other.". But,

before this stage is reached, certain interim ceremonies must be performed.

The end of war: A war can either last indefinitely as a period of general hostility or end decisively with the rout and dispersal of one of the fight-bases. In the latter case, the defeated party takes refuge (usually in family groups, but sometimes in whole sub-clans) with various of its kin or affines. As defeat is always a possibility for every warring clan cluster, its individual members have each arranged their potential refuges long before. The people to whom one can apply for refuge are those with whom one has kept up exchange relationships, which are frequently contracted with just such an end in view.

When a cluster is dispersed, its enemies may or may not occupy its land. Usually they did not do so because, not only was arable land plentiful, but it was also customary for victors to undertake a "scorched-earth" policy after a decisive battle, making the vacated land uninhabitable for some time to come. If the victors did occupy the land, the defeated cluster's chances of regaining it were slight. The vacated land might even be settled by one of the dispossessed group's former allies or by a neutral neighbour. In the latter case, the defeated cluster might reach an agreement with the usurpers and be permitted to return. Cases of this kind (usually of baffling complexity) formed the majority of the land-disputes brought to the government court. Before the arrival of the Administration, there appears to have been no body of law or recognized principles which could be applied to

their resolution. If the defeated cluster was not able to recover its land by force, which, considering its complete dispersal, was most unlikely, or if it could not reach an amicable agreement with the land's new occupants, then its members remained permanently as accretive segments of their hosts' clusters or were absorbed entirely by the hosts.

The reoccupation of their land by a refugee group sometimes involved a payment either to the interim occupants, or to the refugees' former enemies if formal peace had been made in the meantime. The size and form of such payments (or, indeed, whether they were paid at all) depended solely on the arrangements made between the parties.

It might be pertinent to give an example of the kind of settlement involved in such a case. Clan A made war on Clan X. This brought in their cluster-clans B and Y respectively. The winners were Cluster X-Y. Clan A was driven from its land, but Clan B could not be evicted because it lived on the heights in an impregnable position. Some members of Clan A fled to affines in Clan B, within the cluster, while the rest went to affines elsewhere. Clan A's land remained unoccupied for about 10 years. Towards the end of this period, the members of Clan A who had taken refuge with Clan B resumed friendly relations with Clan X and began to filter back onto their former land. The other members of Clan A, who had taken refuge elsewhere, were at first excluded, but later established amicable relations with Clan X, whom they finally persuaded to allow their return. At this point, a dispute



arose over the pandanus-trees<sup>10</sup> which clan A claimed to have planted on the land. They said that because Clan X had eaten the nuts, they should in return allow A to re-occupy their land. Clan B then entered the argument and said that, because many of the pandanus had been planted by those members of A who were B's affines and yet more had been planted by actual members of B, therefore B and its co-resident affines owned most of the trees and the remainder of Clan A had no claim to return. It was finally decided to allow Clan A to return in its entirety on payment of a token fee to those members of A who were also affines of, or residing with, B, on condition that B retained its rights in the pandanus it had planted there. Clan A and Clan B thereupon resumed their original relationship as a cluster.

I have described this case in some detail because it is typical of a number recorded and indicates clearly the circumstantial nature of this kind of agreement. It also throws some incidental light on the effects of war on the structure of clusters and on the relationship of their component segments.

Truce-ceremonies: Peace can be made between warring groups in several ways. If the fighting has been of short

10. The nuts of the pandanus (*pandanaciae pandanus*) are a highly-prized delicacy. The ownership of the trees is vested in the man who planted them and in his heirs, and rights in the trees are recognized as being quite distinct from rights in the land on which they stand.

duration and for a specific grievance, or if the parties had originally been, if not formal allies, at least on moderately friendly terms, then peace is made by mutual agreement and with no particular ritual. Truce is merely declared, and the parties resume the twem and other personal relations which they had before. The term used is showa ("to make peace"), and fights within the cluster or among political allies are normally settled simply thus.

If, however, hostilities have been long standing, long enough, that is, for all friendly relations between the parties to have been completely severed, then there follows a long series of ceremonial "pseudo-exchanges" called ma-shogenja or ma-kirr-'enol;<sup>11</sup> for reasons which will become clear, they will henceforth be referred to as "peace-offerings". Peace-offerings are made in two distinct situations and, although their form is similar in both cases, their significance is somewhat different. They are made (1) between discrete political groups which have fought each other for a long time, and (2) between disputing segments of the same political group as a substitute

11. shogenja } "dry", "itchy".  
kirr }
- shogenja pi } "to scratch", "to tickle".  
kirr pi }
- shogenja ko } "to laugh".  
kirr ko }
- ma-shogenja ko } "to ridicule" (hence, in this  
ma-kirr ko } context: "to compete publicly  
for prestige").
- ma-kirr-'enol: "to make people laugh".

for fighting. These two situations are to be considered separately.

(1) As with the exchanges for death-compensation, peace-offerings between enemies are of prolonged duration, lasting several years. I could not, therefore, observe a complete series or compare the ideal pattern with actual practice. The few episodes in the series which I did observe, however, are fully consistent with informants' descriptions.

Peace-offerings are preceded by the calling of a truce, when open hostilities cease. Two groups which have fought bitterly for, possibly, several generations do not, however, become friends overnight. When truce is declared, both sides set about the preliminaries for compensating the deaths among their allies. When the compensations reach the stage of killing pigs, the peace-offerings begin. One group proposing to kill pigs issues a formal invitation to all its ex-enemies to come and take the pigs. The invitation is a mere formality, and is received by the other side in silence with neither acceptance nor refusal. When the pigs are actually killed, the pork-sides are hung on a long, horizontal pole and when they have been publicly counted, the ex-enemies are again invited to take them; the offer is again ignored. When the ex-enemies kill their own pigs, the original offers are returned, and refused in like manner. On occasions of this kind, the hosts are killing their pigs for a death-compensation or for some other reason, but the peace-offering itself is never the purpose of the function. The killing and pork-display take place on the hosts' dance-ground, and all those



friendly visitors who are to receive pork are admitted to the ground itself. The ex-enemies, however, sit outside behind the palisade and, in the earlier stages of the peace at least, the atmosphere is tense.<sup>12</sup> The situation may be interpreted as a "truce with reservations", a tentative offer of exchange relationships which are not yet ripe for acceptance. At the same time, it is a display of the hosts' wealth and prestige, for, as previously explained, a pork-distribution is made to all the people with whom the hosts enjoy relationships: to all their friends, affines, kin and political allies, to all those, in other words, to whom the hosts can look for protection, assistance, hospitality and refuge. Pork-distributions are thus a public display of the host-group's political position and resources. These preliminary peace-offerings, therefore, serve a double purpose: they are both an offer of friendship, and a demonstration that this friendship is one worth having.

This situation may continue for years, with offer and counter-offer alternating between the groups of former enemies. At any time, a personal squabble may start: a hot-head on one side or the other may decide to seek vengeance from the killer of a close kinsman; and then the whole system can break down.

Although, in the early stages, peace-offerings are made only at the pork-distributions of the parties concerned, they occur later at other functions too. The ceremonies of peace-offering may be observed on any of the

12. See: Chapt. IX, p. 206.

following occasions:

I. Any large, ceremonial pork-distribution given by either of the former enemies for any purpose whatever; the form here has just been described.

II. Any other major public distribution of wealth by either party: e.g. the distributions of live pigs or pearl-shell forming the main payments in a death-compensation.

III. A major pig-killing (ink) given by any third party. On this occasion, both the peace-offering groups buy their pork from their hosts and line up their pork-sides on two horizontal poles erected on the hosts' dance-ground. A representative of each side loudly and publicly counts the pork his group has bought, and the side which has been able to acquire the most pig-sides is the winner,<sup>13</sup> and gains great prestige.

IV. Certain full-dress ceremonial occasions. "Full-dress" refers specifically to the wearing of the "cossack-hat" wig, surmounted by an elaborate head-dress of scarlet, gold and turquoise lorrieket feathers, above which again there projects a rosette of bird-of-paradise plumes waving on a flexible cane stalk. The paradise plumes used here are the long, fronded head-quills of the King of Saxony (pteridophora alberti); their name, sho kalop, refers to

13. That this is seen explicitly as a contest is indicated by the use of the verbs mondonen-wi ("to win") and poshu-a ("to lose"). (Lit.: "to put into the mud", ~~and~~ "to be in the pig-muck".)

the bird, to the head-quills and to the whole head-dress in which they are used. The plumes are extremely valuable, and are the only objects in Mendi that are ever hired for a fee. The wearing of the sho kalop is restricted to large, inter-clan gatherings when wealth and splendour are on display; moreover, they are worn on these occasions only by those groups which are economically involved and playing a prominent part in the exchanges to which such gatherings are preliminaries. Here again, the peace-offering takes the form of a publicly chanted challenge by one group of ex-enemies to the other: "Here we are, wearing our kalop; you go and put on yours!" In other words: "Here we are, a rich and powerful group, able to play a leading part in Mendi economico-political life; go and show the world that you can do as well!"

There are, then, two distinct elements in the peace-offerings connected with a truce.

First, they define an interim period during which both sides become adjusted to the change in outlook brought about by peace. There has not yet been established the trust and mutual security necessary for the maintenance of group or personal exchanges, and the formalized offers of exchange made by both sides represent statements of good faith and tentative overtures from each party.

Second, the competitive element in peace-offerings may be seen as an attempt by each party to establish its prestige and credentials. Exchange can take place only between social and economic equals. Peace implies friendship which in turn implies economic exchanges; it is therefore essential that each party establish its status vis-à-vis



the other and in terms of the society as a whole.

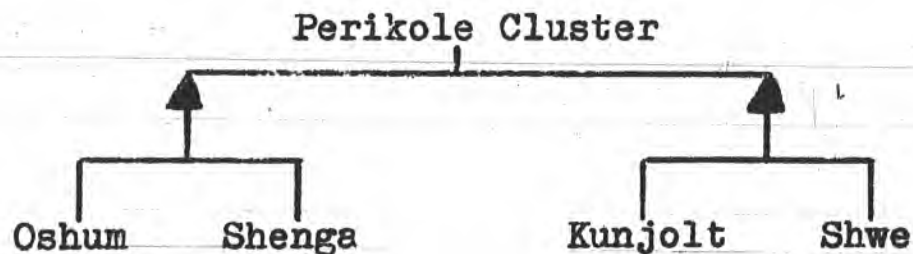
The peace-offerings and counter-offerings finally cease when both sides feel that they can call each other "brother". While they continue, the parties have stopped fighting, but are not really friends: "imin kone, 'ame' na lemi" ("within their minds, they don't say 'brother'".) Some informants suggested that a final exchange offer is made and refused which both parties are agreed will be the last, but it is doubtful whether the affair is so precisely determined. Social groups do, after all, consist of individual human beings and it seems more probable that, even while the official pseudo-exchanges are still proceeding publicly, a number of personal relations would be growing up gradually between individual members of the two groups. Be that as it may, the end is marked when the two parties begin to make twem and to inter-marry; for exchange occurs only among friends, and friends must exchange.

The ma-shogenja or peace-offerings are not confined to the mending of a breach between open and established enemies. They also serve to prevent open warfare within a cluster or political alliance. In the latter circumstances, the emphasis shifts from the re-establishment of friendly exchange relations by tentative offer and counter-offer, to straight-forward economic competition. Inter-cluster peace-offerings are intended to create peaceful relations between warring groups, but intra-cluster peace-offerings are intended, by a process of "economic sublimation of hostility", to prevent a dispute from developing into warfare, with the disruption of the political unit which this would entail.

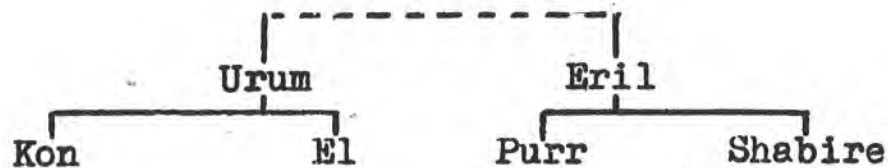
The form and function of inter-group peace-offerings may best be illustrated by an example:

Two adjacent clusters inhabited territories separated by the Mendi River. One, the Perikole, comprised two clans, Oshum-Shenga and Kunjolt-Shwe, while the other also contained two clans, Urum and Eril.

I.



II.



The Perikole lived on the more fertile land in the centre of the valley, while the Urum-Eril territory was high on the valley walls. The two clusters had long enjoyed friendly relations. They fought together, celebrated their men's ghost-cult together and were linked by many affinal ties, with concomitant exchange relationships. Moreover, the Perikole had fertile land, but little timber, whereas the Urum-Eril had poor gardens but many trees; the two groups, therefore, had reached an arrangement whereby one had access to the other's timber and in return allowed the latter to garden on its land. The two clusters had,

to all intents and purposes, amalgamated into one. Anti-gamy was not complete: marriage, although restricted by previous marriages, was still possible between them.

The trouble began when Shwe LUNI, a young man of about 20, eloped with Urum-Kon Umbâm, a widow of about 25. After her first husband's death, she had returned to her patrikin, the Urum. LUNI began to court her, but, being below the average marrying age and having, consequently, few exchange-partners, he could offer only a small bride-price. Umbâm's brother, Urum-Kon OND-WI, wanted a richer husband for his sister; he also wished to extend his own exchange relationships beyond the Perikole by marrying his sister into another group. He therefore forbade her marriage to LUNI, and the pair eloped.

III.	Urum-Kon OND-WI	Urum-Kon Umbâm	=	Perikole-Shwe LUNI
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OND-WI was furious, and brought her back, for he had already arranged a marriage for her with a rich and important old man in another cluster. The latter paid his bride-price and the marriage took place, but Umbâm left him after six days and again ran away with LUNI by whom she was then pregnant. The second husband's bride-price was refunded in full. Relations between the Perikole and the Urum-Eril were left strained.

While all this was going on, Eril-Purr PENDÔ had been



courting Perikole-Oshum Wogiâm.

#### IV.

Eril-Purr PENDO	=	Perikole-Oshum Wogiâm	Perikole-Oshum ON-NGOL & MBI-NA-WI
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He had given her a pig as a betrothal-gift and had also got her pregnant. Pre-marital intercourse, even between fiancés, is not condoned,<sup>14</sup> and Wogiâm was so ashamed that she eloped with PENDO who paid no further bride-price.

There was some difference of opinion as to which episode happened first and whether one was a reprisal for the other. It might be safest to assume that they took place independently; the point is not relevant to what follows.

Relations between the clusters were severed: the Perikole took back the garden-land they had lent to the Urum-Eril, and the latter told them to go somewhere else for their timber. All exchange relations were broken off and the Perikole, who were to have shared the ink or pig-killing of the Urum-Eril, made other arrangements with a neighbouring cluster. Nevertheless, the two groups did not want to fight (indeed, as both lived within two miles of the government station, they could not have fought without being jailed for it). So they decided to do a ma-shogenja. The terms of this wealth-contest were laid down beforehand: the categories of goods to be involved and the approximate duration (roughly 6 months: from about May to December, 1958). A double contest was arranged and the two grievances fell neatly into the genealogical divisions of the

14. See: Chapt.V, p. 81.

clusters: (a) Urum-Kon Sub-clan versus Perikole-Shwe Sub-clan (assisted by Urum-El and Perikole-Kunjolt, respectively); and (b) Eril-Purr Sub-clan versus Perikole-Oshum Sub-clan (assisted by Eril-Shapiri and Perikole-Shenga, respectively). The two contests were, technically, to be kept quite separate; but politically and emotionally, it was a single contest between the two rival clusters.

The affair was opened by the Urum who lined up in display 144 (24 x 6) pigs and invited the Shwe to come and take them. Two representatives of Shwe went to the Urum dance-ground, checked the public counting and reported back to their group. The pigs were not killed, but were returned to their owners.<sup>15</sup>

This was merely an opener to which the Perikole did not reply. They decided to ignore anything as common as pigs and instead, counter-challenged in cassowaries.<sup>16</sup> As the birds are non-local and scarce, their acquisition involved a great deal of complex exchange; many more were required than the few to which the twem-partners of the two

15. They could merely have borrowed pigs for the day from outsiders, returning them when the display was over; this is sometimes done in a small way but if the opposition heard of it they would make it public and the cheating group would be disgraced.

16. These large birds are not bred by the Mendi but are captured wild from their natural habitat on the slopes of Mt. Giluwe (12 to 15 miles to the north-east, and outside the Mendi-speaking area). The Mendi do not hunt cassowary themselves, but purchase them along several trade-routes.

groups had access. So, first of all, each group had to collect all the pearl-shell it could, by calling in old twem-debts and contracting new ones, by pressing affines to fulfil their obligations, or by selling pigs. At the same time, negotiations were opened with other cassowary-owners, either directly or through chains of intermediate exchanges.<sup>17</sup>

As the pearl-shells were collected, they were immediately passed out again in cassowary-purchases. Because cassowaries were few and the demand during this period was heavy, there followed much double dealing, as members of each group tried to persuade the owners to give them birds already promised to their rivals.<sup>18</sup>

Because the cassowary are hard to get and do not live long in close confinement, they were not displayed en masse, as were the pigs. As each one was acquired, the new owner invited an opponent to come and take it and, after inspec-

17. It should be noted that economic intermediaries in Mendi do not demand a commission or other kind of "middle-man's profit". The mere fact of being able to operate in an intermediate capacity implies an exceptionally wide range of economic connections which are in themselves the mark of an important man and are considered to justify fully the time and trouble involved.

18. The price of a cassowary varies with its size and quality but normally averages 4 to 6 shells, depending on individual bargaining power. In the present circumstances, the heavy demand and short supply caused a marked increase in price so that at least one of the birds acquired at this time cost as much as 10 pearl-shells.



tion, the bird was resold.<sup>19</sup> Birds dying before resale are eaten.

The challenge-invitation in all cases is directed personally at the principals on each side, that is, at the parties to the original quarrel. Thus, all the Urum invitations were made to LUNI, while all those of Shwe-Kunjolt were made to CND-WI. In the other contest, the key-figures are PENDO, on the one hand, and his wife's brothers MBI-NA-WI and ON-NGOL, on the other.

Simultaneously with the cassowary offers, pseudo-exchanges were made in other prearranged valuables also. In this case, tree-kangaroos<sup>20</sup> and large river-eels<sup>21</sup> were decided upon; both are native to the area, but are hard to trap and hence quite scarce. The offers and refusals were made as with the other commodities.

A member of Shwe then executed a minor coup by securing an echidna.<sup>22</sup> These animals were unknown to Mendi a generation ago; they are not found locally and are of the utmost rarity. This one was traded from the south (its original provenance was unknown) and it was dead and far from fresh when it arrived. Shwe Sub-clan offered it to

19. I was told that a bird would be recognized if offered more than once and they assured me that substitution would be impossible, so no precautions were taken. I must accept their word for this, but to me all cassowaries look much alike and I find it hard to believe that "ring-ins" do not occur.

20. gen. Dendrolagus. 21. fam. Anguila.

22. Spiny anteater (Monotremata Tachyglossus).

the Urum and then immediately used it as part of a marriage-payment. This was a great set-back to the Urum, who made desperate efforts to obtain an echidna of their own. They succeeded some weeks later.

By this stage of the contest, both the Perikole groups were slightly ahead. The stage was now set for the final and most complicated part of the series, for the contest was to end with rival collections of oil-bamboos. These are bamboo pipes about 15 to 25 feet long, each containing 3 to 6 gallons of tigaso-palm oil.<sup>23</sup> Known as ulu, they are traded in from the vicinity of Lake Kutubu, about 30 miles to the south-west. Six-gallon bamboos are worth usually two pearl-shells and thinner ones with half that capacity are worth one shell.<sup>24</sup>

The Mendi Valley is one of the regular routes through which oil is traded north towards the Kandep, Mt. Hagen, and the Huli and Enga peoples; salt and pearl-shell pass back south in return. Although the Mendi themselves export nothing, they regularly act as intermediaries through whose multiplicity of exchange activities trade-commodities move in their destined directions.

23. Gold-brown in colour, with a pungent smell, it is used as a decorative-ungent at dances. See: F.E. Williams, "Natives of Lake Kutuba" (Oceania : Vol. XI, 1940, p.133).

24. I was told that this is twice their price in pre-Administration days.

I am not suggesting that there is any simple causal connection between the position of the Mendi in inter-regional trade and their preoccupation with ceremonial exchange; but obviously, their exchange system, with its constant emphasis on rapid circulation, would provide economic channels facilitating the flow of trade-goods.

In prescribing oil-bamboos for competitive peace-offerings, the parties were in fact proposing to engage in a recognized system of trade-exchanges, but intensified to a more than normal degree. The oil, as usual is acquired by exchanges to the south, and, as usual, is passed on into further exchanges to the north; but while the peace-offerings continue, more of it goes through in a shorter space of time. Each bamboo that passes through the hands of either side adds, as it were, a point to the score; so that determined efforts are made both to intercept briefly any of the normal oil-exchanges which are constantly going on, and also to accelerate the flow of this commodity through the valley: for the faster the oil-bamboos come through, the more of them can be offered to the opposition.

Each bamboo, as it is collected, is treated exactly as were the cassowaries: it is offered to the key-man in the opposition (who examines but refuses it) and then it is passed on.

The essential thing to note about these pseudo-exchanges is that they are not a wealth-contest only, in the sense of a mere display of assets; the offering of pearl-shell and pigs would have sufficed for that. Here, however, the goods to be offered were nominated beforehand and were deliberately chosen as being those commodities



most difficult to come by and which could be acquired only by a complex organization of personal exchanges. So, the affair was really a contest of exchange partnerships (principally twem), and the winners were the group whose inter-personal exchanges were the most numerous and far-reaching. Most men have the necessary contacts to raise a few pigs or pearl-shell, but only really important men have exchange networks so widely flung that they can call in quantities of such things as cassowaries and oil. Twem, as we have seen, is the medium of prestige, not only for individuals but also for the political groups of which they are part. The sequence of peace-offerings just described was, therefore, a public, competitive statement of each group's political status in the whole society. When this had been established, honour was vindicated and amicable relations could be resumed. The actual winning or losing was of no great significance provided that the loser had put up a creditable performance.

This kind of contest was described above as "an economic sublimation of hostility", and the foregoing description has perhaps explained what this meant. The Perikole did not want to fight the Urum-Eril because, economically and politically, they were inter-dependent; and, moreover, they could not have fought without interference from the Administration. The peace-offerings, therefore, provided an outlet for aggressive tendencies which might else have developed into open warfare disadvantageous to both sides.

The Perikole versus Urum-Eril affair ended in the latter's favour: they won comfortably on the oil-bamboo round. Nevertheless, there was no apparent ill-feeling

over this, for each side was apt to say: "well, perhaps they may have had more so-and-so, but did you see our such-and-such? They couldn't beat that!" It was then possible for both groups to resume their former relationship.

The precise details of the offerings are not complete, because most of my informants were Perikole.

I. Urum v. Kunjolt-Shwe:-

	<u>Kunjolt-Shwe</u>	<u>Urum</u>
cassowaries:	11	11
tree-kangaroos:	2	2
eels:	1	-
echidna:	1	1
oil-bamboos:	12	50

II. Oshum-Shenga v. Eril:-

	<u>Oshum-Shenga</u>	<u>Eril</u>
cassowaries:	9	6
tree-kangaroos:	4	3
eels:	-	-
echidna:	-	-
oil-bamboos:	16	25

In Contest I, 7 Shwe offered 13.5 items, and 5 Kunjolt offered 13.5 items.

In Contest II, 11 Oshum offered 18 items, and 4 Shenga offered 11 items.

Because the central figures among the Perikole were members of Shwe and Oshum respectively, it seems reasonable that these two sub-clans should make the major part of the offerings, with each receiving contributory assistance from

its fellow-sub-clan. The above tabulation tends to verify this expectation.<sup>25</sup>

The above example of an intra-cluster pseudo-exchange for the prevention of war was basically a dispute among affines and took place between two clusters which had merged into one. A similar situation can arise for other causes in any dispute in which the parties have friendly relations which they do not wish to sever permanently. Peace-exchanges at this level are not common, however, and informants did not know at how low a segmentary level they could occur. Men agreed that, ideally, they were possible in a very small way between two sub-clan brothers.<sup>26</sup> They added, however, that a wealth-contest at this level would be an entirely individual affair in which neither party would receive assistance from other members of his group, for the sub-clan is the smallest socially active unit, and, unless it had already reached potentially fissive size,<sup>27</sup> its members would not be party to a division in its ranks.

25. I include these figures for what they may be worth. I checked them where possible, but was unable to watch each offering personally. As this was a competition in which group prestige was involved, both sides tended to exaggerate their achievements. Although the figures themselves are dubious, their general proportion is probably accurate.

26. One thought he had heard of a case of this kind, but knew no details.

27. See: Chapt.I.



The same restrictions apply, to a lesser degree, to pseudo-exchanges within the clan: again there would be a concerted effort on the part of clan-members to prevent a split. Informants agreed, however, that pseudo-exchanges between clans of the same cluster were, although infrequent, an accepted way of settling disputes.

It appears, therefore, that the possibility, probability, and frequency of peace-offering ceremonies increase with the socio-political range of the disputing parties; that is to say, the lower the structural level of the common group to which both belong, the less likely they are to settle disputes in this way. Within the sub-clan peace-offerings are almost unheard of; within the clan they are rare; within the cluster uncommon; among political allies they are more frequent; and between warring groups, they are a regular method of establishing friendship.

### Summary:-

I. Peace-offering ceremonies are of two kinds:/

(a) those between ex-enemies, representing the tentative resumption of political relations.

(b) those between disputing friends, representing a prophylactic substitute for open aggression.

II. In both kinds, the element of competition is prominent and serves to validate publicly the economic-political status of the two parties.

III. In (a), each party seeks the economic assistance

of its regular political allies; in (b) such assistance is determined by principles of segmentation and kinship.

IV. Probability of occurrence reflects the segmentary social structure. Peace-offerings occur least often at the lowest segmentary levels, and become progressively more likely as the segmentary level of the disputing groups rises: that is, as the socio-political range between the disputing parties increases.

V. The situation of political disputes at all segmentary levels can be defined almost entirely in terms of ceremonial economic exchange. In this respect, it is typical of Mendi society as a whole.

VI. The institution of peace-offerings has at least 3 important side-effects:

- (a) it involves the public definition of existing economic alliances, which, in this society, are in fact political alliances.
- (b) the need to acquire specified commodities gives rise to a series of personal exchanges which in turn bring about new economico-political relationships.
- (c) it accelerates the flow of exotic commodities along the regular trade-routes.

## CHAPTER XI:-

### RITUAL, & ASSOCIATED PAYMENTS:

#### Part I : The Timp Cult.

A brief outline of the Mendi belief in malevolent ancestral ghosts was given in Chapter VI. The greater part of the ritual life is concerned with the propitiation of these ghosts by the sacrifice of pigs. In cases of sickness, a divination ceremony establishes the cause: whether ghost or sorcery; and, if the former, it determines the ancestor responsible and the mode of sacrifice his ghost desires. There are 18 named sets of ritual (differing in detail) by which a ghost-sacrifice can be made, but the general form is the same in all cases: the pig (or pigs) is killed, and the blood from the snout is offered to the ghost with the words: "Here, X's father," (the personal name of the ghost is never uttered) "come and eat this pig, and stop eating X." Essentially, therefore, a Mendi sacrifice is an attempt to distract the ghost's attentions from its victim by the offer of an alternative and (it is hoped) more attractive food. This is the Mendi explanation, and I see no reason to go beyond it. It could, perhaps, be expressed in another way: a sacrifice represents the establishment of amicable relations between ghost and victim by the usual Mendi method



of economic prestatation.

The beliefs concerning ancestral ghosts are the core of Mendi ritual life, and propitiary sacrifices comprise the major part of their ritual activity. Most sacrifices, however, are performed by individuals in private. When a person is sick, it is one of his own family ghosts that is responsible, and the sacrifice is usually made by a member of his family, using one of the family's pigs, which is then eaten only by the family.

Apart from sacrifice in cases of specific illness, the ancestral ghosts are also the centre of a wider cultic activity which embraces the entire clan-cluster or major political group and involves certain inter-group relations which are marked by economic exchanges.

It is not my intention to embark on any detailed discussion of Mendi cultic activity except insofar as it is relevant to the topic of ceremonial exchange, but some brief outline of the major cults will be necessary.

Ancestral ghosts are believed to have a certain number (18) of residences, or repositories, among which they move freely. In order to be effective, a sacrifice must be made to the ghost at the place where it was residing at the time of its attack. The ritual attending the sacrifice will be that associated with the ghost's "residence". Two of these ghost-repositories are collections of sacred stones, called respectively kepel (or ungenap), and timp.

As far as could be ascertained, the Mendi have always had some kind of cult<sup>1</sup> associated with stones, and this is

1. By a "cult" I mean: "an organized body of ritual and belief associated with specific supernatural beings or sacred objects, and forming part of a wider ritual complex".

common at least to the whole of the Western and Southern Highlands, and probably covers a wider area than this. A peculiar feature of the Mendi, however, is that they appear to tire of their cults after a certain time, whereupon, they abandon them and adopt new ones. A generation ago, they were performing a stone-cult called ank-pola. This is now obsolete, and although I knew several men who could remember their fathers doing it, the ritual is almost forgotten.<sup>2</sup> The ank-pola appears to have been semi-publicly performed. It was succeeded, some 15 to 20 years ago, by a new stone-ritual called kepel or ungenap. Sacred stones called ungenap are ritualized in the Kaugel River and Mt. Hagen areas, and the ritual clearly came to Mendi from that direction. The stones are kept in a small house concealed in the scrub, and each sub-clan has a separate house for its stones. Each stone is said to represent a dead ancestor, so that every family in the sub-clan has a special interest in one or more of them (i.e., in those of their own immediate forebears).<sup>3</sup> It is said that, when a man dies, if his ghost wishes to be represented by a stone in the kepel-house, it will draw the attention of one of its

2. I have heard recently (1961) that it is being performed in the Upper Nembi Valley to the west of Mendi. I also suspect that a version of it is still done by a few Mendi clans, but under a different name.

3. The collections I saw varied in size from 8 to 18 stones. This small number can probably be accounted for by the comparative newness of the ritual, and by the fact that not every kinsman who has died during that period is represented.

descendants to a stone of peculiar shape.<sup>4</sup> The stone is then cleaned, anointed with pig-fat and red paint while spells are said over it, and placed among the other sub-clan kepel. The stones are carefully guarded, and if a cluster, defeated in battle, is driven from its land, each family takes its kepel with it. When a patriline becomes extinct, its stones are discarded.

Besides being the repositories of the ghosts, the kepel have also some association with fertility and prosperity. The sacrificial ritual is performed only in cases of sickness (of either people or pigs) and it is said to have a prophylactic effect: its performance not only enticed the attacking ghost away from its victim, but ensured freedom from further attacks for some time after.

I also observed, in the dozen or so collections I inspected, that there were basically two kinds of stone: smooth, elongated river-stones, and pieces of lime-stone of which one surface was concave, hollow, or even pierced,<sup>5</sup> and

4. The men may stub his toe on it, or find it while digging his garden, etc.

5. Many kepel were artifacts: pestles and mortars of a kind found throughout the Highlands. They are no longer made in that area; indeed, it is doubtful if they were ever made there, and certainly, they no longer have any functional use. They are of a common Oceanic type and were probably traded in....unless, of course, one is prepared to postulate an earlier stone-working culture of which no other trace remains.



that the two kinds were sometimes kept in separate sections of the house "lest they fight". The phallic significance of these two shapes seems obvious, but, although certain informants showed an awareness of fertility-symbolism in the stones, it was not clear how much importance they attached to it.

As the kepel ritual entered the valley, it was bought and sold from group to group. Details of the method of buying a ritual will be given later in this section in the discussion of the timp cult.

The kepel ritual was acceptable to the Mendi because they were accustomed to rituals centred around sacred stones as repositories for ancestral ghosts. It seems also to be a characteristic of rituals in this area that no new cult is regarded as permanent or "the last word". The ghosts must be placated, and, if all the established methods are unsuccessful, then any new ritual of appeasement will find favour: provided that it can be adapted to fit existing beliefs. Any ritual concerned with sacred stones and the sacrifice of pigs to the ancestral ghost would fulfil these conditions and would probably be accepted.

About the same time that the kepel ritual came in from the north-east, an elaborate cult made its appearance from the south. This came in three obligatory sequences: long-timp, lunk, and short-timp, which had to be undertaken in that order.

The original provenance of this cult is unknown,<sup>6</sup> but there is some reason to believe that it may have begun in the region of the Purari Delta on the Papuan Gulf, about 150 miles south-west of Mendi. Whatever its origin, however, by the time it had reached the Southern Highlands, it had become sufficiently modified to fit smoothly into the culture-complex of the area.

By 1950, it had reached the present government station of Mendi, about 15 miles from the foot of the valley. By the end of 1954, it had moved a further 5 miles north, and by 1958, 3 miles beyond that. Assuming a fairly constant rate of motion, we can say that the timp cult is moving north at the rate of about 1 mile a year. It should reach the top of the Mendi Valley about 1968. As this area is the junction of the Mendi, Huli and Enga peoples, it is impossible to say where it will go from there.

Although at the time of my arrival, timp was already well-established in the valley, I was exceptionally lucky in that the place I chose for my head-quarters happened, incidentally, to mark the northern limits of the cult, and the community I lived with actually acquired it while I was there. In this, and in neighbouring communities to which I had entrée, I was thus able to observe the cult in all its introductory stages.

Rumours of timp precede its actual appearance by many

6. In 1958, I traced it about 20 miles south to the junction of the Mendi, Lai and Nembi Rivers, but for various reasons, I was unable to follow the trail further.

years,<sup>7</sup> and as it approaches, anticipation and excitement prepare the field emotionally for its acceptance. The undertaking of the cult, however, needs a great deal of elaborate preparation and preliminary inter-group negotiation, and a group on the point of taking timp may postpone it until its current economic commitments (mortuary-payments, ink, etc.) have been settled. The people themselves say, however, that a group refusing timp will anger its ghosts who are looking forward to the sacrifices the cult will entail, and who will punish their dilatory descendants with sickness and death. Moreover, pressure is sometimes exerted on a reluctant cluster by the group from whom they will ultimately buy the cult, and the sanction of such pressure is the threat to discontinue twem relations between members of the two groups.

Eventually, whether through supernatural or political pressure, the group decides to do timp.

It should be noted that the "group" which does timp together may comprise only the members of one large cluster; but more often, several clusters which occupy adjacent territories and which are on terms of established friendship combine to perform the rites in a ceremonial-house built on the territory of one of them. Timp, therefore, performs incidentally, the same function that an ink, or major pig-killing, performs explicitly: it provides a public affirmation of inter-cluster political alliances. Only friends do timp together, and the ritual can be bought only from friends and sold only to friends.

A man always does timp with his patrikin (unless the latter are extinct or dispersed) but he often does it with

7. See: M.J. Meggitt, "The Upper Wage & Lai Peoples", (Oceania: Vol. XXVII, 1956, p.134).



his mother's kin also, and it is possible for him to be a ritual leader in both places.

The position sometimes arises where the same clan has been invited to join the timps of two separate groups which are themselves enemies. In such cases, a compromise is arranged: certain sub-clans of the invited clan do timp with one group, and the remainder go to the other. In this way, a position of political neutrality is maintained, which functions as a "buffer", or bridging-relationship, in disputes between the two hostile groups.

The exact composition of the groups which will do timp together is decided during months of preliminary discussion. Although it reflects the general pattern of political alliances, it is, as I have indicated, to some extent an ad hoc arrangement.

Having decided to adopt the cult, the group must then decide from whom they will purchase the ritual.

It should be explained that, although timp is moving up the valley from south to north, its transfer does not follow any geographic sequence: one does not necessarily acquire it from the group immediately to the south, nor pass it on to that immediately to the north. It can be bought from any group that has it and is willing to sell, and the same group often passes it on to several other groups, receiving a full payment from each. This flexibility in the choice of donor allows amicable relations to be established with whatever group is considered most desirable. The ritual and the mode of payment are such that a timp-transfer relationship is a protracted one, providing many opportunities for social intercourse between the groups, which can prove advantageous for both.

When the donors have been selected, the next step is the appointment of cult-leaders<sup>8</sup> by the people who are to receive the new ritual. The timp-officers must be men, still in the prime of life who are rich and important enough to be able to share the payments by which the cult is purchased. As far as possible, every sub-clan taking part is represented by at least one officer, but this is not essential. From among the officers of the recipient group, two are chosen by the donors as the supreme leaders of the cult, and it is by them that the whole affair is organized and co-ordinated, and through them that the payments are channelled. This role is taken more or less automatically by the two richest and most influential men of the recipient group.

It is a feature of the cult that its ritual is always organized on a dual basis. The clans doing timp together are divided into two "sides" or pági<sup>9</sup> who sit on opposite sides of the timp-house. Each side kills, cooks and distributes its pigs separately. Each has its own officers and supreme leader; and, as the ceremonies proceed, each side performs the ritual more or less independently of the others. Thus, all the timp ritual is done in duplicate, simultaneously.

Each officer is allotted a special section of the

8. timp shumba, "timp-father": this is the only role in Mendi life that could be called an "office", in the sense that it carries prescribed duties and authority independent of the individual holding it. The timp shumba will be referred to as "officers".

9. pági = a pork-side.

ritual which he purchases from his "opposite number" among the officers of the donors. No one officer, therefore, knows the whole ritual and even the leaders themselves, although they know the general pattern better than anyone else, do not know the words of any of the spells other than their own. Each officer buys his special portion of the ritual, and when the time comes to pass timp on to another group, he sells his ritual role to his opposite number there.

When the officers have been selected, the next step is the acquisition of the timp-ôba<sup>10</sup>, or temô-win<sup>11</sup>, the sacred stones around which the ritual is centred. The core of the collection is the stones formerly used in the obsolete ank-pola cult, to which is added one stone from each sub-clan kepel-house. But, as with the kepel, it is necessary to have a timp-stone to represent each of the minor (two to three generation) patriline taking part. An outside ritual expert, a shwerrshe-ol ("trance-man") is called in, who conducts a ritual search and "finds" the required number of stones. The trance-man is paid for each stone he finds by its "descendants", whom it will represent in timp.

By this stage, covering many months, the ritual officers have been chosen, the timp-stones collected and the site of the timp-house cleared. It is now time for the cult itself to be introduced. First, the timp-houses must be built. The

10. ôba = "rich", "meat-fat". "egg" (it seems to have a general connotation of "richness" or "fertility").

11. "ghost-bones": a general term for sacred stones.



first of these is about 15 feet square with a high gable front sloping down to a rounded back. This is erected in one day under the personal supervision of the donor group, who receive for this instruction the first of the eight purchase-payments, or abult.

The payment is made formally by the leader of each pági, or side, of the recipient group, to his opposite number in the donor group. It is collected from three categories of contributor:

(a) Each timp-officer contributes a major item (a pearl-shell or a pig) for the share of esoteric knowledge that has been confided to him. This payment goes to the man who gave him the ritual.

(b) Every member of the recipient group, who will take part in the opening ceremony as an initiate, is expected to contribute at least a minor item to the purchase payment. This collection of goods is redistributed among those members of the timp donors who had contributed to the purchase price when their group had itself acquired timp. Thus, as in other inter-group exchanges, a contributor ultimately receives back the equivalent of any contribution he has made.

(c) Minor contributions are also accepted from those younger men who will be initiated at the first ceremony (in addition, that is, to the pig which is their compulsory initiation-fee); their extra contribution is not compulsory, although there is prestige in being able to make it. This is redistributed as was (b).

The second payment is made on the completion of the house, and this purchases the ritual to be performed there.

After a few weeks of minor ceremonies concerned mainly with the sacrifice of possums, the second timp-house is built under the same circumstances as the first, and it is preceded by a third inter-group payment similar to the first two. The second timp-house, the "great house", is identical with the other in form, but much bigger.<sup>12</sup> It stands in the same cleared area, about 10 yards in front of the first house, and it is here that most of the future timp-ceremonies will be performed.

When this large building is complete, a fourth payment buys the ritual to be performed in it.

The next few days are spent in gathering all the pigs to be sacrificed at the opening ceremony, bringing firewood and oven stones to the site, and in private rehearsals of the ritual. The atmosphere is one of feverish excitement, and the preparations are surrounded by the utmost secrecy. Only the officers and the first "foundation-initiates" are supposed to know what is going on, and an elaborate secret vocabulary is used in any reference to the proceedings; (this vocabulary is purchased as part of the ritual). Women and non-initiates are expected to feign complete unawareness that anything unusual is happening. A woman who stumbles on timp secrets may be raped by any of the initiates who catch her, and an uninitiated male in the same circumstances is

12. About 40 feet long by 20 feet wide, with a front gable 15 to 20 feet high.

beaten, his house or gardens wrecked, and a pig seized as a "fine".<sup>13</sup>

The preparations accumulate until the day before the opening ceremony. On this day, bamboo flutes are blown in the scrub, and all women, children, and non-initiates must remain in their houses until the rituals end at dusk of the following day. The initiands, those who are to be initiated next day, are secluded in one of the men's-houses where they are told what they must do at the ceremony, and the solemnity of the occasion is impressed upon them.

The next day, the opening ceremony starts at dawn and lasts until late afternoon. It falls into 3 main parts:

I. The sacrifice of the pigs to the ghosts, and the washing of the timp-stones in the sacrificial blood. This takes place in the greatest secrecy behind a temporary screen, and only those timp-officers directly concerned with that part of the ritual are admitted.

II. The introduction of the initiands, the shōrén ("raw ones") who are led ceremoniously into the "great house" where they sit with covered heads for the rest of the day.

III. The butchering, cooking, and distribution of the sacrificial pigs. These have been supplied by the timp-officers and also by the initiands each of whom had to provide a pig as initiation fee. At the opening timp-ceremony of an important group, as many as 30 or 40 pigs

13. shumba ma-wá: "that laid down for the timp-officers".



may be killed by each side (60 to 80 in all).

This last section, III, may be described as the "secular" part of timp. Although the pork distribution is accompanied by certain ceremonial actions peculiar to timp, it is in many respects similar to the distributions that follow a minor pig-killing (lusha).<sup>14</sup> The pigs, although contributed to timp by the people already mentioned, had originally been acquired by them through a protracted series of exchanges with affines and other twem-partners: in the same way, that is, as pigs are normally collected for a pig-killing. When the pigs are cooked, there is first a ceremonial exchange of pork-sides (six or so) between the leaders of each side, signifying that, although timp is performed in two separate segments, it is, nevertheless, one timp.

The cooked pork is then distributed among those initiates who are not officers.<sup>15</sup> There are also present a number of outside visitors: members of the group from which the cult was bought, and various kinsmen, affines, or exchange-partners of the host-group, who came at the latter's invitation.<sup>16</sup> All the men of the second kind have contributed to, or in some way assisted in, the

14. See: Chapt. IX.

15. timp-ôsha ("timp rank-&-file"); these men are also known (quite officially, by one group at least) as timp-kagoboya, "timp cargo-boys"; this is one of the few Pidgin words that have been adopted into Mendi.

16. In order to be present, a man must, of course, be a timp-initiate. Timp pork must not be given to, or even seen by, any non-initiate. A breach of this rule incurs a timp-fine.

exchanges which enabled the hosts to buy timp.<sup>17</sup>

The patterns of contribution and distribution in a timp differ from those in a pig-killing in that: I. As the cult is secret, all transactions connected with it are restricted to males. One may solicit goods from one's wife's brother or sister's husband, but the wife or sister are not to know. II. A timp should be an occasion of extreme good-will among all the participants, and an element in the distribution is an individual sharing of pork which does not occur on other occasions. Every recipient is expected to give a token scrap of meat to each of the men present with whom he enjoys friendly personal relations. The piece can be as small as 1 cubic inch, but the recipient should back it as soon as possible, taking care, however, that the same morsel is not returned to its original donor.<sup>18</sup> This token pork-sharing could be described as a "communion" in which the participants in the cult reaffirm, in a ritual context, their amicable relations, and they do this through the established medium of gift-exchange. Indeed, individuals who have exchanged pork in timp are supposed to be especially friendly thereafter; the ritual exchange paves the way to later twem-exchanges, and any reluctance on the

17. For example, a timp-officer who is committed to a certain payment must raise it, as most payments must be raised, from twem-partners. The latter may be repaid in the ordinary way with backing and interest, or they may be invited to the timp to be repaid in pork.

18. Not having a Mendi memory for this kind of thing, I found it necessary to employ a "social secretary"; at a big ceremony, one might be obliged to make as many as 20 or 30 such exchanges.

part of one party is met by the reminder: "After all, we've eaten timp pork together.". The timp hosts do not take part in these symbolic exchanges: one never returns a man his own pork, and, in any case, their relationships have already been established by the distribution itself.

The ceremony briefly outlined above is repeated at irregular intervals (perhaps three or four times a year).

There are also occasional "private" timpas. A man is sick; divination establishes that he is being attacked by (say) his grandfather's ghost residing in timp; his immediate relatives (father, son, or brother) then sacrifice a pig in the timp-house with a ceremony similar to that performed for the kepel stones.

In succeeding repetitions of the large group ceremony, the first excitement of novelty begins to wear off. Most of the group has been initiated after the first few performances (the last initiands are those who have been unable to produce the "entry-fee" at earlier ceremonies; they are usually non-agnates or agnatic orphans) so that the earlier elaborations of secrecy become somewhat pointless. The women and children still preserve a pretence of ignorance, but by the end of the first year, most of them have a fair idea of what is going on. The ritual itself becomes progressively more perfunctory, and details are omitted or carelessly performed. It is apparent to the observer attending a series of timps in the one group that the emphasis and general interest is being transferred from the sacred to the secular elements in the ceremony. The Mendi are not, generally speaking, a ritual-minded people: their interest in the "supernatural" is predominantly the practical one of protecting themselves from the



malice of ghosts. Although it might be possible to analyse the details of timp ritual in terms of a fertility-cult, this is an aspect of which the Mendi are only vaguely aware, and in which they display little or no interest. Timp was imported as a "package-deal"; its rituals were memorized, and the performers know little and care less about their interpretation. It is not surprising, therefore, that, once the excitement of novelty has worn off, the Mendi shift the emphasis of timp to those aspects of it which really interest them. These are, of course, the pork-distributions and the establishment of social relationships through the medium of economic exchange.

In later performances of timp, the original "communion of friendship" comes gradually to resemble more closely the atmosphere of a secular pig-killing. There are more disputes about the pork-distribution, and much time is spent in the discussion of various irrelevant inter-clan matters: dates of dances, inks and death-compensations. Individuals treat the timp gathering as an opportunity for arranging twem and other personal business.

Timp continues in this way for 5 to 8 years, in the course of which 3 further group payments are made to the original donors. (During this time, the cult may be passed on to other groups, even while the group transmitting it is still making its own payments.) At the end of this period, the first part of the cult-cycle is ended with a most elaborate ceremony for which the eighth and last payment is made. The first part of this ceremony incorporates new ritual which is performed secretly by the timp-officers, but for the cooking and pork-distribution (which

is on a large scale) the public, including women and children, is admitted. As a climax, both timp-houses are symbolically demolished, and all the paraphernalia (cooking-pots, and the jaw-bones and leg-ropes of all the pigs killed since the cult began) are carried away in a mock funeral-procession and buried.

Several months later, the second stage of the cycle is begun.<sup>19</sup> This is called lunk. The same stones used in the timp ritual (timp oba) now become lunk oba. Lunk is bought from another group, as was timp, but the two sets of ritual are not necessarily acquired from the same group. There is a supreme lunk-leader, and a number of lunk-officers are chosen (but not the same men who were timp-officers). Although part of the ritual is performed secretly by the officers, the subsequent pork-distribution is public.

Generally, lunk is much smaller and simpler than timp, and the large group of political allies which combined for the latter now splits into its component clans, each of which purchases its own lunk.

19. My information on the first sequence, "long timp", is from my own observation, and from conversation with timp-officers whom I knew well. I did not, however, have entrée to any group in which the second and third sequences (lunk and "short-timp") were being performed, and I was obliged to rely for my information on reticent semi-strangers of varying reliability. I can only, therefore, sketch the rough outline of the whole cult.

Just as sickness could be caused by the bite of a family ghost resident in timp: so now with lunk, and the same kind of individual or private lunk sacrifices are made when necessary.

Lunk is said to remain for several years, and it closes with a ceremonial parade in which the sacred stones are carried around the dance-ground (sometimes even by children of both sexes). The stones are then concealed in their secret house until the third sequence is reached.

In the third stage, the cult group remains divided as for lunk.

When lunk is finished, there is an interim period of several months and each lunk-group then purchases the final stage of timp. This takes two forms: one, a smaller version of the original "long-timp", in which the ritual is identical. The dual organization is repeated, but, as the group involved is usually only one clan, its component sub-clans are allotted to one side (pâgi) or the other. Thus, where formerly a ritual was performed on a dual basis by two opposed divisions of a political alliance, the same rite is now performed on a smaller scale by two opposed divisions of a single clan. The ritual is bought (not necessarily from the original donors) and the payments, smaller in scale, follow the same pattern as before.

A conflict of information is perhaps of significance here. The supreme leader of the timp with which I was best acquainted, and which was in the first stage, assured me that, when the third stage came, the duality would be so arranged as to cut across not only sub-clan, but family,



groups; so that, as far as possible, full brothers would be placed on opposing sides. He gave me lists of the prospective divisions (which he himself would be largely responsible for organizing) and on several repetitions, they checked consistently. Yet, despite this, other informants assured me that the normal pattern was a division in terms of sub-clans; and this was, indeed, the pattern of those third-stage groups which I was later able to examine. This would seem to indicate that the cult does not follow a rigid pattern, and is subject to modification as it passes from group to group even within the one cultural area. Certain minor differences in ritual were observable in the groups in which I attended the ceremonies, each of which had acquired the cult from a different source.

The second form of the third stage is an entirely new ritual called "short timp". I was unable to witness, or obtain details of, this. It is performed in a specially built ceremonial house (quite different from the other timp-houses) and it was stated that, although pigs are sacrificed, no stones are involved. It is bought, as were the other sections of the cult, but again not necessarily from the same source.

These sections of the third stage of timp are both performed by the same clan-group, and simultaneously; that is to say, both are present in the same group and active during the same period, but their respective performances do not appear to be co-ordinated at all.

Which individuals of the group concern themselves with which form of the cult seems to be entirely a matter of

convenience. In some groups, the same men do both, and in other groups, members of the same minimal descent-group (full brothers or fathers' brothers' sons) arrange things so that one of them learns the "long timp" ritual and the other "short timp". The important thing is that both forms of ghost-propitiation are available to all the ghost's descendants.

It is said that, in the two forms of its third stage, timp will remain indefinitely. The timp-leader referred to above did say, however, that he expected some new kind of ritual to come later from the south but that he had no idea what it might be.

### Summary:

I am not concerned here with any attempt to interpret the ritual of timp. All that need be said is that it conforms to the local pattern of ritual associated with sacred fertility-stones which are also repositories of malevolent ancestral ghosts; as is usual, pigs are sacrificed to the stones with the primary purpose of placating the ghosts, and a secondary, vaguer, purpose of ensuring the general well-being of the community.

More relevant to this paper are the economic-political aspects of the cult:

I. It is an importation, and it comes into a society accustomed to such importations and whose religious outlook and social structure are such as to make their reception not only possible, but easy.

II. The processes by which the cult is passed from group to group are merely a special adaptation of the elaborate ceremonial exchanges which characterize all inter-group relations in this area.

III. As has been shown elsewhere, economic exchange always implies friendly relations, and the political alliances associated with the time-exchanges are ritualized by various forms of symbolism in the cult itself.

IV. The patterns of contribution and redistribution of wealth involved in these payments are similar to those associated with other inter-group exchanges. So that:

V. The usual side-effects are manifested whereby, in order to assemble the necessary wealth, a number of other collective and individual alliances of the paying group must be activated; and by thus exercising their practical function, they are reinforced.

VI. Once the first stage of the cult and its attendant political relationships are firmly established, the next stage begins. It is significant that subsequent stages of the cult are very often purchased from a new set of donors; the first stage has established one set of inter-group relations, and it is thought desirable to use the purchase of subsequent stages to establish further connections with different groups. This is in accordance



with the usual Mendi pattern of using inter-group exchanges to cast one's net of political relations over as wide a field as possible.

VII. It was remarked above that the Mendi are not particularly ritual-minded: that the primary interest of their culture is in social communication marked by ceremonial exchange. The first stage of timp starts in an atmosphere of intense ritual excitement. This subsides rapidly, and the economico-political aspect of the cult becomes predominant. In the later stages, the ritual element is still further attenuated and the cult settles down to more or less private sacrifices in propitiation of family ghosts. In scale and function, if not in details of ritual, it comes to bear a marked resemblance to the previously established kepel cult.



THE  
TIMP  
CULT.

- (a) Initiends approaching the house.
- (b) Bleeding a pig onto the sacred stones.
- (c) The timp payment.

## Part II : Other Payments for Ritual.

In addition to the ceremonial, inter-group cult payments described in the first part of this chapter, there are a number of minor prestations which nearly always accompany the transfer of non-cultic ritual (magic, sorcery, etc.) between individuals.

Like the payments for kepel and timp, these are all known as abult. They are of relatively little structural or political importance, and their main relevance to this paper is that they indicate how the Mendi preoccupation with economic exchange permeates every aspect of the society.

Sorcery: Only two allegedly fatal forms of sorcery are at all widely practised:

1. tôm: This is by far the commonest form of Mendi sorcery. Tôm is a substance described as a grey powder "like ashes" (indeed, the word nalom, "ashes", is sometimes used as a euphemism). It can be sprinkled on food or on the victim's skin, although the former is more common. Its action is delayed, and the victim sickens and dies from one to six months after it has been administered. Tôm, there-



fore, is thought of as an actual, physical poison.<sup>1</sup>

Tôm is bought and sold under conditions of great secrecy, and the price is at least one major item. There is no ritual attending its use, and, as far as I could ascertain, it can be administered by anyone who can obtain it.

The mode of administering tôm makes it difficult to use on enemies with whom one has little or no physical contact. It was more commonly used, therefore, between groups which had formerly been at war and had ostensibly made peace, but which still harboured resentment and the desire to avenge past deaths.

2. huld temô ("Huli spirits"<sup>2</sup>): This technique is reputed to have been introduced to Mendi from the northwest, through the Nembi and Lai Valleys, whither it was brought by Huli traders from the Tari Basin. The equipment

1. I was able to purchase a sample of the substance which I have reason to believe my supplier sincerely regarded as genuine. On analysis (by Dr. I. Ross, Department of Chemistry, University of Sydney) it was found to consist of the fine, powdery seeds of a grass orchid which is quite common on the kunai-grass slopes of the valley. It had no toxic properties at all and could certainly not have had the very delayed fatal action attributed to it. Anyone could have obtained a large supply of the stuff and, if my sample was genuine, one can only assume that the knowledge of its origin is obscured by the furtive secrecy that attends its use.

2. These temô are not ancestral ghosts.

consists of a small medicine-bag of stones, within each of which resides a malevolent spirit under the control of the sorcerer. The spirits can be sent forth to a selected victim whose body they enter through any of the natural orifices. The victim is then supposed to sicken and die. This type of sorcery is especially popular in time of war when it is directed at a "big man" of the enemy. In this case, the spirit goes and waits beside the victim and enters his body through the hole made by an arrow: it does not cause the wound, but does ensure that it will be fatal.

There are few huld temò sorcerers, and, as the technique is an imported one, they command a higher price for their services. The usual payment (again called abult) is, I am told, 1 pearl-shell, 1 pig and 10 minor items, (but as is usual with such ideal estimates, we may assume that the payment varies considerably from case to case). All the goods are paid in advance except the pearl-shell which is held back until the project is successfully completed and the designated victim is dead.

Women are not hired as sorceresses.

Sorcery-victims call in a nemonk-ol, or "spell-man", who attempts to cure them by counter-sorcery and is paid for his services.

Specialized esoteric knowledge is owned by individuals and passed down from father to son, usually, unless the father is dying, for a small payment. The same family seldom owns more than one set of specialized ritual. The

distribution of spell-men in terms of social groups appears quite random: some clans may have several spell-men, and others none. A specialist in any form of ritual receives from his client a payment (of unspecified size, but a pig is about the maximum for performing the rites, and, if the killing of a pig is involved, he takes a pork-quarter, or -side. Ritual specialists do not form a group, class, or guild of any kind; their relationship with their clients is an entirely individual one.

Ghost sacrifices: Several of the 18 modes of sacrifice to the ancestral ghosts in cases of illness are sufficiently uncommon to come into the field of ritual knowledge held only by specialists. When an unusual form of sacrifice is prescribed by divination, a spell-man familiar with this ritual is called in to perform it. Every adult male knows half a dozen or so of the commonest ghost-sacrifices, and has a fair to rough idea of the others but does not know the spells; in the latter instance, he calls in a specialist.

Magic:

I. For curing sickness:

tomba shen ("stomach spell"): for worms, and other intestinal ailments.

tila shen ("fire spell"): for burns.

tôm wol ("poison sugar"): for the extraction of poison.

ol tom tongela ("binding the man's spear"): for the extraction of broken arrow-tips from wounds.



The rites and spells for these forms of curative magic are owned individually by other ritual specialists who operate in the same way as those who perform specialized ghost-sacrifices.

II. For success in fighting:

shont nemonk ("fighting spell").<sup>3</sup>

III. Garden magic:

mo-we shen ("taro-shoot spells"): 4 spells associated with the cultivation of taro. The latter is of particular importance to the Mendi gardener because in that area, its maturation-cycle is almost exactly 12 months, so that its stages of growth determine the gardening seasons. Taro is grown in special gardens, and taro-spells are the only garden-magic used in Mendi.

Most men possess some form of garden-magic. Within any one family, it may be passed free from father to sons, but in many cases, it is paid for by a small prestation (one minor item). But if a man acquires his garden-magic from someone other than a father or brother, it is always paid for; and the price, as for most spell-payments, is as much as the owner can get.

IV. Pig magic:

môk nemonk ("pig spells"): a series of spells, said only by women, to protect and fatten the pigs in their charge.

A woman acquires pig-magic from her mother, who receives some token payment (a shell ornament, a handful of salt).

3. See: Chapt.X, p. 238.

V. <sup>o</sup> Dance magic:

ke labon ("we are about to dance"): used by women when anointing their men-folk with oil for a dance to mark some large inter-clan gathering. The object is to make the men strong and handsome, and a credit to their clan on an important public occasion.<sup>4</sup>

A woman performs this service only for her husband and sons, or for one or two of their close kinsmen who have no women of their own. She acquires the magic from her mother in the same way as pig-magic.

VI. Sex-protection magic:

ten nemonk ("woman spells"): a series of rites and spells with which a man protects himself before marriage from the dangerous impurity of prolonged and intimate contact with a woman.

A man acquires sex-protection magic from his mother's brother, and gives several minor items in return. Before consummation, his bride performs similar magic, acquired from her mother, and designed for his (not her own) protection.

4. In order to be dangerous, the contact must be frequent and regular, with the same woman. For this reason, woman spells are not used in cases of casual rape.

## VII. Good luck magic:

esh-we nemonk (esh-we is a wiry-leaved, scented grass): grown in tiny, secluded gardens (about 12 inches in diameter) esh-we and its associated spells bring a man prosperity, wealth, fertility. Worn in the arm-band, it is a powerful love-charm.

A man buys esh-we magic (both the plant and its spells) from any one or more men whose wealth and status he would like to emulate, for any price he is willing to pay. Rich men customarily sell their esh-we only to those who are already potentially successful, or coming men; but it is not possible to say whether this represents a conscious and deliberate effort to protect the value of their personal success-magic.

All the forms of magic so far mentioned are "pure magic", in the Frazerian sense; that is to say, they are deemed to act through their own intrinsic power and not by the agency of ghosts or supernatural beings.

There is, however, one other form of ritual which is neither "pure magic", in the above sense, nor a true ghost-sacrifice. It is associated with the spirit-double, or woshe, which resides in every living individual. Called ank-we nemonk ("hair-tuft spell"), it involves the tying of a cord around a tuft of hair left for this purpose on the normally shaven head of a child. The rationale is that of tying the child's spirit-double to life and thus preventing the ghosts from taking it away. It is a highly-specialized ritual which few men know. A pig is killed,



and the spell-man takes a pork-side as payment. It is distinguished from other ghost-sacrifices in that the subject need not be sick: it is performed as a precautionary measure if anyone has seen him dead in a dream.

Summary:

It is notable that, with the occasional exceptions of fight-magic and garden-magic, all rites, spells, and other personal ritual knowledge must be paid for, just as are the large group and inter-group cults. It would be reasonable to expect payments to ritual specialists who regularly sell their services to those requiring them on particular occasions. In fact, the principle of exchange is carried much further than this: to the point where payments for ritual take place even within the family, from son to father, from daughter to mother, and between brothers. But, in a society in which every gift creates a corresponding debt, what is given free must be worthless. In our society, we tend to think that the more intimate the connection between individuals, the less rigid their obligation to each other; but in Mendi, a prestation signifies a relationship, and it needs a counter-prestation to make the relationship mutual.

## CHAPTER XII:-

### CONCLUSIONS.

From an examination of Mendi social structure, three important facts emerge:

I. Warfare between politically autonomous groups appears to have been chronic.

II. In contrast to many other parts of the New Guinea Highlands, arable land in Mendi is relatively plentiful.

III. Although patrilineal descent and patrilocal residence are the structural norm, group affiliation and residence are marked by a high degree of flexibility on individual and group levels.

Without wishing to imply any sequence of cause and effect, I would suggest that these three facts are closely related.

Warfare (informal battles, sporadic raids and furtive assassinations) was waged constantly by most political groups, and I have given evidence for the people's assertion that it caused a great many deaths. Those parts of

the Highlands in which fighting has been officially suppressed for 20 years or more have shown a marked increase in population during that time. This increase is not due to peace alone; for European medical facilities have helped to lower infant mortality rates and to increase life expectancy. Nevertheless, we may reasonably assume that, in pre-European times, warfare was an important factor in limiting the population.

A low population-density means that there is likely to be a plentiful supply of land.

The particular form that warfare took in Mendi had a further implication. I have explained that it was the practice for the victors to lay waste the land of the defeated, uprooting gardens, burning houses and felling trees, so that the devastated land would not support its former inhabitants for some time after. The vanquished clan or cluster was then obliged to disperse. Its members, either individually or in small groups, sought refuge with various of their kin or affines resident in other places where, as a matter of course, they were granted land by their hosts: grants which were nominally temporary but which often became permanent.

I suggest, therefore, that warfare in Mendi had a twofold effect. It caused a number of residential groups to abandon their own land and to seek land elsewhere; at the same time, by limiting the population-density, it made alternative land available for war-refugees.

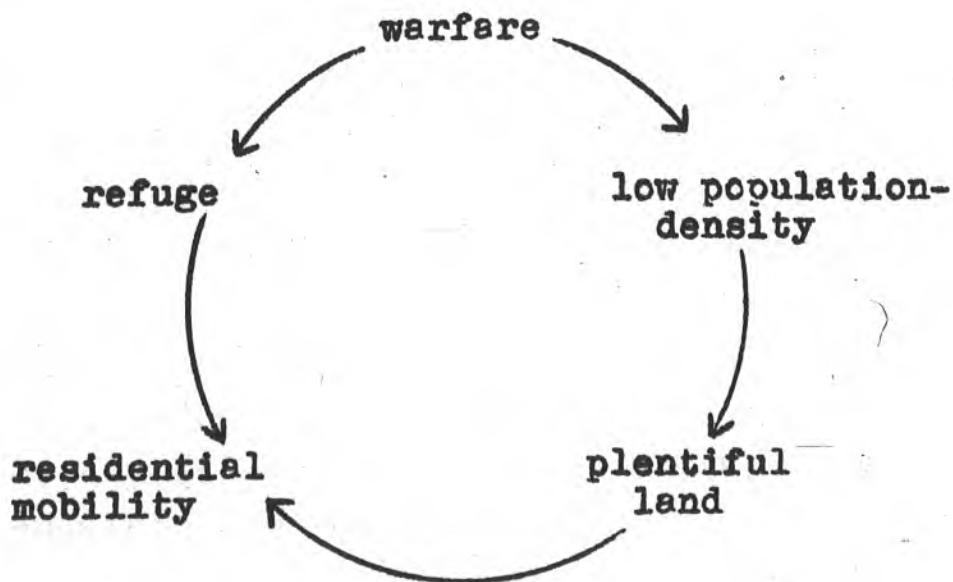
The situation of defeat-and-refuge was an emergency, but it was an emergency of such common occurrence that it



was necessary for the people to make some socially recognized provision for it. This requirement was met, in the Mendi structure, by its system of mobile or multilocal residence.

Mobility of residence implies, almost inevitably, flexibility of group affiliation. I shall say more of this later.

It seems reasonable to infer that the flexibility of descent- and residence-patterns was a direct result of Mendi's style of warfare; for this kind of loose structure did offer a solution to problems of refuge caused by warfare. It was warfare that made residential mobility necessary; and it was warfare, too, that as an important factor in limiting the population, made such mobility possible.



Any social group is definable only in terms of its membership, and if membership has no qualifications, then the group has no real existence.

In a society having as its norm an aggregate of discrete, autonomous, political units, complete individual freedom of residence and affiliation is clearly impossible; for in such a society, residence and affiliation are the criteria of group membership, and, in order to be effective, they must be subjected to some kind of ordered limitation. The Mendi restrict their freedom of residence and affiliation by means of their system of gift-exchange.

The people from whom an individual can claim refuge in time of war are limited to those with whom he has established amicable relations and maintained them over a period of time. The only way in which he can do this is by engaging in economic exchanges.

Relationships which usually provide potential war-refuge are those with maternal kin, wife's patrikin, and sisters' affines, and it is a noteworthy feature of such relationships that they be maintained by specific and obligatory ceremonial or individual exchanges of valuables. Indeed, every formal occasion (marriages, funerals, pig-killings) in which an individual comes into contact with his kin or affines is marked by prescribed prestations of wealth; and failure to make the appropriate prestations can repudiate the relationship.

Not only is it essential that individuals have places

of refuge in the event of military defeat; but the groups to which they belong also need political alliances, either for actual assistance in the fighting or as a guarantee of the neutrality of strong neighbours. Although the same group of political allies may offer both fighting assistance and potential refuge, it is not necessarily committed to do so; and the two kinds of relationship are often separate. Political relationships involving military assistance are also formed and preserved by means of gift-exchanges: usually those associated with the ink, or major pig-killing ceremonial.

Gift-exchange thus fulfils at least two practical functions:

- (a) It opens the way to alternative places of residence for members of a clan dispersed by defeat in warfare.
- (b) It establishes political alliances between otherwise independent groups.

The survival of a Mendi clan or sub-clan, therefore, depends almost completely on certain external, socio-political relationships which the group can initiate and maintain only by undertaking regular exchanges of wealth.

Not only relations aimed at political survival but all other significant relations too are established by means of gift-exchange. Even within the smallest groups, people exchange gifts on many occasions; for instance, children buy magic from their parents, friends exchange food, close kin share pork. The institution of twem extends individual exchanges beyond the immediate social group; on a group level, sub-clans and clans exchange



goods ceremonially at weddings and funerals; death-compensations and pig-killings bring into definition the wider political groups, the clusters and war-allies. Even the sacrifices to the ancestral ghosts are seen prosaically as exchanges intended to establish amicable relations with the supernatural, on the principle that if the ghost accepts the gift, it will be obliged, in repayment, to withdraw its attack.

Gift-exchange not only marks off structural groupings at all levels, but, at the sub-clan level, it actually determines them. A sub-clan can exist as a separate social unit only so long as it can fulfil its exchange obligations. If it is too small or too poor to do this alone, it is forced to amalgamate with another group of the same order, thereby losing its identity as a sub-clan. Similarly, when a sub-clan reaches fissionable size, whether or not it does split is determined by the capacity of each of its prospective segments to conduct its own exchanges.

Exchange means friendship: only friends can exchange, and all friends must exchange. With this principle in mind, it is possible to define, in terms of gift-exchange, the pattern of individual and group relations forming the Mendi social structure.

Some form of gift-exchange is found in every society, but in few has the practice attained the degree of elaboration that it shows in Mendi. Even among neighbouring groups in the Highlands, gift-exchanges have fewer ramifications and are less extensive than in Mendi, although the cultures are in many other respects similar.

I suggest that there is a real correlation between

the Mendi emphasis on gift-exchange and the looseness of the structure of their society. Residential units change in composition; individuals have a choice of several residences; larger groups fragment and their parts attach themselves to other groups; the patterns of political alliance alter. As the residential structure shifts and changes, so do the patterns of group affiliation. When an individual moves to a new territory, he often tends to transfer his group loyalties also. The child of a long-term immigrant nearly always identifies himself with his clan of residence rather than with his patriclan.

In all societies, some fixed frame of reference is needed in terms of which individual and group relationships can be identified. In a society whose significant components are elements of a rigidly-structured lineage system, the structure itself provides such a frame-work: social relations are essentially determined by group membership, which is usually fixed at birth and does not change throughout the individual's life-time. (Other societies define the pattern of their relationships through elaborate kinship systems, or through a class-hierarchy, and so on.)

Mendi society has a segmentary structure of putatively unilineal descent groups, but one so loosely organized that it cannot be used to define the pattern of social relations with any degree of conciseness. This function of definition is taken over by the system of gift-exchange: those Mendi groups which have lasting amicable relations with each other are those which participate regularly in economic exchanges.

Hostile relations are also social relations; these too are defined in the ceremonial exchanges that accompany death-compensations and peace-offerings.

Thus, Mendi gift-exchanges serve to delineate socially important relationships between individuals and groups with a clarity that their flexible descent-system is unable to achieve.

In the course of this paper, I have emphasized the differences between the agnatic members of a residential group and those immigrants who have become affiliated with the group after severing relations with their own patrikin. These non-agnates are consistently at a disadvantage in all activities involving economic exchanges. Because ability to participate prominently in such activities is the only way of achieving higher social status in Mendi, non-agnatic affiliates of a residential group, as a category, occupy a lower status than do agnatic residents. For instance, they pay less for their wives, they make smaller funeral payments, and they contribute less to the major inter-group exchanges.

This situation is to be expected; separation from the patrikin means separation from those people who are normally relied upon for assistance in exchange contributions. Nevertheless, the Mendi themselves deny that non-agnates are socially inferior.

We have, therefore, a paradoxical situation in which the system of gift-exchange facilitates the survival of refugees from dispersed groups; but, while they remain refugees, they find themselves at a disadvantage in operating the system of gift-exchanges. That is to say, although



Mendi society is self-consciously egalitarian, the social structure itself produces real differences of social status

The Mendi make a clear distinction between gift-exchange and trade: all forms of gift-exchange imply permanent relations of friendship between the parties to the exchange, whereas trade is the acquisition of commodities from outsiders with whom no permanent relationship is desired or possible. There is no confusion about this, and different verbs are used to describe the two kinds of transaction.

Tôp is trade or barter, and the term is also applied to purchases made with money at the European trade-store. But the distinction between barter and gift-exchange has nothing to do with the nature of the goods exchanged, with their original provenance, or with the purpose for which they are acquired (whether for consumption, or for investment in further exchanges); the nature of the relationship between the transacting parties is the crucial factor.

Many of the important media of exchange are not in fact indigenous to the Mendi Valley; but such items as stone axes, cassowary, and shell have moved in so gradually from the east that they have now become an accepted part of the Mendi gift-exchange system, and are regarded as trade items (tôp) only when bought from Europeans. Once into Mendi hands, what were originally exotic goods circulate in a series of twem-deals or group exchanges. From then on, they are involved with social relationships, and tôp

gives way to twem; at this point, trade with outsiders becomes gift-exchange with friends.

It is true that gift-exchange induces a wide and rapid circulation of certain kinds of goods among the Mendi, but the effects of this are more political than economic; that is to say, the circulation of valuables in Mendi has little or nothing to do with subsistence, or with the distribution of utility or consumer goods.

To a Mendi, wealth means social relationships which in turn mean political influence, and this identification is achieved not by accumulating wealth, but by circulating it as rapidly and as widely as possible through channels which are socially prescribed.

It has not been my purpose in this thesis to propose any general theory of gift-exchange. It does seem clear, however, that there is little to be gained by attempts to discuss gift-exchange solely in terms of European economics, because the problem is concerned with socio-political relationships, and not with the organization of a society's natural resources.

My theoretical approach has been predominantly functionalist because I believe that societies have problems to face, some arising directly from the natural environment, and others from disharmonies in their own structure, and I believe that their members develop or emphasize certain institutions in an attempt to solve these problems. The Mendi have, in common with other Highland societies: I. a localized, patrilineal descent system; II. a constant state of warfare; and III. the

practice of marking marriages and deaths by the ceremonial exchange of wealth. In contrast with many of their neighbours, however, they have no shortage of land. By developing the institution of gift-exchange, they have been able to integrate these elements into a social structure that, in their eyes, works satisfactorily.