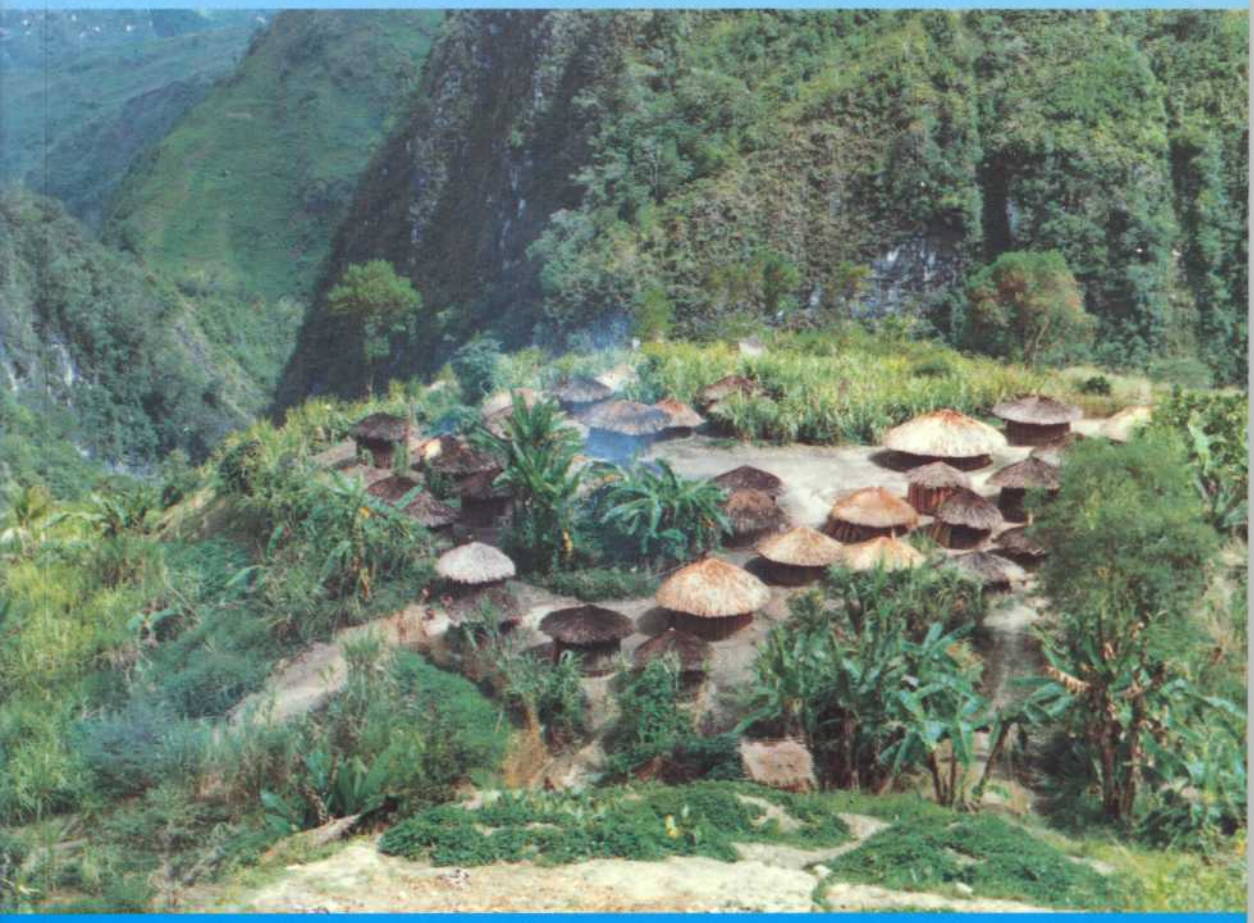
Sela Valley

An Ethnography of a Mek Society in the Eastern Highlands, Irian Jaya, Indonesia



Jan A. Godschalk

VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT

Sela Valley

An Ethnography of a Mek Society in the Eastern Highlands, Irian Jaya, Indonesia

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor
aan de Vrije Universiteit te Amsterdam,
op gezag van de rector magnificus
dr. C. Datema,
hoogleraar aan de faculteit der letteren,
in het openbaar te verdedigen
ten overstaan van de promotiecommissie
van de faculteit der sociaal-culturele wetenschappen
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De Boelelaan 1105

door

JAN ANTHONIE GODSCHALK

geboren te Maartensdijk

Amsterdam
1993

Dedicated to the memory of
prof.dr. J. van Baal (1909-1992)
my teacher and my friend

Promotor : prof.dr. J.W. Schoorl
Referent : prof.dr. R. Schefold

Front cover: village of Orisin (1984)

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Preface

From April 1950 until August 1954, I lived with my parents in then Netherlands New Guinea as a young boy. My father was a harbour master in Hollandia (now Jayapura) and later a circuit judge (*landrechter*). My mother taught us school at home. We loved the land and the people.

When we repatriated in 1954, I knew – somehow – that one day I would come back. My 'leave of absence' lasted almost twenty-four years. I returned to Irian Jaya in April 1978, now with my wife and two young daughters. Much had changed. For one thing, this half of the island of New Guinea had been integrated into the Republic of Indonesia.

Of greater significance, however, at least for me personally, was the fact that the Central Highlands, which in the early 1950s were virtually unknown territory (except for the Paniai area), now had opened up to the 'outside' world. Large populations had been 'discovered'. The Dani, Yali and Me (unfortunately long known as Kapauku) became familiar to anthropology students through the publications (and films) of field researchers. Lesser known groups were the Moni and Damal (Amungme) in the Western Highlands, the Nduga in the Central Highlands, and the Nalum Ok in the Star Mountains near the international border. One relatively large society remained virtually *terra incognita* for many years: the Goliath pygmies, later more aptly called the Mek people, wedged between the Yali and the Mountain Ok in the Eastern Highlands. I wished to study their way of life.

It took a little while before this became reality. First we had to learn Indonesian. Then we lived among the Western Dani in Karubaga in the Swart (Konda) valley for a few months, and among the Hupla in Soba, in the Eastern Highlands not far from Wamena, for a year. We briefly visited Korupun in December 1978. After these wanderings through the highlands, interesting for comparative purposes but otherwise unsettling, we moved to Sela Valley in May 1980 and lived there – apart from a furlough during the second half of 1981 – until May 1985. Since then we have been back there several times, although only for brief visits. But I had found my niche.

Were it not for the readiness of the Sela people to talk with us about their cultural heritage and values, this study would never have seen the light. It's as simple as that. Their co-operation and help were indispensable. They will as yet not be able

to read this book – this may quickly change, though –, but will be fascinated by the photographs of their land, their villages and their people. I sincerely thank them for allowing us to live and work among them.

While I was in Irian Jaya, I worked under the auspices of two organizations.

First, from 1978 until 1985 I was sponsored by what eventually would be called the Evangelical Church in Indonesia (GIDI), for we were missionary workers with RBMU International (Canada). I wish to express my appreciation to the leadership of both church and mission for making it possible for us to study the language and culture of the Sela people. Thanks is due also to several former colleagues who were stationed in either Korupun or Sela Valley and who helped me in one way or another. They are Ms. Elinor Young, whose dictionary and other linguistic write-ups became valuable resources; Mr. and Mrs. Bruce McLeay, who were very interested in the Sela people, but unfortunately had to return home before their anticipated move to Sela Valley; Mr. and Mrs. Orin Kidd, and Mr. and Mrs. Paul Kline. Furthermore, I am very grateful to my friend and colleague Mr. John Wilson M.Th., himself an able student of Yali culture, for his interest to this day in my Sela studies. His support has been quiet but effective.

Second, from 1987 to 1989 I worked at the Irian Jaya Study Centre under contract with the Cenderawasih University in Jayapura and the Directorate General for International Co-operation of the Ministry of Development Co-operation in The Hague, the Netherlands. While the primary focus of my assignment was the study of cargoism within the context of the development of Irian Jaya, I could also continue my research in the Sela area. For this I express my gratitude. My thanks goes to the previous Rector of the university, Dr.Ir. Rudy Tarumingkeng, to his successor Drs. August Kafiar MA, and also to the present Governor of Irian Jaya, Mr. Barnabas Suebu SH, who has always been interested in what I was doing in Irian Jaya.

We were seconded to these organizations by Knox Presbyterian Church, Toronto, Canada. Throughout the years Knox has shown a warm interest not only in us, but also in the Sela people and their welfare.

We are also thankful to the Mission Aviation Fellowship and the Summer Institute of Linguistics for flying us to and from Sela Valley many times over.

In contrast to the Mountain Ok, for example, the Mek have been studied by relatively few scholars. I have been interacting with several of them. I mention Dr. Jan Louwerse (formerly a missionary at Langda), Dr. Dietrich Helmcke, Dr. Wulf Schiefenhövel, and Dr. Volker Heeschen whom I visited in Kosarek in January 1981 and who visited Sela Valley in turn in December 1983. The last three were members of the German Research Team that did fieldwork in the Eipomek valley

in the 1970s. It will be clear from my account below, that the results of their research have been invaluable for my own work. It is hard for me to adequately reciprocate this form of academic generosity.

I consider myself very privileged to have had you, Prof.Dr. Pim Schoorl, as my promotor. Over the years, you have shown great sympathy with my work and studies in the 'field' and, moreover, you were deeply interested in the highland people among whom we lived, as you are in all of Irian Jaya. This made my work under your supervision much more meaningful. My thanks also to you, and your wife, for your hospitality at your home.

I thank Prof.Dr. Reimar Schefold for reading through my manuscript as the referent.

This book has been dedicated to the memory of Prof.Dr. Jan van Baal. I owe him much, very much. He taught me a basic lesson for doing fieldwork, namely to look around, to listen to the people and to jot down notes. He also did what good friends do: warn me for mistakes I was about to make. Whenever I wrote to him for advice, he always responded promptly. I recall with gratitude, and with a tinge of sadness, the many hours we sat together in his study, conversing about Irian Jaya. He knew the Irianese people as few others did. I thank his wife, Mrs. Hilda van Baal, for kindly agreeing to my request to honour her husband in this way.

Several of my relatives and friends helped me prepare this manuscript, and I thank all of them for their kind co-operation. Drs. Johsz Mansoben translated the summary into Indonesian. My daughters Helen and Ingrid thoroughly edited the summary. My wife Dea read and commented on the manuscript as one who shared my field experiences. Ms. Vidheya van Bilsen prepared the kinship charts, the maps and the front cover on her computer. My brother, Mr. Louis Godschalk, virtually took charge of lay-out and formatting and made it a pleasure for me to finalize the text on his computer.

Finally, a personal word of thanks and gratitude. To my mother (and my father), for had they not decided to move on to New Guinea in 1950, my life would have run an entirely different course. To my wife and daughters for helping me finally reach my goal, which all too often seemed depressingly elusive. And most of all to my heavenly Father, a trusted Guide throughout my life. To Him alone be the glory.

January 1993

Abbreviations and Orthography

1 Abbreviations

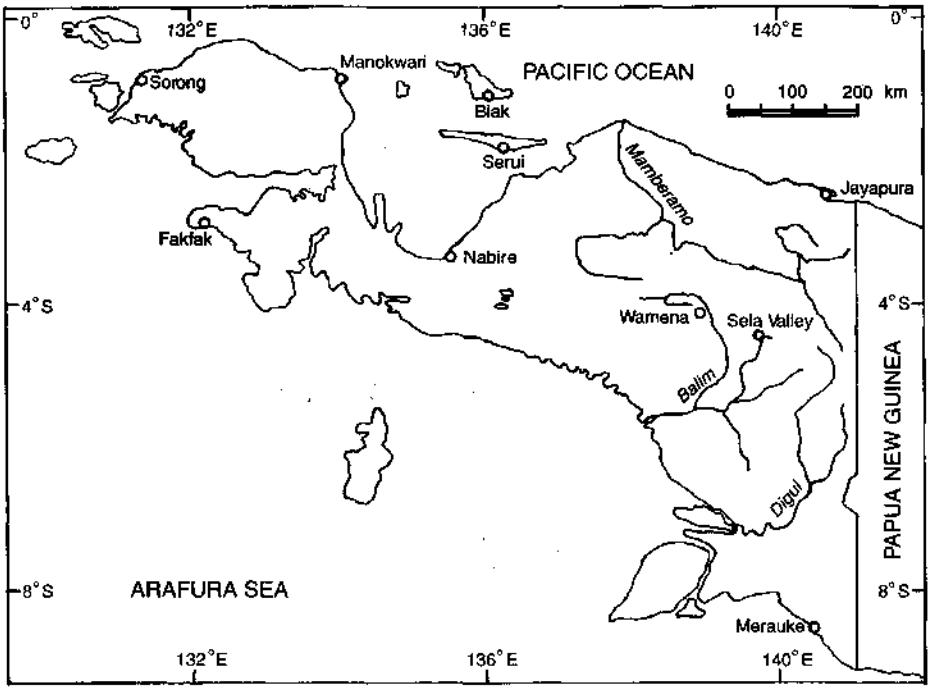
ASAO	Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania
B	Brother
D	Daughter
DGIS	Directoraat-Generaal Internationale Samenwerking
F	Father
GIDI	Gereja Injili di Indonesia
GKI	Gereja Kristen Injili di Irian Jaya
H	Husband
M	Mother
MAF	Mission Aviation Fellowship
NRC	Netherlands Reformed Congregations
PUSDI	Pusat Studi Irian Jaya
RBMU	Regions Beyond Missionary Union
S	Son
SIL	Summer Institute of Linguistics
TKNAG	Tijdschrift van het Koninklijk Nederlandsch Aardrijkskundig Genootschap
UFM	Unevangelized Fields Mission
UNCEN	Universitas Cenderawasih
VKI	Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde
W	Wife
Z	Sister

2 Orthography

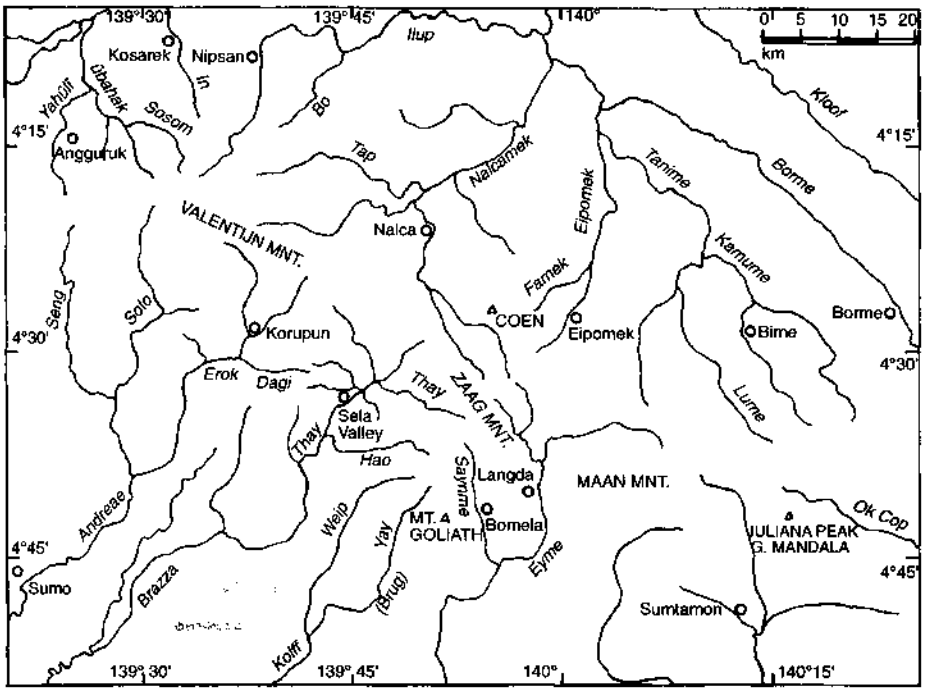
The letters *ì* and *ù* represent high open front, respectively back vowels, which tend to shift to the mid close position. In Korupun they are written *e* and *o*.

In addition to the well-known glides *ai, au, ei* and *ou*, there are also the glides *ae* and *ao*.

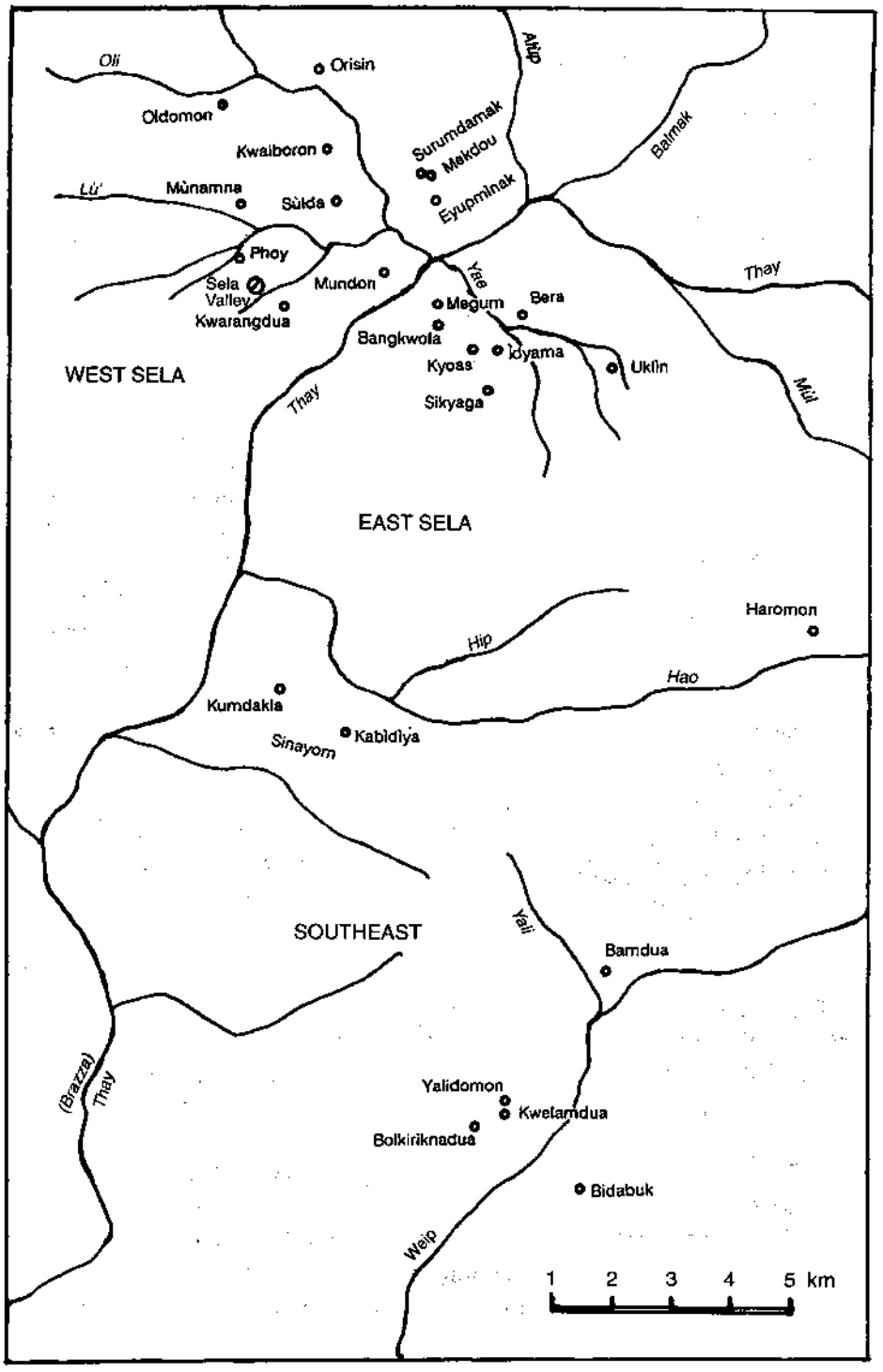
Both aspirated stops (*ph, th, kh*) and aspirated continuants (*mh, nh, lh, wh, yh*) are found in the language spoken at Sela Valley.



Map 1 Irian Jaya (Indonesia)



Map 2 Mek Culture Area (Eastern Highlands)



Map 3 Greater Sela Area

Chapter 1

The Setting

The purpose of my study is to present an ethnographic sketch of the communities living in the greater Sela area in the southwestern sector of the Mek culture area in the Eastern Highlands of Irian Jaya, the easternmost province of Indonesia.

Relatively little is known of the Mek people, possibly the last one of the larger highland tribes in Irian Jaya, of which detailed ethnographies are still lacking. The only exception are the Eipo people in the central part of the Mek region, where a team of German scholars carried out a series of interdisciplinary studies in the 1970s. Their results continue to be published. Individual studies have been, or are being, carried out in a few other areas, mostly by scholars affiliated with mission organizations.

Almost nothing is known or has been published about the Sela people amongst whom I did my research. This rather general study is a first step, and no more than that, towards learning something about their life and customs.

My ethnographic account begins in this chapter with an overview of the various (language) groups within the Mek culture area, beginning with the communities where I carried out my fieldwork. This overview is followed by a brief description of the societies surrounding the Mek culture area. By means of this I outline the geographical and cultural mosaic in which the Sela people find their own niche. The maps printed on the previous pages show the location of villages, rivers, mountain ranges, and so on.

Then I give some information about the climate in the Sela area, especially the rain data, and about the impact of the weather on the life of the inhabitants. A few other natural 'events' are briefly mentioned.

This is followed by a summary of some of the demographic data based on a census carried out in the greater Sela area in 1984 and on a subsequent update of it a few years later. More demographic information will be found in the appropriate sections of chapter 3.

After this I give a brief account of the history of contact between the Mek communities and the 'outside' world. This is a rather neutral account. How the Sela people responded to what for them were, without question, unprecedented events as well, will be discussed later.

In the final section I deal with the conditions under which I carried out my research, both during the early years when I lived at Sela Valley with my family, and later on when we, or I myself, visited the area from time to time.

1.1 The Mek and their neighbours

1.1.1 The greater Sela area

The people who are the subject of this study inhabit a number of steep valleys on the south side of the Eastern Highlands in an area surrounding, and south of, the mission station Sela Valley (Sela is in fact the name of a nearby hill). The co-ordinates of the airstrip at Sela Valley are 139° 45' east longitude and 04° 31' south latitude on the older maps published by the Dutch in the 1950s, but 139° 44' 30" E and 04° 33' S respectively on a map published more recently (Helmcke, Pöhlmann and Pohlmann 1983).

I did most of my fieldwork among the population living near Sela Valley, which is situated in the upper drainage area of the river, named the Brazza by the Dutch in 1910, but called Thay by the people in the West Sela or Dagay by those in the East Sela. Almost 1500 people (July 1989) live on the (north-)west side of the Thay river (see map 3). The ten main villages are Kwarangdua, Phoy, Mùnamna and Sùlda situated on slopes drained by the Ùm creek and the Lù' river; Oldomon and Orisin in the Oli river valley; Surumdamak, Mekdou and Eyupmìnak on a hill between the lower Oli and lower Alùp river; and Mundon, a former garden village linked to Eyupmìnak but now much larger, across the Oli river and not far from Kwarangdua.

From Sela Valley one looks 'down' on a small tributary valley (plate 1) to the southeast, drained by, among others, the Ok and the Yae river. Over 650 people live in seven main settlements, Megum (or Weriduahak), Bangkwola, Kyoas, Sikyaga (or Hemhak), Ìdyama, Bera across the Yae, and Uklìn at the top of the valley.

Several kilometres south of Sela Valley – but it takes half a day of walking through a steep gorge – a major tributary, the Hao (also spelled Ao or Atù) river, flows into the Thay river from the east. About 130 people live in a village, called Haromon, in the upper part of the Hao valley; they have close links with their neighbours in the East Sela. In the lower Hao valley, less than 190 people live in

small and scattered settlements, nowadays known together as Sinayom.

Finally, a mountain range (called the Tasman range by the exploration teams of the 1910s) separates the Hao river valley from the valley of the Weip river (and the Yay river valley to the east), which descends directly into the southern lowlands. Several small villages are found there. They are, on the west side, Kwelamdua, Bolkiriknadua and Yalidomon (with Bamdua); many of the approximately 240 people are now living near the airstrip at Kwelamdua. On the east side there is one settlement, Bidabuk, with about 200 people living in the main village as well as in small garden hamlets.

The total number of inhabitants in the greater Sela area, therefore, is approximately 2900 as of July 1989. Of those, less than 1500 live in the West Sela, about 800 in the East Sela (including Haromon), and over 600 in the Lower Hao valley and Weip valley. They live within an area of about 300 square km, of which naturally large sections are not inhabited.

Despite the relatively small number of people living in the Sela area, the language situation is very diverse. The West Sela and East Sela people speak the same dialect, but different communalects which reflect a relationship with the language spoken by their respective neighbours, on the one hand those living in the Korupun area to the west and the Nalca region to the north, and Una language speakers to the east on the other. For example, an adult male is called *ningabù* in the West Sela, but *sal* in the East Sela. Another difference is illustrated by the way in which the Brazza river is called: *Thay* versus *Dagay*.

The inhabitants of the (lower) Hao valley and those living on the west flank of the Weip valley speak a different dialect; this dialect area almost certainly extends further to the west, to include villages on the southern edge of the highlands.

An altogether different language is spoken by the residents of Bidabuk on the eastern flank of the Weip valley. It probably belongs to the Saynme (Bomela) dialect of what has been called the Una language by Louwerse (1988; the boundaries indicated on his maps, however, are incorrect). It is of interest to note that a word comparison indicates a closer connection with the language spoken in the Bime area, much further to the east.

As the Una language belongs to the Eastern group of Mek languages, the boundary between this group and the Western group in the Mek language family (see Heeschen 1978:10) runs between the Upper Thay and the Ey river valley, then between the Hao and the Sayn river valley, and finally along the middle of the Weip river valley.

1.1.2 The Mek culture area

The Mek people inhabit the valleys in the central area of the Eastern Highlands in Irian Jaya (see map 2). We briefly mention the various sub-groups.

The western neighbours of the Sela people inhabit first of all the Erok river valley system (mainly the Duram and the area around the mission post Korupun), including a small valley to the west with just one small village (Wura). Furthermore, the much larger Dagi – or more correctly Phuldùbla (named after the *phul* tree or its fruit) – valley directly to the west of Sela Valley. And finally, they live in two villages, Gobogdua and Sìsìbna, in a valley south of the Dagi which descends directly into the lowlands, as well as in Debula, a village situated in the Nìri river valley, a western tributary of the Thay river. Relations (not always of a friendly nature) are maintained between villages in the West Sela and those in the Erok and Dagi valley, between Sinayom and the Dagi, and between the hamlets in the West Weip valley and Debula (marked by enmity). A distinctly different dialect, called Korupun Kimyal, is spoken in the Erok and Dagi valley. The inhabitants of Debula, Gobogdua and Sìsìbna probably speak the same dialect as those living in the West Weip and lower Hao valley. Linguistic studies, including the compilation of a dictionary, have been carried out by Young (1981), a missionary formerly based at Korupun. There are virtually no ethnographic studies available of this area.

The eastern neighbours of the Sela people live in the Yay river valley just west of the Goliath Mountain, in the valleys of the Saynme and its tributaries and in the Eyme (or Heyme) valley system. The relations between the Sela people and those groups are not very close. There is a trail leading from the East Sela over the high range to the Eyme valley. Another connection links the East Sela (and Haromon) with the Saynme valley. There is apparently more frequent interaction between the inhabitants of the Weip valley and the communities in the Yay and Saynme valley.

There are a few more populated valleys further east of the Eyme valley, in the catchment area of the upper Eilanden river. Not much is known about those who live there. The same language – Una – is spoken throughout the entire south-eastern sector of the Mek culture area. Linguistic studies have been carried out by Louwerse (1978, 1988), formerly a missionary based in Langda. He also wrote a missiological thesis (1987) that includes some ethnographic information, mostly about Una worldview.

Turning now to the Mek population living north of the watershed, we begin with those at the western end. The In valley is inhabited by the so-called Yalenang. This is a transition area. The people speak one of the Mek languages, but culturally they have much in common with the Yali people. Heeschen (1984, 1986) has published some comparative ethnographic studies of the Yalenang and the Eipo.

Mek people are also living in two villages, Piniyi and Pindok, in the upper Ûbahak valley, near the juncture with the Sosom valley (see Zöllner 1977), which otherwise is inhabited by the Yali.

Not much is known about the people living in the Ilup, Bo, Tap and Nalcamek valleys. A few villages in the northern part of the West Sela maintain relations with villages in the Nalca (Olsikla) area. There are trails leading from both Sela Valley and Korupun to Nalca, and also from Korupun to Nipsan in the Ilup valley, Kosarek in the In valley and Angguruk in the Yahûlî valley. In the early 1970s, missionaries carried out preliminary linguistic studies of the language spoken in the Nalca area, which was at that time called Hmanggona.

The communities living in the Eipomek (and Famek) valley have become well-known through the publications of the members of the German Research Team in the 1970s. We will frequently refer to those studies for comparative purposes, although the Sela people have no (direct) relations with the Eipo people and do not appear to be familiar with them. Volker Heeschen and Wulf Schiefenhövel above all have been, and still are, prolific authors of both linguistic and ethnographic publications; together (1983) they published a very useful dictionary of the Eipo language, in both German and English. Other ethnographic studies were published by Michel (1983) and Gerd Koch (1984), while Büchi (1981) published a short study on the physical anthropology of the Eipo people. Eibl-Eibesfeldt, too, collaborated in a number of publications.

The people living further east of the Eipomek valley inhabit the Tanime and Bime valleys. A few members of the German team carried out some studies there, but until now only scattered references to these groups are found in the published literature.

Finally, there is a large, but thinly populated, territory in the northeastern sector of the Mek culture area where the same language, Ketengban, is spoken. Andrew and Anne Sims, missionary linguists with SIL, have carried out linguistic and anthropological studies here (see the bibliography).

The Mek languages have been provisionally assigned the status of a sub-phylum-level family (a one-family stock) of the Trans-New Guinea Phylum (Wurm 1982:187-189), because of its relative isolation. The languages within the Mek family itself appear to be rather homogeneous (Heeschen 1984:113). They are distinguished in a Western and an Eastern group. The Western group includes a diverse group of languages, spoken at Kosarek, Nipsan, Nalca and Eipomek on the north side of the range, and at Korupun and Sela Valley on the south side. The Eastern group, which is more uniform, includes the Ketengban language on the north side and the Una language on the south side of the range (cf. Heeschen 1978). The boundary runs between the Eipomek and Tanime valley, between the

Eyme/Saynme and Thaymak valley, and through the Weip river valley. The Eipo language seems to occupy an intermediate position.

The cultural features of the area are fairly uniform. At the western 'frontier', a mix of Yali and Mek features has been observed. Otherwise, the Mek cultures are generally oriented more towards the Mountain Ok cultures in the east. In this respect, they conform to the same pattern found among the Yali, the Grand Valley Dani and the Western Dani.

Within this configuration, the people around Sela Valley occupy a remarkable position. Their language belongs to the Western group of Mek languages, but there are eastern 'traces', in particular in the *mos* songs. In respect to cultural traits, one encounters influences from both the east and the west (and north) within the valley.

1.1.3 The neighbours of the Mek

The Mek people share their western border with the Yali. The Yali people inhabit, from east to west, the Solo, Seng, Heluk and (east side of the) Kwik valleys on the south side of the range, and on the north side the upper Yahûlî, Habilik and Landi valleys, and furthermore numerous smaller tributary valleys. Klaus-Friedrich Koch (1974), an anthropologist, and Zöllner (1977), a former missionary at Angguruk, wrote their doctoral dissertations on warfare and religion respectively among the Northern Yali, and also published studies on other aspects of their culture. Wilson, also a missionary, wrote an article (1986) about male initiation practices among the Southern Yali and a master's thesis (1988) about their oral culture in relation to the translation of the Bible and the creation of a Yali hymnody.

The eastern boundary – its exact location is not entirely known – is shared with the Mountain Ok. On the south side of the range, a large swath of no-man's land apparently separates the two groups. On the north side, the line appears to run between the Ok Bi valley and the Bame (also known as Ok Bap) valley. Following the Netherlands New Guinea Expedition to the Star Mountains in 1959, several articles were published on some aspects of the Ok culture in this region, namely by Kooijman (1962), Pouwer (1964) and Reynders (1962). But it was the missionary Hylkema (1974) who wrote a perceptive study on the worldview of the Nalum people at Apmisibil.

Turning to the southern border, the mountains abruptly descend into the lowlands. Trails lead down the steep slopes at various points, and there are occasional contacts between the Mek and their southern neighbours. But to my knowledge there are no permanent settlements in the mid-altitude zone. Below this zone live people who used to be known as the Somahai, but today are called Momuna or Momina, a relatively small group of people who maintain a semi-

nomadic way of life in a vast area extending from west of the Balim river to the Steenboom (Ey) river in the east. They are lowlanders whose language, according to Voorhoeve (1975:32), appears to be more related to the Ok and Muyu languages than to the Asmat languages. More recent linguistic studies have been written by Reimer (1986 for example), a member of SIL assigned to study this language. Henson (1988), a missionary living at Sumo, wrote a paper on Momina spirit beings.

The area to the southeast is virtually unknown. According to an SIL missionary (Kroneman, pers. comm.), the people living near Seradala, situated in the lowlands south of the Eyme valley near the west branch of the upper Eilanden river, speak a language closely related to either the Ok language or what has been called the Kupel language.

Finally, the northern frontier is very indistinct. The mountains gradually turn to row after row of undulating foothills which are sparsely inhabited. Eventually the hills give way to the Eastern Lakes Plain. Very little is known about the population living there.

1.2 Climate

1.2.1 Rainfall

The rainfall at Sela Valley was measured virtually each day from May 1980 until March 1991. The Bureau of Meteorology and Geophysics of the Ministry of Communication at Jayapura provided a raingauge of the 'VanDoorn' type as well as a supply of record cards. The gauge was initially located on a slope near the airstrip, but was later relocated about 100 m because of interference by trees that had been planted there in the meantime. Readings were taken at 7 o'clock in the morning. From June 1980 onward, data on the daily rainfall and on the number of raindays (defined as days with a rainfall of least one half mm) were recorded on cards which were forwarded to the Bureau mentioned above each month. Annual records were mailed at the end of each year. In March 1991, a huge landslide wiped out the mission post at Sela Valley. It missed the raingauge by a squeaker, but rainfall readings came, for obvious reasons, to a sudden end. The data cover an uninterrupted period of just over ten years and, therefore, represent the most complete body of information of this kind collected in the Eastern Highlands between Wamena and Oksibil.

The averages of both rainfall (in mm) and raindays for each of the calendar months are given in table 1.1. They were calculated for the period beginning in January 1981 and ending in December 1990.

Table 1.1 Averages of rainfall and raindays at Sela Valley

month	rainfall (mm)	raindays
January	483.6	27.2
February	471.7	25.3
March	461.7	26.1
April	391.4	24.0
May	277.1	23.1
June	256.1	22.7
July	183.7	21.7
August	263.3	23.5
September	267.4	22.7
October	262.3	22.3
November	270.6	21.3
December	446.4	26.9

The monthly averages are 336.3 mm and 23.9 days; the annual averages are 4035.3 mm and 286.8 days.

The highest daily rainfall (107 mm) was recorded on December 17, 1987. The longest period of continuous raindays recorded is forty-four days, from December 1989 to February 1990. Twice there were nine continuous days without rain, in May 1985 and July 1987.

The average annual rainfall of just over 4000 mm, while being the highest on the southern fall of the Eastern Highlands, is lower than had been expected. The probable factors are in my opinion the fact that the site where the raingauge was located, was at a fairly high altitude (1890 m), was rather close (about thirteen km) to the central range, and was situated in the rainshadow of the slope, facing the highlands rather than the foothills or the lowlands to the south.

This average is much lower than the amount of 5171 mm over a total of 312 days, recorded by Hoffmann (1985-89) in the Eipomek valley from November 1975 to December 1976, with two interruptions. On the basis of this he estimates the annual rainfall to be close to 6000 mm. It is true that the average rainfall recorded north of the central watershed is generally higher than that measured south of it. But the amount recorded in the Eipomek valley is in my opinion not altogether representative; moreover, the recording period was both short and discontinuous.

The effect of the so-called El Niño weather pattern during 1982-83 shows up very distinctly in the records. In June 1982, the amount of rainfall began to drop well below average, and from that month on until December 1982 the monthly totals were the lowest on record, as were the number of raindays. In November

1982, only forty-nine mm of rain fell over a total of seven days. During that time the valleys began to fill up with haze and smoke, drifting in from the lowlands and rising up to as high as 3000 m. The forest became crackling dry, and rivers and creeks dwindled in size.

1.2.2 Weather patterns

An average day in this part of the highlands has the following pattern. At sunrise, the sky is virtually clear, there is little or no wind, the humidity is between ninety and one hundred percent, and the temperature ranges between twelve and fourteen degrees Celsius. As a result of the sunshine, the mercury rises quickly until the temperature reaches twenty-five degrees or higher, while the humidity goes down to about eighty percent, sometimes even lower. Before long, cloud formations appear on the high ranges and around the peaks. After 9 o'clock the wind picks up. Clouds float into the valley from the lowlands through the Thay river gorge, slowly dissolving at first. When the saturation point is reached, the valley closes down quickly. By noontime visibility is virtually zero on the slopes. The humidity level is increasing and the temperature begins its long downward slide. The wind may calm down. Shortly after noon a drizzle (*mùru*) begins to fall, which soon changes into a steady rain (*mùk*). The afternoons are monotously foggy, rainy and cool. Towards dusk it may sometimes clear up a little. Rain continues well into the evening; clear nights are rare. After midnight the sky usually opens up.

What is the effect of this on the people? In contrast to, for example, the Yali or the Hupla, the Mek people are early risers. They are up and around well before sunrise, and are on their way to the gardens before 7 o'clock in the morning. There they work until 2 or 3 o'clock in the afternoon. They try to be back in the village before the rain starts coming down. But it is not uncommon to see women returning in the rain, heavily loaded with potatoes, firewood and sometimes a little child perched on top of that, followed by men carrying heavy logs on their shoulders. After nightfall they rarely venture outside.

There are also seasonal variations. From December until April, the mornings are clear and sunny, but there are heavy showers during the afternoon and throughout the night. Beginning in May, precipitation begins to decrease. But from then on until about August a persistent fog blanks the valleys. Humidity is continuously high. Within one or two hours after the sun appears over the mountains, fog rises up from the valley floor and quickly spreads over the slopes. The temperature hardly rises and hovers around twenty degrees. In September, the weather improves markedly. This is the onset of the dry period. The days are bright and clear. The temperature range is wide. It is the time when one occasionally sees a dusting of snow high up on the ranges. Humidity is generally

lower. By December heavy rains pick up again.

This fluctuating pattern affects the people also. While gardens can be prepared throughout the year, large sections of secondary growth are cleared and burned off during the latter part of the year; smoke can be seen rising from various places in the valley. This is also the time when people travel around more often. They spend most of their time outside. This changes, of course, during the rainy season when drenching rains keep everyone inside in the afternoon. The foggy season, however, is not an enjoyable time. The gardens yield less food and shortages occur, forcing the people to eat the smaller and less desirable potatoes, otherwise given to the pigs, and to go to the forest to gather leaves, ferns and small rodents or other animals. On the one hand, it is a time when sicknesses (sometimes of an epidemic nature) make their rounds and deaths occur more frequently. On the other hand, the fact that the people are forced to collect a greater variety of food and so become less dependent on their staple food, the sweet potato, seems to have a positive effect on their health condition.

1.2.3 Other natural events

A rainbow is called *menù (imange)*. The same word refers to a kind of snake belonging to the python family, which is not found in the valley itself, but in the lowlands.

Occasionally strong mountain winds occur, in particular in the early mornings. They are called *khau*.

Lightning (*beba, bepya*) lights up the evening sky regularly, from all sides. But the thunderstorms are far away in the lowlands (both north and south of the range), and thunder (*limang*) is rarely heard. Hardly ever does a thunderstorm hit the valley itself.

The upper highlands can be freezing cold during the night, especially when it is raining. More than once we heard of people who had died high in the mountains, because they did not make or find a shelter.

Snow is not unknown, and the word for it is *blom deya*. Van der Ven (1913:180) often saw the high peaks covered with snow after clear nights during his sojourn on the peak of Mt. Goliath in February 1911. I have rarely seen snow on the ranges of the Eastern Highlands.

Earthquakes (*suguma'*) occur regularly; tremors are felt once a month on average. A strong earthquake, the epicenter of which was situated in the Solo valley, about thirty km to the west, occurred on January 20, 1981, shortly after midnight. In the following months, hundreds of aftershocks rumbled through the valley. Several people were buried under subsequent landslides. Scars from huge slides are visible throughout the valley.

1.3 The census of 1984 and its update in 1988/89

1.3.1 Introduction

In 1984 I took a census in the greater Sela area. It covered over 2600 persons. A selection of the data is tabulated in Appendix A (and Appendix D).

The list of questions (questionnaire is too fancy a word) was first tested out in one village, to smooth out the way of interviewing the people, and also to determine their response. It turned out that their reaction was quite positive. In each village there were always some willing to help us, and we were usually surrounded by a crowd of men and women who were happy to give whatever information we asked for.

Then I obtained the help of young men who were literate and who lived in the village for which they were asked to collect data. They left with notebook, pencil and the list of questions, and wrote down the information. When they returned, I went over each line of information, and additional data were also written down. All of this was used and cross-checked whenever I visited a village. I could not go to all the settlements in the area at that time, but the data were verified several times over. Whenever people came to the mission post, I checked with them any information regarding them and their relatives that we had on record. Throughout the process, of course, we found and corrected errors.

We recorded the following information:

1. The (proper) name. Name changes are not uncommon and often I obtained the name used at that time as well as the 'old' name.
2. The clan affiliation. While the people were sometimes unsure of someone's name, the clan affiliation was always known. The clans are further discussed in chapter 3.6.
3. The place of birth. If people were born outside the Sela area, the name of their valley or area where they were born was sometimes supplied. By coupling this information with that on place of residence and clan affiliation, we could begin to trace how people, that is members of a given clan, move about, whether or not this is called migration.
4. The gender.
5. The age group. We made use of the categories used by the Sela people themselves, but combined some of them to arrive at the tripartite division of the young people (*mì/kìlmì*; *nìngmabù/kìlmabù*), the adults (*kabìnì/kabìnìkàl*; *nìngabù/kìlabù*; *hong yakni/-kàl*), and the old people (*nong nang/nimi*); see also chapter 3.1 through 3.3.
6. The marital status. If people were married, the monogamous unions were

distinguished from the polygynous ones. If they were not married, we noted whether they were single or widowed. Data on marriage and marital residence are found in chapter 3.3.2.

7. A few primary kin relations were recorded, in particular to the head of the household. The purpose was only to place a person in relation to his or her immediate kin. Where a man had more than one wife, the order of marriage was noted.
8. The affiliation of adult men with a men's hut.
9. A note was made of those who had been baptized.

In 1988/89 I rechecked and updated my census data, to correct any further errors and document the most significant changes that had taken place in the intervening years. Seventy-four corrections were necessary. Information on twenty-three persons had been overlooked or omitted, while there had been eighteen double entries. Two questionable entries were removed. The result was that the population total increased by three. The other corrections were related to – in decreasing frequency – clan affiliation, marital status, age group, place of birth and gender. Several of the changes will be noted in the relevant sections below.

1.3.2 The villages

I will now give a brief description of each of the villages (see map 3). Settlements themselves change continually, and they move, although rarely over a great distance. My description will be based on the situation of 1984, but I will also indicate significant changes that have occurred since then.

We begin in the West Sela. **Kwarangdua** (1800–1900 m), near the airstrip, consists of a number of wards, spread out over a gradual slope (plate 3). They are Blengblengko, Kwarangdua, Sisayak (and Saimdua). The first two wards moved about 100 m in the mid 1980s. Saimdua has dwindled over the years, and does not exist anymore today.

Phoy (1920 m) is a small settlement situated to the northwest, fifteen minutes walking from the strip. The village appears to move up and down the slope, depending on where the gardens are.

North of it is **Mùnamna** (1900 m). This is a composite village. As a result of the heavy fighting in which their neighbours of Orisin were embroiled in the late 1970s, the people from Kwalboron and Sùlda fled to Mùnamna. By 1984 some had returned to **Kwalboron** (1980 m), and by 1987 **Sùlda** (1900 m) had been rebuilt. I have on record who have moved back, but I have not split up the data collected in 1984.

The village of **Oldomon** (1980 m) is situated in the upper Oli river valley. It is a compactly built village, built on a promontory overlooking the valley. From there, a major trail leads to the Erok valley via the Olmin pass.

Down the valley lies the village of **Orisin** (1740 m; see plate on front cover). The huts are also built closely together. Although it is located at the foot of a steep mountain, the Kùmnang range (2750 m), the location is safe from landslides.

A number of villages are found on a ridge between the Alup and the Oli river. **Surumdamak** (1970 m) is built on its crest. **Mekdou** is located next to it; it used to be situated at some distance, but it moved over, possibly at the urging of the evangelist from Korupun. From this ridge, and from Orisin, a trail leads over the high range towards Nalca.

A little down the slope is a small village, **Eyupmìnak** (1890 m). A garden village across the Oli river became permanently inhabited several years ago, and the village of **Mundon** (1550 m) has since outgrown its mother village. Mundon is located in an amphitheatre-like setting, the only flat land on a steep slope. It consists of two wards, Lukluas and Baruwi. It is here that the most influential leader in the Sela, Wanyasirik Sùl, has settled with his three wives and many children.

We turn to the East Sela. The first village is **Megum** (1550 m). It was located on a sharp ridge overlooking the Thay river, and is clearly visible on the aerial photographs taken in 1945. In September 1987, however, everyone packed up their belongings, took down their huts and relocated to a new site, about 500 m away, called Weriduahak. This happened after a series of 'unexplainable' deaths, attributed to a *bisa' kil*, a (female) spirit which is greatly feared (see chapter 4.2).

Bangkwola, although near to Megum and very close to Weriduahak, is a small but distinct community.

Kyoas (1650 m) is located further up the valley on a gentle slope. A former settlement, Angkalana, used to be situated a little higher up.

On the same slope, but much higher, one finds **Sikyaga** (1830 m), also called Hemhak after a nearby river. From there a trail leads to the lower Hao valley.

At the upper end of the valley is the village of **Uklìn** (1980 m). It is compactly built, and is located near the forest. From there a trail winds its way to the upper Hao valley. Another trail crosses the Mùl river and follows the upper Thay river to the pass and on to the Eyme valley. A small garden hamlet, Dìblam, about four hours away from Uklìn, straddles the Thay river bank. The Phu river, a source of rock for stone blades (*phudala*), joins the Thay river just below Dìblam. An offshoot of Uklìn is the village of **Ìdyama** (1630 m), which is located far below on a small plateau a few minutes from Kyoas.

Bera (1615 m) is the only village on the north side of the valley at present. There used to be another village, called Lìblum, just across from Uklìn.

Then the villages in the two valleys to the south. In the upper Hao valley we find the village of **Haromon**, at 2100 m the highest settlement in the Sela area. It is densely built on a flat area near the forest. From there a trail leads into the Saynme valley, and another one south to the Weip valley. There is also a trail going down the valley, but it does not appear to be traveled much at all; one has to clamber down a steep gorge. For demographic purposes, I have listed Haromon under the East Sela category.

Sinayom comprises a number of small settlements in the lower Hao valley. The largest is a new one, called **Kumdakla** (1370 m), to which many people are now moving. Another one is **Kabìdìya** (1310 m), the lowest settlement in the area. From Kumdakla one can walk to Sela Valley in less than a day.

Finally the villages in the Weip valley, from where the lowlands can be clearly seen. Most of the people on the West flank have moved to live close to the site of the new airstrip (see chapter 5). There are, or were, three distinct communities, **Kwelamdua** (1500 m), **Bolkiriknadua** and **Yalidomon**. In earlier days, people were also living in Bamdua, a few hours up the valley, near the juncture of the Weip and the Yali river. That site is also visible on the 1945 photographs.

Across the Weip river, which also functions as a language boundary, is the village of **Bidabuk** (1590 m). The Bidabuk people live far and wide on that side of the valley and even in some locations in the Yay valley. From Bidabuk, a trail leads to the east. From this valley there are also trails going down into the lowlands (plate 2).

1.3.3 The households and the men's houses

The members of a household are those whose names were given to me, when I asked who lived in, or was affiliated with, a family hut (*diba*). They are usually a husband and wife (or wives) with their children, some other relatives, like a widowed mother or a brother and his family, and certain non-relatives, such as 'adopted' children or single males. There is a great variety of possibilities. The male adults and adolescents sleep in the men's hut, while the females and the younger children sleep in the family hut and are its actual occupants.

I noted a few times that there were more than one fireplace in a family hut, separated by an inner wall, with or without an interior connecting passage way. In those cases the number of households equalled that of the fireplaces. One could in this case also say that there are two huts which share one roof.

In each village one usually comes across a number of males, from each age group, who are not affiliated with any one family house. These 'leftovers' were, by my informants, marked as members of a certain men's house. They are of course included in the total number of inhabitants, but do not constitute a household.

Their number is so low, that the impact on the analysis is negligible. There is one exception, however. In the Southeast there are eighty-nine males (one old, seventy adult, eighteen young) who are not affiliated with a household; of over 80 percent of them, one or both of their parents had died. Including them would skew the data on the average household size in that area.

The number of 'occupants' ranges from one to eleven. The size of the average household is 4.7 (5.9 in the Southeast when the ninety or so males are included, 5.0 when they are not).

The number of households in a village ranges from seven (Bolkiriknadua) to fifty-six (Mùnamna, undivided) or fifty-five (Kwarangdua), corresponding to some extent to the size of the village.

The figures I arrived at are similar to those calculated for a few villages in the Eipomek valley (Röll and Zimmermann 1979:6, 14-15; Michel 1983:25).

Adult men were also asked for the men's house (*yùwi*) they were affiliated with. Sometimes this question remained unanswered, for example if a (garden) hamlet did not have a men's house, or if a man lived outside a village in a hut near his garden. But if a man lives in a village, he belongs to one of the men's houses of that village, although not necessarily to the one of the ward in which his family hut is located.

The number of men's houses in a village ranges from one to five, and corresponds basically with the number of wards or hamlets making up a village. But one should note that several villages are built quite compactly, and that no wards are distinguished there; then we find more than one men's house. The traditional men's houses are all named.

Nowadays, men also live in houses where devotions are held or which double up as rooms for literacy classes. It is my impression that younger men are more likely to live there. Once I noticed that a new men's house had been built as an extension of the traditional men's house. It had no name and was occupied by younger men.

In three out of five cases, father and son(s) are occupants of the same men's house. Over seventy percent of the brothers live in the same house.

The number of occupants ranges from four to thirty (adult males), but is higher if the older boys are included, who often sleep there, too. The average is approximately twelve. These figures are similar to those for the Eipomek valley (Michel 1983:25, 31; Koch 1984:17). The men's houses in Eipomek are also named.

1.3.4 The age groups

In 1984, the young age group constituted 39.8 percent of the total population, the adult age group 54.7 percent and the old age group 5.5 percent. In 1988/89 the

percentages had changed to 46.1, 49.7 and 4.2 respectively.

The sex ratio for each of the three groups was 135, 107 and 38 respectively, and just over 111 for the entire population in 1984. These numbers had changed little four years later (see Table 2 in Appendix A).

The sex ratios are fairly balanced in the East Sela and show a greater variation (among the young) in the West Sela. In the Southeast, however, they are very different. There they are for 1984: young 216, adult 135, old 13, total 150−; and for 1989: young 219, adult 124, old 26, total 150+. This means that there exists either a surplus of males or a shortage of females. The ratio of the young age group to the total population was, as we noted, almost forty percent for the greater Sela area in 1984. This is, according to Van Baal, a normal percentage in a pre-contact situation. But in the Southeast it was more than three percent (36.7) lower, and this may point to a shortage of girls due to the practice of preferential female infanticide (see further chapter 3.1.3). Although in 1988/89 the ratio of the young to the population increased to 46.1 percent (45.5 percent in the Southeast), there was no correction of the imbalance in the sex ratio; on the contrary, for the young age group it increased to 219. I have elaborated more on this in an earlier paper (Godschalk 1990; see Appendix D in this study).

On the basis of the pattern of the sex ratio and the ratio of the young to the number of inhabitants, I have included Haromon with the villages of the East Sela.

The demographic picture in the Eipomek valley parallels the one that I have encountered in the lower Hao and the Weip valley (see Schiefenhövel 1984 and 1988:67-84).

Concerning the age group of the old people, there are relatively few of them in the Southeast. In 1984, over 72 percent of them were women; this increased to over 76 percent in 1988/89. Of the men, slightly more than half of them are still married. But most of the women (four out of five) are widows. Thus five out of six who have been widowed are women. When a spouse dies, the surviving partner may continue the household. But in most cases, he or she moves in with the household of one of their sons or, less often, one of their daughters. The preference towards being incorporated in the household of the son's family may be a reflection of the relationship between parents and their children. On the other hand, most of the men, after they marry, remain living in the village of their parents, while only half of the women do.

1.3.5 How people move

With regard to every person, I asked where he or she was born. Those who are considered to have been born locally were born in the village in which they now reside, though not necessarily in the same ward, or on sites (for example in huts

near the gardens) that are associated with that village, or in places which have since been abandoned but are considered related to that village. Each village has its own interesting history, and this shows up clearly in the information concerning the place of birth. Immigrants are those who were born in other settlements, either within or outside the area of study. At one time or other they moved to where they are living now. I have no specific records about those who moved out of the greater Sela area.

Given these parameters, 76.6 percent of the population was born locally (in 1984; see Table 3 in Appendix A). In the Southeast it is 86.0 percent; it seems that the villages there are more self-contained. The range is from ninety-three percent in Sinayom in the lower Hao valley to almost fifty-three percent in Phoy in the West Sela.

Apart from those who moved within one of the three main regions or between them, it is of greater interest to see the pattern of the movement of people from outside the Sela area into this region. We note then, first of all, the relatively large number of people coming from the valleys to the west: seventy-six. Forty of them originate from the Korupun or Duram area alone. All but two of the seventy-six moved to the West Sela, and none to the East Sela. It is significant that more people moved to the West Sela from areas to the west than from the East Sela (forty). Geographical proximity apparently does not imply social proximity; or in other words, rivers function more as boundaries than mountains do. But geographical nearness does play a role. For those from the west moved to the westernmost villages in the West Sela (Phoy, Mùnamna, Oldomon), while those from the East Sela moved to places like Mekdou or Mundon.

Only eleven people, all of them women who are – or were – married, are recorded to have come from valleys to the east. They now live in either the Southeast or the East Sela, but not in the West Sela.

When we, finally, look at both the marital status and the gender of the immigrants, we note once more a distinct difference. There are 106 (formerly) married men (out of 197 male immigrants), but 368 women (out of 418 female immigrants) who are or were married or who remarried (see Table 4 in Appendix A). These women constitute 60 percent of the total number of immigrants, and 88 percent of the total number of female immigrants. Almost half of the number of marriageable females has moved away from their place of birth at one point in their life. It seems to us that most of the females move with a view to marrying (either virilocal or neolocal mode of marital residence).

Of the other ninety-one male immigrants, thirty-eight are single men and fifty-three are children; of the other fifty females, forty-three are children and just seven are women who are not (yet) married.

1.3.6 The 1988/89 update of the census

In this paragraph I just mention some of the more significant changes, in as far as these have not yet been referred to. The population in the greater Sela area increased to almost 2900 people (see Table 1 in Appendix A). Over an averaged period of four years and four months it grew by just under 10 percent (see Table 3 in Appendix D), or more than 2.2 percent annually. The increase was only 5.2 percent in the East Sela, but 15.7 percent in the Southeast, where Bidabuk topped the list of villages with an increase of 19.5 percent.

This increase is solely due to a net gain within the young age group. This group grew by 27.4 percent in the region (see Table 4 in Appendix D), increasing the ratio of the young to the total population to over 46 percent. In the Southeast, the young age group increased by 43.4 percent. There I noted a high number of 'new' marital unions. This was not completely unexpected, for in 1984 I had been told that quite a few young men had already been 'promised' to their future wives. In spite of this, these couples accounted for only 20 percent of the children born between 1984 and 1989. Another 20 percent were 'first' children of couples who were (just) married in 1984. The others were born in families which already had children. More important is the fact that many more boys than girls (sixty-two over against thirty-nine; sex ratio of 159) were recorded to have been born in these years, keeping the sex ratio of the young age group far above normal. In fact, it went up from 216 to 219, for a variety of reasons.

Furthermore, the birth rate increased significantly. During the period mentioned above, 377 children were born (see Table 5 in Appendix D); fifteen of them died, together with twenty-four other children. Because the interval between the original census and its update coincided roughly – it was slightly higher – with the average interval between the birth of children, I recorded one birth per mother in five out of six cases. The other cases are interesting, however. Some women had two children, but spaced at least three years apart. But others gave birth to a child within three years after their last child was born. The closest interval was nineteen months. This indicates a departure from a custom found in the highlands, where children are spaced three to four years. The reply I received on my queries was intriguing. The local people have noticed that the Dani families (all Christians) usually live together as nuclear families. When they themselves become Christians, and especially if they are chosen for a church ministry, they tend to emulate this new pattern. But, unlike the Dani, they do not have access to anti-conception drugs. Hence a higher frequency in pregnancies and births among them.

1.4 Contact with the outside world

Rather than focus on the Sela Valley area alone, I will give a brief account of the contact of the Mek people as a whole with the 'outside' world.

1.4.1 The first encounters in 1910-1911

The highest (snow-capped) peak of the Eastern Highlands (its elevation is estimated at approximately 4700 m) was sighted by members of a military exploration team from a distance of about 80 km to the south on September 6, 1909. It was named the Juliana Peak (Hellwig 1910a; Heldring 1910 includes three panoramic sketches); its co-ordinates are 140° 16' E and 4° 41' S. It has since been renamed Gunung Mandala by the Indonesian administration.

From that time on, these teams, while exploring and mapping the numerous rivers in the southern lowlands, made an effort to reach the highlands from the south. In 1910 they worked their way up along the Eilanden and the Kolff river further to the west (Hellwig 1910b). In June 1910, Schaeffer reached the Pandan Hill, where he found a few (tree) huts and left some trade goods behind (Schaeffer 1910). In August 1910, he and Van der Ven ascended the next ridge to the east; on the 21st they reached their highest point (2500 m). On August 30, about twenty people approached from the north and began throwing stones, but they quickly disappeared after a few volleys were fired. In January 1911, Schaeffer and Van der Ven resumed their explorations, and on February 5 they reached the peak of Mt. Goliath (elevation 3340 m; the local name is Ùl), where they stayed for three weeks, mapping the ranges and taking bearings of over 150 peaks. In the valley to the northeast (the Sayn river valley) they saw a large village with about 60 houses, situated on a small ridge (a man from Kwelamdua told me that its name could have been Kìtiknahak). They met a few people, presumably from that village, near their bivouac (Van der Ven 1913; the article includes a map, three panoramic sketches and six photographs).

At the same time, A.C. de Kock[1] came in contact with people on the south side of the Goliath. On January 31, 1911, he met a few individuals and a family on the trail. In the following weeks he was able to visit a village on the west flank of the Goliath (in the Yay river valley, near present-day Yalmebi). There he met men and older boys, but he never saw women and smaller children. He counted eleven huts, but was not allowed to enter any one of them.

De Kock wrote a most interesting and quite accurate report (De Kock 1912) about these people, and this in fact is the first ethnographic account of the Goliath

1 Not M.A. de Kock; see the correction in *TKNAG* 29:598.

pygmies, as they were then called. I give a brief summary. De Kock first reports briefly how the first encounter came about. He and his men, the visitors, were from the beginning recognized as human beings, not spirits. He notes their jovial character. He observed how gardens were cultivated. He notes the absence of a distinct form of leadership. He describes the attire and decoration of the males as well as what they carry along, such as bows and arrows, stone adzes, small netbags, and so forth. He saw how fire was made. He describes the food that was eaten, and notes the use of tobacco. He reports about the structure of the huts. He saw a handdrum, and notes how stone adzes were manufactured. He found the people to be generally healthy. He discovered their way of counting (up to 27), which uses body parts, going from the pink at the left hand up to the head and down the other side. He measured twelve males. Finally, he collected a list of over eighty words and of the numbers.[2] This is a remarkable document, all the more so because it was not until almost fifty years later that outsiders visited this area again, and linguistic and anthropological studies began in earnest only in the 1960s and 1970s. I include an English translation of this article in Appendix B.

The location of both villages is marked in Van der Ven (1913: map IV). The people that lived in village A (in the Yay valley) apparently were not living there in 1945 (see below), but the site can still be clearly recognized from the air today. I crossed the Yay valley once further downstream, but had no time to visit the location itself and did not obtain the name of the (former) settlement.

The anthropometric data, body colour data and hair samples, collected by De Kock, were analyzed by Van den Broek (1911; 1913) and compared with similar data obtained from other inhabitants of New Guinea, especially the Pesechem.

It is less well known that at the same time a naturalist, Albert S. Meek, was collecting birds, and moths and butterflies (*lepidoptera*) on the Goliath on behalf of Walter Rothschild in England. Since July 1910, he had been collecting specimens at the (Upper) Setekwa river, further to the west. In December of that year he accepted an offer to join the expedition to the Goliath. From January to March 1911 he made his camp on the slopes of the Goliath at an altitude of about 2000 m, together with twelve boys from then Papua (Australian New Guinea) as his assistants. In fact, these youngsters were the first ones to meet with the local visitors who had come to the camp, and they made it possible for Meek – and De Kock – to visit their village. Meek, however, hardly makes any references to his encounters with the local people. He collected 64 species of birds in this habitat, of which twelve (or thirteen) were previously unknown and three were rare. Among the species were fly catchers, honey eaters, and especially birds of paradise, such as the

2 The errors in the list of numbers are corrected in Le Roux (1948-50: II.529).

Pteridophora Alberti, *Paradigalla Brevicauda*, *Loboparadisea Sericea*, *Astrapia Splendidissima*, and the *Falcinellus Striatus Atratus*, a male specimen of which was presented to the Governor-General of the Netherlands Indies (cf. Meek 1913; Rothschild and Hartert 1913).

1.4.2 Explorations in the 1930s

In the late 1930s, exploration teams ascended the rivers as far as the foothills of the Central Highlands to search for gold. Traces of very flaky gold were found in the Brazza and the Kolff river, and a small nugget was discovered in the West I (Bulolo) river. Occasionally the teams met lowland people.

In 1937, officers of the Dutch Navy Aviation Service (*Marineluchtvaartdienst*) made aerial surveys with Fokker T4 (and Dornier) floatplanes along the south side of the Eastern Highlands (Klein 1938). They discovered the Sibil valley, and found the valleys to be well inhabited, in particular those northwest of the Juliana peak.

In June 1989, I interviewed an older man living in Mundon, Wanyasirik Sùl, the most influential person in the Sela area. He recalled that one day – he was at that time still a small boy – he and other people were in the village of Boblahak (Eyup), when they suddenly heard a strange sound. They looked around, then saw two 'things' appear over the Yalomna hill in the west. Startled by the sound and the sight, they ducked away wherever they could. The planes flew past the valley and disappeared over the Morongkù range in the east. According to Wanyasirik, the people associated these planes with (splinters of) the *yùli kal*, a tree which in the primordial time rose up high near Megum, but then came down one day. The significance of the *yùli kal* will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 4.1.4.

1.4.3 Aerial surveys in 1945

Early in 1945, U.S. Air Force planes made a number of flights over the Eastern Highlands and took trimetrogon aerial photographs of the terrain, within the framework of the TOPAM mapping project. Apart from the area surrounding Mt. Goliath, these photographs are the first evidence that many valleys in the Mek area were at that time already inhabited.

Verstappen (1952:425-430) published a geomorphological study based on these photographs. Other studies of the highlands or sections of it were prepared in the late 1950s.

Helmcke (1983) analyzed the same photographs and drew some important conclusions. First, he discovered that all the valleys that were inhabited in 1976 were already populated in 1945. Second, he noted that in the Mek area the huts within the settlements are built closely together and that these settlements, therefore, can

be easily recognized on the photographs, whereas further to the west, beginning with the Solo valley, the houses are standing farther apart; from this he inferred that there existed some kind of a culture boundary. This is correct; the people living in the Solo valley and further to the west are Yali (an eastern Dani society).

1.4.4 Scientific and other expeditions

A Dutch expedition carried out field research among the Mountain Ok in the Star Mountains in 1959. Five participants made an exploratory trek through the Ok Tsop valley in a westerly direction and reached the Juliana Peak for the first time on September 9, 1959 (Brongersma and Venema 1960).

Pouwer (1964) reports that one of the tribes in the Star Mountains are the Kupel ('inland people'), living in two or three parishes in the Upper Tsop river valley and in parishes along the Ok Bi. According to him, Anceaux discovered close parallels between Kupel words and the wordlist by De Kock. This discovery has since been confirmed.

A French expedition led by Gaisseau traversed the center of the Mek region from south to north in the last months of 1959 and early months of 1960 (Saulnier 1962). They went up the Eyme valley and down the Eipomek valley. They had occasional encounters with the local people, but were not allowed to enter their villages. Gaisseau made a documentary film, called *Le Ciel et la Boue* (*The sky above, the mud below*).

Ten years later Gaisseau, a few colleagues and a number of Indonesian paratroopers made a parachute drop in the Eipomek valley – also known as X valley or *Lembah X* – and stayed there for two months (Laporan 1970).

From 1974 to 1976, a large interdisciplinary research project was carried out by the German Research Team; it was initiated by the Museum of Ethnography in Berlin and sponsored by the German Research Society.

The focus of the investigation was mainly on the inhabitants of the Eipo and Fa river valleys, as well as on groups living further east. The aim was to systematically document data about the people, their culture and their environment. The study programme incorporated disciplines such as ethnology, physical anthropology, (ethno-)medicine, anthropogeography, archeology, climatology, botany, zoology, musicology, and so on. The project was abruptly terminated by the Indonesian government at the end of 1976.

Since that time a stream of publications, mostly in German, has been published, the more important ones in the series "Mensch, Kultur und Umwelt im zentralen Bergland von West-Neuguinea".

1.4.5 Missions and churches on the scene

Protestant missionaries began to enter the Mek area as early as 1963. Their usual approach was, first, to reconnoitre the valleys from the air (by airplane, later on also by helicopter) to find potential sites for airstrips, then to come in (by land or from the air), build the strips, construct houses and fly in their families. They began learning the local language and (all too) soon shared their message. Several missionaries carried out research individually, mostly in linguistics. Culture studies have in general lagged behind.

The following stations were opened in the Mek area (see also map 2).

The UFM, a North American evangelical mission, operating north of the range, opened Nalca in 1963, Bime in 1971, Omban in 1973, Eipomek in 1976, as well as Borme.

The RBMU, another evangelical mission, working south of the range, moved in from the west and opened Korupun in 1963 and Sela Valley in 1980.

The NRC, a Dutch Reformed mission, first opened Nipsan in the northwest in 1971, then also began working in the southeast, where it established Langda in the Eyme valley in 1973, Bomela in the Saynme valley in 1976 and Sumtamon, south of Gunung Mandala, in 1983.

The GKI, the largest Protestant (mainline) church in Irian Jaya, founded a mission post at Kosarek in the In valley, not far from Angguruk.

The SIL, an evangelical mission specializing in Bible translation and literacy work, did not establish separate stations (it could not so under the terms of its contracts with the various government ministries or institutions), but sent teams, at the request of the respective missions or churches, to work in Omban, Kosarek and Langda so far. There they became involved in language analysis, Bible translation and literacy as well as in community development projects.

1.4.6 Government activities

We have hardly referred to the activities of the government. The military exploration teams did their work in the early part of this century by order of the government of the Dutch Indies. Their interaction with the Mek people, although of interest because it was the first encounter with total strangers for both of them, was fleeting and lasted only for a few weeks. In 1959, a Dutch official accompanied the Gaisseau expedition on behalf of the government of Dutch New Guinea (Sneep 1961-62). But the Dutch administration was not in a position to extend its influence and control over any part of the Mek area before it left the territory in 1962, forced as it was by the political events.

The Indonesian government continued the administrative structure of the area, set up by the Dutch, and the entire Mek area falls within the boundaries of the *kecamatan* (district) Kurima, an area of more than 13.000 square km, with its capital, Kurima, situated in the Lower Grand Valley. But it has never really penetrated the Mek region. Occasionally police patrols are sent in, mostly at the request of missionaries, when fighting occurs. There are public (elementary) schools as well as health services, but originally these were invariably established by the mission organizations. Community development projects, too, are almost always initiated by non-government organizations. Government officials have hardly visited the Sela area, at least not during the years that I lived at Sela Valley.

1.5 Research conditions

On March 4, 1980, my wife and I landed on the Sela strip for the first time, together with our future colleagues. The ladies spent less than an hour on the ground, then left for Korupun. The men did their business, and walked over to Korupun the next day.

On May 23, 1980, my colleague and I returned. That day marked the opening of the mission post Sela Valley. The wives and children followed a couple weeks later. Our assignment was to learn the language spoken in the Sela area. I was then to study language and culture with a view to Bible translation and as part of the overall mission approach; my wife was in charge of the medical work. We (and our children during their school holidays) lived at Sela Valley until May 1981, then went on furlough. We returned in January 1982 and stayed on until May 1985.

Then our employment changed. We returned to Irian Jaya in August 1987, to work at the Irian Jaya Study Centre (Pusdi) under contract with the Cenderawasih University (UnCen) in Jayapura and the Directorate General for International Co-operation (DGIS) in The Hague, the Netherlands. My main assignment was the study of cargoism which had been my other field of interest, within the context of the development of Irian Jaya. But my job description also included the continuation of my study in the Sela area. So we visited Sela Valley during the months of October 1987, December 1987 – January 1988, October – November 1988, and June 1989. Then we returned to Canada.

After that I was in Irian Jaya twice at the invitation of the Provincial Government, and was able to visit Sela Valley for a week in November 1990 and in December 1991. During this last visit, I stayed in the ward Blengblengko of Kwarangdua, sleeping in a small room behind the new clinic, for in March 1991 the mission post had been obliterated by a huge landslide which had also destroyed

our house. Since the airstrip was still partly covered with debris and mud, I had to walk in from Korupun and back out again that way.

As I mentioned, we had to start our work in a virtual mono-lingual situation. The initial emphasis, besides trying to learn the local language, was on observing what was going on around us. Thus we went around with notebook and pencil. We walked a lot, and over the years visited so to speak every nook and cranny of the area under the responsibility of the mission post Sela Valley. We have always made it a point to join the people on the trail and visit their villages, and overnight there. I enjoyed trekking through the highlands.

As soon as we could express ourselves a little in the local language, however foolishly, we began to try to converse with the people in their own vernacular. The conversations – I am uncomfortable with the term 'interview' – were for the most time unstructured and open-ended. Often I had in mind what I wanted to bring up, but if my partners wanted to talk about something else, that was fine by me. Everything was interesting and new for me anyway. I always took care that I would not interrupt their work schedule, in the garden, the village or the classroom. I had to remind myself constantly that the valley was their land and the culture their heritage, and that I was their guest. I had come to learn, not to teach, much less to impose my views.

We talked with the many visitors to the mission post – our house has always been an open house – as well as with the people in their own village. Their contribution to this study may be 'invisible', but it is substantial, for they often helped fill in the gaps. In addition to this rather amorphous group, there are a few informants whom I should mention, because I spent much time with them or they were readily available to answer my queries. They are first of all Limbum Sùl from Mundon, and his father, Wanyasirik Sùl. Through the son I often accessed a treasure trove in the mind and memory of the father. Another son, Bundam Sùl, also helped me a few times. Furthermore Lukas (his new name) Wakla from Kwarangdua and Darius Magayang from Kwelamdua, as well as Obùm Mirin from Orisin, through whom I was in touch with some of the older men in that village. I should also mention some women, Mirirubkùl Ousu and Esìk Sùl, both from Kwarangdua. In addition, I went to the Dani workers for information on some occasions, but this was more for comparative purposes.

Concerning the greater Sela area, there was virtually nothing available in the literature; just a report or two about the missionary involvement. I could start my research at any point. The studies about the Eipo people were, however, a great help, even though there were many obvious differences, the language to begin with. I never visited Eipomek or the area further east. I did walk to Langda (and Bomela) in September 1983, and exchanged information with the resident mis-

sionary, Mr. Jan Louwerse. I did not visit the valleys east of Langda. On the west end, Korupun was of course familiar territory. The dictionary Kimyal – English and its counterpart, prepared by the linguist-missionary, Ms. Elinor Young, was a useful help to compare notes, although the Sela people could without hesitation tell me the Korupun variant of any word or expression. I also was in touch with Dr. Volker Heeschen, whom I visited in Kosarek in January 1981, the day of the destructive earthquake in the Solo valley, while he visited us at Sela Valley in December 1983. From Kosarek I walked to Nalca by way of Nipsan and Kono. From Korupun I crossed the high range in July 1983, on my way to Angguruk to discuss another project with Dr. Siegfried Zöllner. I visited the Dagi valley and the valleys south of it in November 1980, and was in the Dagi again in July 1982, on my way to Sela Valley from Soba. Although there is almost no information available on the people living in these valleys, at least I learned a little bit about them and their environment. The treks also helped to establish personal contacts here and there.

An indirect, but from an historical perspective interesting, source of information are the trimetrogon aerial photographs of the Eastern Highlands, taken in February 1945 (see section 1.4.3 above).

Finally, our relationship with the other institutions one usually has to deal with in the field. About the Indonesian government we can be brief. There was no government apparatus present in the Sela area. The elementary school started by the mission became a state supported school (Inpres) at some time. We knew the one or two teachers, but had no intensive contact with them. More teachers arrived only towards the end of 1991.

Concerning the local church, we had no official relationship with it or function in it. But if the church leaders came to us for consultations or just to talk things over informally, we were happy to sit down with them. Otherwise, we participated in the life and activities of the church as fellow Christians, and enjoyed our friendship with many fellow believers.

In stark contrast to this, our relationship with the mission deteriorated and, much to our regret, broke down completely in the end. Since this had a major impact on our work, we will briefly deal with this.

Our former colleagues were familiar with the area and the people, for they had worked in Korupun from 1969 to 1973. Then they lived in Karubaga for a few years. In 1980 they moved back to the area, not to Korupun but to Sela Valley. They spoke the local language well, but with a Korupun 'accent'. In many other respects, too, it was their experience in Korupun that coloured their attitude and determined their approach towards the Sela people. Furthermore, their understanding of doing mission in the 1980s, even in an area as isolated as the Sela, was – at least to my mind – both unreflective and superficial. This in spite of the fact

that in the evangelical community, too, a new understanding of mission is breaking through and, for example, the obligation to understand local cultures and – on this basis – the need to try to anticipate the response of the people to new ideas, beliefs or programs is being recognized. Moreover, according to the policies adopted by the mission, the so-called spiritual ministries have first priority. In reality, however, this left room for some to infer that the opinion of the 'other' missionaries could be ignored at will if it appeared to be in conflict with their spiritual ministry or rather their understanding of it. In other words, these missionaries were (no doubt unconsciously) considered second-class colleagues. It is only self-evident that an integrated approach then is out of the question.

Thus my work and study within the context of the mission outreach was either downgraded or disregarded. The same happened to my wife in her medical work. So we had to draw the line in order to maintain the integrity of our research. That earned us the wrath of our colleagues and of the mission, and we had to hand in our resignation papers in 1985.

We came back to Irian Jaya in 1987 to work at the Irian Jaya Study Centre. Before long we returned to Sela Valley for occasional visits, despite the – initial – opposition on the part of the mission. We continued our relationship with the Sela people, quietly and devoid of pretense as it had been in the past. In fact, they opened up in their conversations and shared much more with us than they had in earlier years. During those periodic visits I learned more from them than I ever did before. We also learned something else. In 1985 we had left as missionaries, in 1987 we were welcomed back as friends.

Plate 1 The East Sela

Plate 2 The Southern Lowlands visible from Bidabuk (Weip valley)

Plate 3 The village of Kwarangdua, surrounded by gardens

Plate 4 The *dùbna* spring trap

Plate 5 Megum gardens above the Thay river

Plate 6 Garden mounds on a rock slope near Sugul (East Sela)

Chapter 2

The Sela Valley People and their Environment

In this chapter I discuss the so-called economic dimension of the Mek culture among the Sela people, or the various ways in which these men and women interact with their environment and utilize it to maintain a sustainable way of life. This covers above all food resources, and how food supplies are gathered or grown (or raised in the case of domestic animals), processed and consumed. Then we list and describe the various categories of the material culture, such as attire and ornaments, tools and utensils, weapons, houses and settlements, and finally expressions of art, such as songs and dances.

2.1 Food gathering

The Mek people, like all highlanders in New Guinea, are essentially horticulturalists; the bulk of their food is grown in their gardens.

A supplementary source of food is obtained by means of gathering, either by collecting certain plants and animals day by day, or by hunting and trapping ('passive hunting') occasionally. Although fish is not unfamiliar to those living at Sela Valley[1] and, for example, a word in the local language, *deban/diban*, refers to a large fish found in rivers in the lowlands, they themselves do not fish.

2.1.1 Collecting

Everyone participates in collecting plants or animals, in the gardens, in fallow and grasslands, in ponds and near creeks, and in the forest. But it is mostly women and children who do this on a daily basis. They catch small animals, such as lizards,

1 De Kock (1912:163) noticed this already when he met the people in the Yay valley.

frogs, tadpoles, grasshoppers, beetles, beetle grubs, bugs, spiders, dragon flies, mice or rats, which are rarely eaten by males. Plants collected by them include leaves or shoots of semi-domesticated plants, such as an acanthus variety (*kalu*), a kind of cane (*begi*) or a type of grass (*nongi*), fruits and seeds, such as cucumber (*sumik*), chayote (*sùkkob*), a local bean variety (*nali*) or a kind of parsley (*yhali*), and edible fungi plucked from tree stumps. Like the Mountain Ok, but unlike the Dani, they rarely pluck or eat the leaves of the sweet potato plant.

Men collect the red pandanus fruit (*ken* or *ban*); only the (*lila'*) initiates are allowed to consume it. Both men and women collect the nutty pandanus (*yùwìn*) growing high up in the forest, when it ripens every third year.

Whenever the gardens produce less food than anticipated and a shortage of sweet potatoes occurs, people go to the forest more often than usual to search for additional food as a substitute to supplement their diet.

2.1.2 Hunting

Hunting is fairly insignificant, because there is very little game available; there is no special hunting season. Yet whenever people walk through the forest, they constantly watch for birds or animals moving around. Hunting is an activity carried out exclusively by men, for they control its primary tools, the bow and arrow, and mostly by younger, unmarried males. Dogs are rarely used in hunting.

Forest animals hunted include mammals, such as various kinds of marsupials, rats, bats or cuscus, as well as the cassowary which is found in the lower ranges of the forest.

Birds are hunted in particular. Whenever people see them, their first reaction is to throw stones at them, and then to grab bow and arrow to go after them and stalk them. Bird blinds (*winang bar*) are sometimes built in trees in the forest, to watch for and shoot birds. I once came across three such hides constructed closely together on the Sela hill. Numerous feathers were stuck in at the foot of the trees, each one indicating a catch. Among the birds hunted are pigeons (*yalma*), honey eaters, doves (*lon*), and – closer to the lowlands – birds of paradise (*kwilib*).

Hunting takes place for several reasons: to obtain food (a protein source), to prepare for certain ceremonies, and to gather decorative materials.

2.1.3 Trapping

Like hunting, trapping appears to be an activity in which only men are involved. This is certainly the case among the Eipo. I do not know whether women at Sela Valley are allowed to set traps as those in Langda are, according to Blum (1979:15).

There are basically two types of traps: the spring trap (*dùbna*, Eipo *wena*; see plate 4) and the weight trap (*wena'*, Eipo *fena*; these two words are cognate). In the first the spring power is provided by a tree (*yina'*), bent over to pull the loop taut when the trigger stick (*bebna*) is activated by an animal, thereby strangling it. In the second it is a heavy piece of wood hanging under the trap that works on the same principle.

I have encountered a number of different traps. In the forest, people construct (both weight and spring type) traps on tree poles placed or bent over trails; the traps are carefully 'hidden' by ferns, which also 'direct' the animals into the loop. Along these trails one also finds ground traps (spring type obviously) to catch small rodents. Another kind of ground trap is used to catch the *yalma* pigeon; the bird is lured inside the cage-like construction by sweet potato morsels. Another place where one finds traps are the gardens. Small ground traps are set there to catch mice.

Finally, a rather unique sort of trap is used to catch bats. Near the mouth of a large sinkhole in the East Sela, a veritable roosting place for hundreds of bats (*khei*), a thin tree pole with streamers of barbed vines had been bent down in such a way that, when bats appeared towards dusk, at least some would hopefully fly into this mesh and be caught in the barbs.

Although these methods of obtaining additional food resources are not significant 'economically', they are an important means whereby the Sela Valley people interact with their natural environment and gain knowledge essential to their survival. Already at a young age they begin to familiarize themselves with their surroundings. Wherever men and women go, they are always alert to any sound or sight of animals or plants.

2.2 Animal husbandry

The most important animal raised in the Mek area (and throughout the highlands) is the pig (*mìya'*). Pigs have a significant socio-economic and ritual role in the society, and much effort is devoted to raising and feeding them.

A large segment of the Eipo population is subject to a clan-specific taboo on eating pig meat, based on their origin myths (Michel 1983:80; Koch 1984:80). Certain clans for example are believed to originate from a pig ancestor. Such a stringent taboo affects the inhabitants in the Weip valley, but is not found at all in the Sela area and the Hao valley, even though there are clans that do have pigs as their putative ancestor.

Pigs are owned mostly by men, and cared for by women. Each morning they are carried or driven along to the garden areas, where they forage in abandoned or fallow fields for whatever is left in the ground. In the afternoon they are taken back to the village, and are fed cooked or raw sweet potatoes. They always depend on this, for pigs are not able to take in enough food by foraging only. During the night they are kept inside the family hut in a space bounded by planks which takes up to 25 percent of the living space available. I have not noticed that they are confined to a place under the hut, as they are sometimes in the Eipo valley (Röll and Zimmermann 1979:27; Koch 1984:83; Michel 1983:84-85). My impression is that the floor of family huts in the Sela Valley area is raised much less off the ground or simply is an earth floor.

Men and women may perform a ceremony to promote the growth of pigs. For this they use certain stones. One is a sort of ammonite which, when found at places where pigs roam about, are taken home to secure their health. Another kind are stones, called *yogaba*, which are associated with the *yùli kal* (a primordial tree, see chapter 4) and are considered splinters of it. These stones are rubbed with pig fat to secure overall prosperity, or are rubbed on the skin of pigs to guarantee their well-being. The meaning and use of such stones will be discussed in chapter 4 as well.

The women who take care of pigs are much attached to them, and the pigs respond to this attention; Koch (1984:83) calls it a reciprocal emotional relationship. Pigs follow women closely, or run ahead of them, wherever they may go. If pigs die, the occupants of the family hut may move to another hut.

Pig kills are not frequent. When they are organized, however, they may involve dozens of pigs. They are killed by men with an arrow fitted with a bamboo blade (*lay*), and cut up with a (bamboo, or nowadays steel) knife. Everything is either consumed or kept for ceremonial, decorative or other purposes.

The other indigenous domestic animal, but of little economic use, is the dog (*kam*), of which there are only a few in each village. They are fairly small, have short hair of a yellow-brownish colour, and always look malnourished. They are not used as watchdogs or in hunting.

Recently introduced animals include a larger and fatter strain of pig. The highlanders call it *babi ras*, a term picked up from Indonesian, which means something like 'pedigree pig'. Furthermore, there are chickens by the score, which nowadays compete with the dogs for survival. Finally, one comes across rabbits, which are kept in family huts and have access to a small fenced-in area through a small opening, where they rummage around and are fed greens, such as sweet potato leaves or *yhali* 'parsley'.

2.3 Gardens and gardening

2.3.1 Garden types

Hiepko and Schultze-Motel (1981:6-8) list four basic vegetation types found in the lower montane zone in the Eipomek valley, which are also found in the Sela area. They are (1) the primary forest densily covered with tall trees; (2) the garden lands, where sweet potatoes and other cultivars are grown; after the fields have been utilized, they are allowed to lie fallow and turn into (3) grasslands covered with common grass (*maning*) and the much taller sword grass (*wid*); eventually they revert to (4) secondary forest where the *ùri* tree dominates.

Primary forest is rarely cut down in the Sela area in order to open up new gardens. There seems to be enough land available to rotate gardens. The Eipo literature reports fallow periods ranging from a minimum of 5 years to as long as 15 years. My impression is that in the Sela fallow land is developed into garden land after a much shorter time span. Land used as gardens in 1980, when I arrived at Sela Valley for the first time, was being used again in 1984/5, and again in 1990.

Now the types of garden (*wae*). Apart from small patches in the village (which are usually fenced in), the large garden areas reflect a variety of cultivation techniques (plate 5). Röll and Zimmermann (1979:19) distinguish the following types: (1) large mounds, either round, oval or elongated, built on rather flat (and wet) lands, and surrounded by drainage ditches; (2) terraces constructed along the contour of slopes; and (3) terraces on steeper slopes, supported with sticks and tree poles to prevent erosion. In other words, the choice between different cultivation methods (mounds or terraces) is largely determined by the ecological conditions. The Mek people use excellent techniques to utilize the land they occupy for growing the food they need.

I prefer to combine the second and third type. Dry contour terracing is used on slopes, but whether or not additional support structures are built depends more on the preference of the garden maker and the availability of wood than on the slope gradient.

In the East Sela I have come across another type of garden: small circular mounds on slopes of bare rock, built up by scraping together whatever little soil is there (plate 6). The risk of such mounds being washed away by heavy rains seems to be small, for the rain water dissipates over the rock surface and erosion channels are not formed. I have always been fascinated by the creative abilities of these people to make gardens by using the available resources judiciously.

2.3.2 Land tenure

Land is not owned in the Western sense of the word. But claims to certain areas are definitely maintained by villages and exercised by their inhabitants. For example, it is precisely known which village may lay claim to which forest and mountain territories, and only the people from that village may without suspicion traverse these forests to collect timber, to hunt or to harvest the *yùwin* pandanus (these trees are individually 'owned' by those who have planted or inherited them).

Garden land is claimed and used in a similar way. The gardens are by and large located in the proximity of the villages, although the boundaries are not necessarily equidistant. When the time has come to reactivate fallow land, a large working party of men clears this area in a couple of days. Then it is divided up; in most cases individuals reclaim the parcels of land they have used in the past. The development of garden land is staggered and individual people usually maintain garden sections in several places throughout the area.

Michel (1983:51) writes that the Eipo people (at least of Moknerkon) do not derive property rights from ancestors; only the members of the (original) clan Kisamlu claim a certain area as belonging to them. Heeschen (1984:122-123), on the contrary, reports that the clans among the Yalenang at the western frontier of the Mek culture area derive their claims on forest grounds and garden lands from their ancestors, depending on the way they came from the original mountains. I have not come across such clan-specific claims on land in the Sela area. This may have to do with the social organization of the Sela people, who put more emphasis on the local village community than on descent groups, including clans.

2.3.3 The preparation and maintenance of gardens

The preparation of gardens is primarily the work of men, especially the rough clearing during the first stage. But women start pitching in when it comes to constructing the raised beds.

Sometimes no garden beds are made. Only the grass is cut; then sweet potato shoots are simply stuck in the ground. My impression is that this 'method' is practiced in more remote areas, close to the edge of the primary forest.

Otherwise garden mounds or beds are (re-)built. Ditches are cleaned out and the debris put on top of the mounds. The terraced beds are prepared in the following way. A row of grass or reeds is cut down and thrown on top of another row, just below it. Then a layer of the soil beside the row is removed with a digging stick (or a shovel) and placed on top of the grass, sometimes barely covering it. The grass thus functions as green manure and also provides a porous layer. Mounds may consist of more than one layer of grass. Where required, the terraces may be

supported by sticks and tree poles.

Ashes are not used to fertilize the soil. Branches and other debris and dirt are burned off, but the ashes are not spread out.

Gardens are not always fenced in (it is rather the village that is surrounded by a fence), and the fences that one encounters are not elaborate constructions of the kind found for example among the Dani.

When the garden beds have been constructed, they are planted. Long sweet potato shoots are carried in and stuck, usually in pairs, in small holes in the centre of the beds, about 50 cm apart and 10 cm deep. When taro is harvested, the top of the tuber is cut off and that part is replanted, usually at the side of the garden beds, where the soil is more moist. But occasionally it is grown in the centre of the mounds. Sugarcane is planted in a similar way.

Weeding is mainly the work of women, but I have also seen men doing it. When sugarcane grows high, it is tied up. Banana trees are supported with long sticks.

Dead tree branches or huge leaves are sometimes left in new gardens. The reason given to me for doing this was to chase the mice out, for they may think that these branches are humans. But if they stay, traps are set.

Yogaba stones may be used in the gardens to promote the growth of the plants.

2.3.4 Plants cultivated or collected

The most important food plants under cultivation are the sweet potato (*kwaning*, *Ipomoea batatas*; the botanical terms have been quoted from Hiepko and Schultze-Motel 1981), taro (*am*, *Colocasia esculenta*), sugarcane (*kwei*, *Saccharum officinarum*) and banana (*kwali*, *Musa x paradisiaca*).

Sweet potatoes are the basic staple of the Sela Valley people. Taro is grown both in the fields and in village patches, where it may grow to huge size through careful cultivation. Banana trees are usually found in or near the villages, and they grow in clusters.

Plants whose leaves (*bo'*) or shoots (*luk*) are eaten include varieties of cane (*begi*, *Saccharum edule*), grass (*nongi*, *Setaria palmifolia*), acanthus (*kalu*, *Rungia klossii*), mallow (*sùwi*, *sùmbùrù*, *Abelmoschus manihot*), parsley (*yhali*, *Oenanthe javanica*), and tree fern (*balsing*, *Cyathea pilulifera*).

Fruits or seeds (*dù*) include the red pandanus (*ken* or *ban*, *P. conoideus*; *kobùm* is a small variety), the nutty pandanus (*yùwìn*, *P. brosimos*, which grows high in the mountains; *kawìn*, *P. antaresensis*, found in lower areas, as is the *wanìm*), a local bean variety (*neli/nali*), cucumber (*sumik*, *Cucumis salivus*), chayote (*sùkkob*, *Sechium edule*; apparently a recent import, but now well established), and a kind of raspberry (*kirikna'*, *Rubus rosifolius*).

Other plants include edible mushrooms (*mùmsùt*, *Oudemansiella*), and the sago

tree (*ambe* or *be*) which grows in the lower Weip valley not far from the lowlands.

Recently introduced plants include the white potato (*kolamdibu* –a Dani loanword – or *ùrùga kwanìng*) which the people like to grow for sale or export but prefer not to eat themselves, corn (called *sagun*, the Sela rendering of the Indonesian word *jagung*), a kind of black berry, and carrots (*yhalì kwanìng*) if they are able to obtain seeds. Finally, in 1991 a school student with an entrepreneurial mind took over one hundred coffee tree seedlings into the Sela area and had these planted in the gardens and around the villages, although without shade trees; he had picked up this idea while attending high school in Wamena.

2.3.5 Harvesting

Gardens are usually prepared during the relatively drier part of the year (May through December). There is no particular harvest season. Each day the people go to their gardens to collect a sufficient amount of food for that day and the next. But there are times, usually around mid-year, when the gardens appear to yield fewer and smaller potatoes. The people are then forced to collect greens and other food in the forest, which actually enriches their diet.

Sweet potatoes mature in nine to ten months, depending on the location of the land and its altitude. A garden is gradually cleared. Taro is harvested occasionally and the top of the plant is replanted immediately. Bananas are taken down while they are still green. Sugarcane requires well over a year to ripen, and the gardens are already reverting to fallow land when the last stands are cut down.

2.4 The preparation and sharing of food

2.4.1 Food preparation

A familiar and recurring sight each afternoon is that of women returning from their gardens, carrying on their back netbags loaded with sweet potatoes and other food, bundles of firewood, and often on top of that a small child clinging to her head (plate 7). Back in the village, they set out to prepare the evening meal.

Meals are prepared primarily in the family hut and consumed there or in the men's hut (in the case of men). If more people are together on the occasion of a feast or a work project, the food is prepared outside or in a cooking house (*yùna' ak*). Meals may also be prepared in the gardens, usually by a group of men, either outside or in the small garden huts. The people normally eat twice a day; leftovers early in the morning and the main meal late in the afternoon.

Heeschen (1984:117-118) noticed that the Yalenang men do not eat in the

men's house, and that the food is prepared in a steampit in the garden hut at noontime, whereas the Eipo eat 'publicly' in either family hut or men's house. The Sela valley people definitely follow the same practice as the Eipo do.

Food is usually prepared in the fireplace inside the huts. Sweet potatoes (they have already been washed in a stream) are first roasted slightly and then stuck deep into the hot ashes. Greens are wrapped up in small bundles and carefully placed in the ashes. Sometimes hot stones are put in packages of food. There are no cooking utensils, except for simple fire tongs (*sìb*) to poke in the ashes.

Food is also occasionally cooked in an earth oven or steampit (*oling* or *yùna' oling*). These are normally built outside or in the centre of a cooking house. Small ones are sometimes found in a family hut, provided it has an earth floor; in this case the soil is not really dug out. These steampits may be circular or rectangular in size and up to three metres long; they are about fifty cm deep. If a large group has come together, there may well be ten or more of such steampits, each one representing a sector in the village or a group of people related to one another.

First stones left from previous occasions are collected in a long row and heated up until they are almost red-hot. The steampits have been cleaned out in the meantime. Then layers of grass linings, hot stones and foodstuffs are carefully assembled. Sweet potatoes are not placed in the bottom layer. Finally, the entire 'package' is completely covered with soil and left to steam. After an hour or two the soil is removed and the food taken out to be shared and eaten. The pit is often still so hot, that people use logs to place their feet on while removing the earth (plate 8).

The Sela people use two verbs that may be glossed 'to cook'. The first is the verb stem *dab-*, which means 'to cook, roast, burn' or 'to light fire' (*uk dab-*). This verb is combined with nouns such as *mìya'* (*sùb*), *winang*, *kwalì* or *begì* to refer to the way in which respectively pig (meat), birds, bananas and *begì* shoots are cooked. The second is the stem *yùb-*, which relates more particularly to the process of cooking with heated stones, and this verb is used when one refers to the cooking of sweet potatoes (*kwaninɡ yùb-*).

A few comments about some food ingredients. The red pandanus fruit (*ken*) is cooked in a steampit. The meat is mixed with water and squeezed out over the taro or greens; the kernels are sucked clean. For this the men use a folded piece of bark or a container called (*kabna*) *kou*, made from the bark of the *yasì* tree. I have rarely come across these containers in the Sela area, and they are said to come from the Nalca area to the north across the range. As has been indicated above, it is only the (initiated) men who are involved in preparing this sauce and consuming it.

Local salt (*ùwa'/ouwa'*), if it is used, consists of a substance extracted from the ashes of certain plants. Only once did I see a kind of salt brick; it belonged to a

Dani evangelist who had obtained it from the Western Dani area (I believe the Ilaga valley).

Water is readily available, for most villages have a clean stream or spring located nearby. Yet the people drink very little water, even during long treks. They use a bamboo container (*yìs*) for transporting it.

2.4.2 Sharing food

In the end food is, obviously, consumed. It is also shared, thereby reaffirming and consolidating the social relationship between the partners. I give two examples of how this noble exchange takes place.

In December 1982 I had just left Kwelamdua in the Weip valley to walk back to Sela Valley, a three-day journey. After a few hours we walked through a small garden hamlet, Telebatiga. A few men and women were there, preparing a meal outside. After they had taken out the food, they sat in a circle and rather than eating straightaway they began sharing some of it first. A few stalks were handed to one person, a potato or two given to another. This went on silently and it involved the entire group without exception. Everyone gave of his food to the others and in turn received food from them.

Just before Christmas of each year, people from several villages gather together for a feast meal and a service. Once all the food has been removed from the steampits, one of the church leaders blows a whistle and points to one of the groups assembled, whether they are from one of the villages or are outside visitors. Everyone else grabs some vegetable food or a chunk of pig meat from his or her own pile and runs over to give it to those of the targeted group who sit there silently and do not visibly respond to acknowledge this show of generosity. After this the whistle sounds again and everyone runs to the next group, yelling and hooting. I presume that this custom has been introduced, possibly by the Dani evangelists, but everyone participates in it with great enthusiasm and gusto.

2.4.3 Food shortages

Every year, between June and September, we noticed that food supplies from the gardens began to dwindle temporarily. The people began to eat the less desirable potatoes usually given to the pigs, or went off to the forest in search of additional food.

The reason they gave to us for this recurring phenomenon was the bad weather. Indeed, while in general much less rain fell during these months, it always was a season of heavy fog (*mùru*), and the valley could be completely socked in as early as 7 o'clock in the morning, after an hour or so of sunshine.

My own feeling is that such shortages were also caused by unevenly spreading out the preparation of new gardens. When the present gardens are producing an abundant supply of food, the people are happy and satisfied, and are less inclined to start preparing new fields for gardens, which necessarily involves hard work. Nine to twelve months later this lack of timing could result in a lower supply of food.

2.5 The use of tobacco

Tobacco is called *hu* in the Sela area and *utu* in Bidabuk (where a dialect of the Una language is spoken); De Kock recorded *usuwe* in his wordlist. It is used for example in the clause *yumna hu delamla* 'he smokes (from) a pipe'; the parallel clause in the Eipo language is *saboka dibmal* (see Heeschen and Schiefenhövel 1983:197). In other words, the Sela (and Una) words stand by themselves, while the Eipo word belongs to the widely spread **s-b-k** set identified by Hays (1990).

In 1989, however, my informant mentioned, when we were discussing the phrase *ya sabuga* which refers to a tie used to fasten a stone adze, that the word *sabuga* also meant 'tobacco' (but in a specific sense, over against the generic term *hu*). It is, therefore, possible that the range of the **s-b-k** set includes the Sela Valley area.

The tobacco plant (*Nicotiana tabacum*) is grown under the eaves of a family hut or a garden hut in a relatively dry environment. The leaves are plucked off and briefly heated or dried in the fire, then rolled up to form a crude cigarette and smoked.

It is also smoked in a pipe (called *bale* – possibly a Yali loanword – or *yumna kaldù*). The one type that I once saw consisted of a small, thin tube stuck into the back of a sort of acorn; the person who used it had to hold this pipe (and his head) up or the contents would fall out. Another type, never seen by me but described as follows, consisted of two curved sections; the rolled up tobacco was put into the end of one section, but the hole was not closed off with the hand. It resembled the kind of pipe labelled type G by Craig (1990:143; see drawing on p. 137), which is found among the Yuri in the Border Mountains in Papua New Guinea. A very similar type had already been seen by De Kock in 1911 in the Yay river valley and he gives a good description of it (1912:163), although he does not indicate whether that pipe was curved or straight.

Tobacco continues to be grown in the Sela area. When I once asked someone what the reason for this was, since the local church (and mission) prohibits the use of tobacco as a condition of church membership, he deftly replied that it was grown only to be sold or traded.

2.6 Material culture

The Sela Valley people fully utilize the basic materials found in their environment, and 'import' only a few artefacts from elsewhere. Nonetheless, their 'material' culture is, when compared with that of other highlanders, rather 'skimpy'. I will describe the various items, listing them under the usual categories.

2.6.1 Attire

Men and women wear very little clothing, but this does not seem to bother them, unless it is raining heavily. They are well adapted to the weather conditions in the highlands.

During the first years of their life the children wear nothing at all. When they are still small, the girls begin wearing a small grass skirt. The boys wear nothing, except perhaps for a sort of belt, until they reach their teenage years.

Males wear a penis sheath (*bik*; Weip valley *kumya/kumnya*). It is made from the elongated fruit of the gourd plant (*karerùba[?]*, *Lagenaria siceraria*), which is grown in gardens or near villages. The fruit is hollowed out and its skin is hardened in hot ashes, obtaining its characteristic yellowish colour. The sheath is either straight or curved, and is not very large in size. It is held in place by a string attached to the base and looped around the scrotum, while another string is tied around the waist and attached to the gourd, from the middle to as high as the tip which often is not cut off.

Another standard part of a man's attire is a waistband (*sabya/sapya*). Several coils of rattan are wrapped very tightly around the waist. The skin is protected by an inner belt, consisting of strips from large leaves.

Females wear a reed skirt, called *blae*. This plant (*Eleocharis dulcis*) is grown by females in small ponds or swampy areas in the gardens. The reeds are cut off and let to dry out a little. Then they are flattened, tied to a string and trimmed. The traditional type of skirt is multi-layered and short (a kind of bunny skirt), resting on the hip (plate 7). A single-layered type of skirt falling to the knees has been introduced in recent years, possibly by the Dani, and this kind of skirt is commonly used today.

Whereas the Eipo do not have them (Koch 1984:25), the Sela people use rain-capes (*ìldìs*). They are made from strips of pandanus leaves knitted together. Both men and women may carry them along, folded up in their netbag. If the rain takes them by surprise, they may also use large taro or banana leaves.

Today Western clothing is used more and more, in particular by those who have left the valley for some time (mostly to attend school), or by those who can afford

to buy it in the trade store. But it has certainly not replaced the traditional attire, which is still seen all around.

2.6.2 Self-decoration

The body is not mutilated, but some parts are usually perforated. Women perforate the sides of the nose as well as the septum and put sticks in these holes horizontally. Men commonly perforate the nasal septum and put a reed stick, a piece of bone, a curved pig tooth (or a pencil) through it. Often they also pierce the lobe of one ear (either left or right) and put in a piece of bamboo; the hole may widen so much that finally the lobe splits in two.

Men and women occasionally apply paint to their body or face. Stripes are painted on the cheek or around the eyes and nose with a kind of red ochre (*aran* or *sùgù aran*). Other patterns are coloured black, whitish (by females, on their body) or yellowish.

The hair of the head is cut off with a bamboo knife (*lay*) or, nowadays, a razor blade. Usually a tuft of hair remains on the top of the head; in the case of women, this tuft is located more to the front.

A sort of comb (*hong lìlìkna*) is sometimes stuck into the hair, as are bird feathers (*winang hong* or *mhayong*). A headband (*warembù* or *kùrùrù*), consisting of a string of small beads or shells, is worn by males during dances. The bamboo earplug is called *ongkwalìnga*. The reed nose plug is called *ira'* (or *iro*); the pigtusk *marum sola'*.

Of interest is the hair appendage. It is worn during dances. Non-initiated men are not allowed to wear it, only the initiates. One informant referred to *wìs* initiates, another one (in my opinion more correctly) to *lìla'* initiates. By the time I arrived in the Sela in 1980, the appendages had been abandoned at the urging of the Dani evangelists. Only once did I see a man wearing one, during a meal in a garden, as a form of decoration in my opinion.

The general term for the hair appendage is *mùm*. There are two ways of attaching the tail to the hair. One is by plaiting the strings (*mùm sae*) into the hair on the side of the head (*erìn mùm*); in the other (*kalun mùm*) the strings cover the entire head. The tail is the same in both types. The appendage thus consists of a number of (rattan or reed) strings, tied together with a piece of wood, which tapers off into a kind of tail hanging down the back.

Moreover, there are two forms of hair appendages. The first type, called *mùm*, has one tail which is considered to be male (*yìm*). The second, called *kyar/kyat* (or *tyar*), has two tails. The large 'female' (*kìl*) tail lies on top, the small 'male' tail is

located underneath. Koch (1984:31-32) describes only a single-tailed *mum*, and so did De Kock (1912:160) in a detailed description. The information given to me by men from both Sela Valley and the Weip valley, just west of where De Kock made his observations, is specific enough to suggest that both types are indeed found among the Mek people, as they are among the Mountain Ok. The only difference is that the position of the 'female' and 'male' tail is reversed. For example, Hylkema (1974:367-368) reports that the Nalum in the Abmisibil valley use the term *kamil* (hair) to refer to a hair appendage. They distinguish two forms, one with a thin tail (*mafum*), and one with a thick tail, called *kup-sok* or *okur* (mother). The *mafum* rests on top of the *okur*. The *mafum* can be worn alone, as a kind of decoration, and in that case is not plaited into the hair, but is removable, like a netbag. The *okur* is only used in combination with the *mafum* and, moreover, only during the initiation into the Tukon ritual group.

There are several kinds of necklaces. One with no teeth is called *ngang dama*. A round one with many teeth strung together is called *adnarob*, one with the lower teeth of mice *kùra' sunum*. The *weik* is a necklace made from a string overlaid with yellow orchid fibre. Sometimes shells are hung from the neck; it may be a piece of a cymbium shell (*dangman/tangman* or *melik/mìlik*), or a string of small nassa shells (called *kwarìngbù* in the East Sela), or cowrie shells (*whae*).

The *weik* (*karakna*) consists of orchid fibre string looped around up to 22 times and tied together by a cross piece, and is worn by men from the shoulder in the form of a sash or, resembling a double sash, in X-form (*weik wandani*) over the chest. It is not related to having been initiated.

A belt resting on the hip below the waistband is called *kelingdyo* or *winang yo'* (literally 'bird bones'). I myself have never seen it; Koch (1984:34) writes that it is rarely worn by men and then only during dances.

Armbands (*dama*) are worn around the upper (*sùkna dama*) or lower arm (*den dama*). Sometimes a 'dagger' (*lùli*) from cassowary bone is stuck behind the upper armband; it does not seem to have a functional use, only a decorative one.

Legbands are worn by men just below the knee. I have not often seen them being worn, though.

2.6.3 Tools and utensils

Netbags (*ak*) come in various sizes. The large ones (*ak-ak/agak*) are used by women to carry sweet potatoes or other garden produce, or small children. They are also used to carry sick people unable to walk on their own, or to carry the dead to the site where they will be cremated. Smaller netbags (*akling/aklìn*) are used by men or women to carry things like fire making equipment, food for on the way,

tools and utensils, or animals and plants collected.

Women carry their nets usually from the head down their back, or on their chest (plate 9). Men carry theirs over their shoulder or from the neck and down the back.

The nets are made by women. They separate fibres from branches of certain trees or bushes (for example *walas* or *lisarab*), and twine these on their thigh into thread (*wet/wed*). This thread is then used to knit the nets; the size of the mesh is set by a strip from a pandanus leaf. Thread is coloured reddish with ochre, and purple or yellowish by using certain berries. Men may attach feathers to their nets.

One of the basic tools is the stone adze (*yae/ya*). Men carry theirs over their shoulder; women carry them along in their netbag. They are used, for example, to cut down trees, scrape rattan string, or for trading purposes. They are not used as prestige goods and form to my knowledge no part of, for example, marriage payments.

Since the introduction of steel axes and machetes (Ind. *parang*), stone adzes have become less visible, but they have not disappeared and may well make a comeback (as the fire saw is doing) when the current stock of steel axes wears out and new axes are too expensive to be purchased.

The adze blades are manufactured locally or imported. When asked where the stone or blade comes from, the answer is *phudala* or *eidala*. In other words, the stone originates from the banks along either the Phu river or the Ey river. The Ey valley (Larye area, Langda airstrip) is a large, well inhabited valley, and the site where the stone is found is easily accessible. The Phu river is a northern tributary of the upper Thay river, just west of the Nogomsanmok peak, not far from the trail from the Sela area to the Ey valley. The actual site is situated at an altitude of 2250 m and is far away from inhabited areas. When I visited the area in August 1983, the trail leading to the site was slippery and overgrown, and I had the impression that the quarry had fallen into disuse. According to Helmcke (pers. comm. 1985) the stones from both sources are magmatic rocks of andesite.

The manufacturing process is the same and has been well described by Koch (1984:41-43) and especially the Pétrequins (1990). A boulder is, if necessary, pried loose from rock and hammered down to a manageable size, then taken to the village. There it is carefully flaked with a small pecking stone into an elongated stone with a triangular cross-section. This stone is roughly polished across and sharpened on the cutting edge (*yae si*). The blade is then tightly tied with a vine string to a knee-shaft adze.

In the Larye area the knappers are all members of the Tengket clan. The manufacture of the blades in the Sela area is apparently not restricted to members of one clan, but probably is entrusted to men of the Sengket clan, all of whom live in the East Sela. At any rate, a man must be competent in making stone blades.

There are only a few gardening tools. One is a large stick (*wae wen mekya'*) to move chunks of soil, remove rocks or make ditches; it is primarily used by men. Today the shovel has become a useful substitute. The women use a smaller garden stick (*megì/yongon megì*), made from *yamù* wood, for planting and harvesting. There are various other names for these sticks, depending on what they are used for and from which tree they are made.

There are several other utensils and tools. The (*kabna*) *kou* is a large container, made from the bark of the *yasì* tree. It is used to mix pandanus sauce with food. It is apparently not indigenous to the Sela area. A bowl I once saw in Orisin was said to have come from Nalca; another one seen in Mundon came from the Giribun area in the lowlands.

The *sowed kou* is a kind of basket, woven from a type of fern fibre and probably used as a kind of container. I saw it only once, in 1980.

The *yabna'* is a sort of plate or bowl; it also refers to the blade of a shovel.

The general term for a water container is *mhaya'* or *mhaiya'*. The bamboo container is called *yìs*.

I have never seen a stone knife (*kìrik kabù*); metal knives (*sìnì kabù*) are readily obtained today. A bamboo knife (*lay*), which has an extremely sharp cutting edge, is used for cutting up a pig as well as for a haircut.

The *yùmpìt* is a bone needle or awl.

The teeth of a marsupial or mouse, still set in the lower jaw (*si banya'/bana'*) tied to a piece of reed, are used as a carving tool.

Fire tongs (*sìb*) are 'made' from a piece of wood split in half and then folded, or simply from a stick split through the middle.

Equipment to make fire consists of a coil of rattan string (*sìkna*) always taken along by a man around his lower arm or in his netbag, a grooved split stick (*kongkona*) and a small bundle containing dry tinder. When he wants to make fire, he carefully places some tinder between the ends of the stick which is held open by a stone. He pushes this stick with his toes against the ground and with his hands pulls the string up and down along one of the grooves. The string may break a few times, because of the heat generated by the friction. But when he succeeds, a spark falls into the tinder in fifteen to thirty seconds, and a few seconds later smoke appears. He places dry leaves on the tinder and fans the smouldering fire by blowing on it. After a little while flames appear. I have only seen men make fire in this way.

When matches became available, they were snapped up fast. However, in recent years it apparently became more difficult to acquire matches and in 1990 I noticed quite a few coils of new rattan carried along by the men or hanging in the men's house.

When fire is needed in another hut or in the garden, people (usually women) take it there using a kind of fire holder, which consists of a bundle of folded pandanus leaves and other dry materials (plate 10). If the place to which fire is to be taken is close by, burning sticks will do.

A flare or torch (*whe'*) is sometimes used at night to get around; but often no light source is needed at all.

Finally, string of split vine is used to tie the finished stone to the stone adze (*yae sabuga*), to tie joints in huts (*sabu*), to tie up bundles, to make traps, and so on. Twined thread (*wed mun*) from the fibres of certain trees is used for making netbags. A rougher kind of rope consisting of several strands (*sutya/sura*) is used to tether pigs.

2.6.4 Weapons and defensive equipment

Spears, which are more suitable in open terrain, are not used by the Mek people. One finds them, for example, among the Grand Valley Dani.

The basic weapons are the bow and arrow. The bow (*yin*) is approximately 150 cm long and is made from black palmwood, probably of a *Caryota* or *Areca* palm family (Hiepko and Schultze-Motel 1981:21). This palmwood is not locally available and must be traded in from the lowlands. It is a highly valued object, and it was only after several years that I was able to purchase a few at Sela Valley, and then only from visitors from other valleys. The bow string (*yin sabu*) is from rattan.

Arrows (*mal*) are a little shorter than the bow. The shaft is made from the stem of sword grass (*wid*, *Miscanthus floridulus*). There are several arrow types, distinguished by their point and, therefore, their use. The *dabyùm* is an arrow with a single smooth and sharp tip. The *yamù* is an arrow with barbs (*mal si* or *kwaman si*). Both of these are used in fighting. The *lay* is an arrow with a bamboo blade, linked to the shaft with another section (*khwa* or *dum*). It is primarily used for killing pigs. The *phay* (East Sela *bagay*) is an arrow with three to four (*mùb*, *phay mùb*) or even five (*phay lambatya*) prongs. It is used not as a weapon, but rather to hunt birds with. I have not seen hunting arrows with a bulbous point. There is a relative lack of decorative carving (*mùmi*) on arrow points.

The arrow shafts are not feathered and the arrows cannot be said to be highly accurate. When the men use bow and arrow, they hold the right arm, with which they pull the bow string, high and do not aim with the eye along the arrow. The (Western) Dani, I was shown, keep the arm low and with their eye follow the direction of the arrow.

The only equipment to protect against arrows is the cuirass (*sing*), of which there

are not too many around. The basic material used for making it is rattan. The men put it on from below and tie the shoulder pads together. Tiesler who published a detailed study of the cuirasses in New Guinea indicates the relative position of the type of cuirass found among the Mek. According to him (1984:60-61), the Mek cuirass is homogeneous with the northern type in respect to the flexibility of the armpit section and the square form. But, like the southern type, it does not cover the upper part of the back, and it has the vertical support and the braiding technique in common with the coat of mail found among the Dani in the west.

There are also shields, but their purpose is ritual rather than defensive and they will be discussed in chapter 4.

2.7 Houses and settlements

2.7.1 Houses

The design of the houses (*ae*) in the Sela area where the people normally dwell is basically the same. They are round and have a conical or gabled roof. Inside is a central fireplace (*hasigin*) with four posts (*hagya/hakya*) and a drying rack stacked with firewood tied to the posts.

There are several types of houses. The men's house (*yùwi/yùwi[y]ak*; *ak* means 'place') has a diameter of 350-400 cm. One enters it through a comparatively large entrance (West Sela *hagin*, East Sela *asei*), which is closed with a board during the night. In Bidabuk there was a men's house (in 1981) that could only be entered through a kind of tunnel and a hatch. If it has a raised floor, there is only one floor where the men sit together and sleep. If it has an earth floor, there is a second floor accessible through a hatch. In that case the men sit together downstairs for talks and meals, but sleep upstairs, where a fire is kept going through the night to keep them warm. Although the smoke dissipates much more slowly through the roof, one sleeps there quite comfortably. In 1984 the men's house Pagadùwi in Orisin had an earth floor; by 1987 it had been rebuilt and the floor had been raised approximately 50 cm (plate 11).

There are two kinds of men's houses, the sacred (*mem yùwi*) and the regular men's house (*mali yùwi*). Every men's house carries a name.

There were carved and painted boards on the men's house in Kwelamdua when I saw it for the first time in 1981.

Women are not allowed to enter the men's house. It is (or was) restricted to the initiated men and boys.

The family house (*diba/diba[y]ak*) is much smaller and has a diameter ranging between 200 and 330 cm (plate 12). In this hut the woman lives with her younger

children (and older girls) and the pigs under her care. The entrance is small and is usually located immediately under the edge of the roof; there is a separate entrance for the pigs. Once I noticed a kind of double entrance, so that one could not enter the hut directly; this is called *wasalana*. The floor is either an earth floor or a slightly raised one. There is no upper floor. A section, taking up about 25 percent of the space available, is marked off by planks for the pigs. In a few huts I have seen a kind of (sleeping?) rack built over it. There is thus incredibly little room left for the family. But it provides a sense of togetherness, and the people do not seem to mind the cramped space at all.

The women's hut (*kàlabù ae* or *mali ae*) is of the same design, but is perhaps even smaller and has an earth floor. Women stay here during their menstrual period or to await the birth of their child. Although the actual birth normally takes place outside the hut, it may also be called *mì mangana' ae* 'birth hut'.

Sometimes there is a kind of cookhouse (*yùna' ak*) built next to a hut or in the village; here one may find small steampits. I have also seen racks built against a hut to stash away utensils and foodstuffs for the moment.

There are, to my knowledge, no separate pig sties in the villages or confined spaces under the floor of the family huts. All the pigs overnight in the family hut.

Another type of hut is found in the gardens (*barae*). It is simply (and quickly) built and serves mainly as a shelter against the rain and for preparing a meal. People may use it for the night. It has a level floor and the walls are not well insulated.

Houses have a gabled roof (*dùma ae*; *dùma* refers to the 'ridge' of the roof) or a conical roof (*kwabùdùma ae*; *kwabùdùma* refers to the centre pole sticking out through the roof like a lightning rod). I was told that the gabled roofs are rather used for temporary houses. I have noticed that over the years this type of roof is used less and less; most houses today have a conical roof.

Roofing material consists of pandanus leaves, bark, grass or a combination of these. Sometimes the roof cover is tied down with vines to hold it together. This certainly helps when there is a helipad nearby.

When I made a survey of the villages in the early 1980s, I occasionally noted two or (once) three family huts built under one (gabled) roof. From the outside the building appears rectangular with rounded ends or oval-shaped. Only when one steps inside, does the actual design become visible: the adjacent walls of two (or three) huts are joined or fused together to provide separate living quarters covered with one roof. There were separate entrances to each of the units. This type of construction has disappeared in later years. As far as I am aware, it is not mentioned in the Eipo literature.

The style of houses has not changed over the years. But today some men (primarily those who have been away) have built large houses with low overhanging grass covered roofs and an indirect entrance, much like the houses built by the Western Dani (evangelists, medical orderlies or teachers). This in turn resembles the trend I have seen in Dani land, where two-storied European-style houses are now being built by the score in the villages and sometimes in the middle of the forest. The Dani, in my opinion, took their cue from the way the Western missionaries built their homes among them.

2.7.2 Settlements

The lives of the Sela people center in the village. They identify themselves with a village rather than refer to a river as a point of reference, as for example the Nalum Ok do.

There are two types of settlement (*hak*, Kwelamdua *a-ak*, Bidabuk *atei*). One is the main village, called *nong hak* (*nong* means 'body, trunk, stem' or 'essence'). Examples are Kwarangdua, Orisin, Megum or Kwelamdua. The other type is the temporary settlement (*barae[y]ak*), usually in new garden areas or in the forest. Examples of this type are Dolbul, Mundon and Sugul. It may become the core of a new village, such as Mundon, or the houses may be deserted after a while.

A typical village has at least one named men's house, situated in a prominent place. It usually faces an open yard (*yùwa abaramak*), which functions as a dancing place. The men's house is surrounded by family huts which are all very close to each other. The women's huts, of which there one or two, are located in an inconspicuous place and are hardly 'visible'.

The houses seem to be built in the village without any specific order.

A village may consist of several named wards, each with their own men's house. The villages (or wards) are very compact in size, in contrast to, for example, a typical Yali village, where the houses are set further apart. For that reason some of the villages in the Sela Valley area show up clearly on the trimetrogon photographs taken in 1945 (Helmcke 1983:9-11).

Villages are usually built on ridges or in places where they could be reasonably defended from attack.

Houses are occasionally taken down and rebuilt or moved within the village. If a men's house is relocated, it takes its name with it.

Villages rarely move, and then only temporarily. I give two examples. In the late 1970s the people from Sùlda and Kwalboron became embroiled in a conflict triggered by men from Orisin and Surumdamak, and then spilling over to include virtually the entire East Sela. They became scared and fled to a garden site called Mùnamna. By 1987 the majority had slowly moved back and built up Sùldahak again.

In September 1987, the inhabitants of Megum suddenly abandoned their village where they had lived for many years (it is clearly visible on the 1945 photograph) and without exception moved to a site about 500 m away, called Weriduahak. They removed every single hut, except for an old hut, one that was overgrown, dilapidated rabbit hutches and the 'church' building where they continued their worship services. The contours of the huts and their fireplaces were still quite visible a few weeks later and the place made an eery, ghost-like impression on me. The reason for their drastic action was the sudden death of a young man, Banus Ùtpan, which could not be 'explained', except for the deadly influence of a *bisa' kàl* (literally 'spirit woman'), capable of killing and eating human beings. He had become violently ill a few days earlier, and was taken to the medical clinic at Sela Valley for treatment and consultation, but died the next day (the diagnosis pointed to tetanus). His death climaxed a rash of deaths in Megum during the previous months.

2.8 Expressions of art

2.8.1 The mos

The word *mos/mot* refers both to a number of songs and to the dance (feast) in front of the men's house during which they are sung (*mos seb-*).

The *mos* are performed on a number of occasions. The most important is that of the pig feast (*mìya' mùbi mos*), to which people from other villages or valleys are invited. Their leader (*mùbi deya' ni*) comes in the day before to help kill and cut up the pigs. The main party arrives the next day, moving in a single-file and holding bow and arrows in their hands. The man who leads the line of dancers and the one who closes it should be young and tall men, well decorated and full of splendor, for they are watched in particular. The line moves onto the dance ground and then coils inward like a serpent. The men remain in a stationary position for a while, then turn around and 'unwind' the coil to form a new one. A few young women from the host village stand at the side of the grounds, performing a stationary dance together.

Another occasion for a dance feast is the dedication of the men's house after it has been (re-)built (*yùwi mos*), or after someone has been killed (*nìmi mos*), either outright or in revenge. Although it was denied by one of my informants, others told me that there is also a *mos* during the *wìs* initiation.

There are a variety of songs. They are named and have a certain geographical origin. Some of the names of the songs are *dirìn (deiya') kukna, boulumdùmonì, man(a)* and *sìkyal(a)*. The *sìkyal* I recorded was said to be a local song. One *man* song originated from the west (*khìmban mos*). Another one was identified as

coming from the east (*yali mos*); the language of the text differs completely from the language otherwise used by the men who sang it. Royl (1990:3-4) has discovered two basic styles of singing within the Mek culture area, the western style with simultaneous entrances and an harmonic end, and the eastern style with staggered entrances and a monotonous end. In Eipomek both styles are found. Whether this is also the case in the Sela area I cannot say. The ethnomusicologist Simon had already concluded earlier that "the borders of the diffusion of musical style and language are congruent" (1978:441).

2.8.2 Other forms of art

The mouthharp (*binggong*), which is 'played' by men, is a common musical instrument. It is made from the stem of the *wid* reed.

Another artefact that could be called a musical instrument is the handdrum (*whau*). It is made from the wood of a softwood tree (*kal keibi*); a person from Kwelamdua called it a *keibi*. They were present throughout the Sela area and in the Hao and Weip river valleys, but were burned in the 1970s. I have never seen one locally. De Kock (1912:164) describes a handdrum he had come across in the Yay valley. It was about eighty cm long, hour-glass shaped, hollowed out, and had no handle. It had been roughly cut with an adze, but he did not notice a decorative design. A skin tympanum covered one of the ends, glued to it with black resin. He did not see blobs on the membrane to tune the drum. Unfortunately he could not obtain one. Simon (1978:442) reports that here and there he found handdrums of the 'kundu' type, sometimes without a skin. They were rarely played. He thought that they were not indigenous.

Visual art is virtually absent from the Sela area. As I indicated above, once I noticed a men's house with carved and painted boards. The arrows may have a simple design carved onto them. The body may sometimes be painted in a way that could reflect a certain design. And once a boy picked up a partly broken stone with a flat surface along a riverbank and made a drawing of a hut on it.

2.9 The counting system

Although the discussion of the counting system in the Sela area does not strictly fall within the parameters of this chapter, I include it at this point, for comparative reasons.

The base of the counting system is 27 as it is among the Mountain Ok; but the

'turn around' point is not the nose (cf. Brongersma and Venema 1960:74 for the Sibil people), but the top of the head, while also some different parts of the body are used or the same part denotes a different numeral. The Eipo people (Koch 1984:123-125; Michel 1983:101-104) use a base of 25; they omit the side of the head.

The numerals correspond with body parts, beginning with the little finger on the left hand and going up the arm to the top of the head and down the other side of the body. The suffix *-bare/-pare* is used in conjunction with the numerals 4 to 14; the numerals 15 to 27 begin with *dara*. A set of 27 is called *dìng nhonok*. The set of numbers (in the West Sela) is presented in the following table.

Table 2.1 The counting system used in the Sela Valley area

body part	name	number (left)	number (right)
little finger	*seldeka*	1 *nhon/nhonok*	27 *dara seldeka*
ring finger	*phìnyaba*	2 *phìnì*	26 *dara phìnyaba*
middle finger	*wìnalyaba*	3 *wenali*	25 *dara wìnalyaba*
index finger	*dom*	4 *dombare*	24 *dara dom*
thumb	*lam*	5 *lambare*	23 *dara lam*
wrist	*nhab*	6 *nhappare*	22 *dara nhab*
lower arm	*sek*	7 *sekpare*	21 *dara sek*
elbow	*lin*	8 *linbare*	20 *dara lin*
upper arm	*sùkna*	9 *sùknabare*	19 *dara sùkna*
shoulder	*sao*	10 *saobare*	18 *dara sao*
side of neck	*kaklom*	11 *kaklombare*	17 *dara kaklom*
ear	*o*	12 *obare*	16 *dara o*
side of head	*abùm*	13 *abùmbare*	15 *darabùm*
top of head	*mìk*	14 *mìkpare*	

Plate 7 An older woman on her way home (East Sela)

Plate 8 Kwarangdua people opening an earth oven

Plate 9 Two women and a child from Mundon

Plate 10 A Kwelamdua woman with a fire holder in her hand

Plate 11 The men's house Pagadùwi in Orisin (1987)

Plate 12 A family hut in Mundon

Chapter 3

The Sela Valley People as a Community

We now turn our attention to the so-called social dimension of the culture of the people living in the Sela area. In this chapter I wish to discuss how they interact with one another, as individuals and as a community.

In the first part we will deal with the major phases in a person's life cycle: his or her birth (and the occurrence of infanticide), childhood and adolescence (and male initiation), adulthood (and marriage), and finally old age and death.

Then data will be presented on kin relationships and kinship terminology, as well as on clans and clan clusters.

Finally, we will briefly touch on the subjects of community leadership, exchange and trade, and conflicts and their resolution.

3.1 The onset of life

3.1.1 Pregnancy

Sexual intercourse (one uses the verb stem *yob-* to refer to this act) takes place in garden huts or other secluded places. When a woman gets pregnant, it is life as usual for her. She keeps on working in the garden and 'at home' until virtually the completion of her term. When the previous child (if there is any), however, is weaned, it goes through a difficult time and may react to this in a very traumatic manner.

3.1.2 Birth

The Schiefenhövels, both of whom had had medical training, were present at a number of births among the Eipo and the Yalenang, and recorded several in detail (G. and W. Schiefenhövel 1978; W. Schiefenhövel 1988). I could impossibly collect

such rich information in the Sela area, where I had to rely on a few interviews and on information provided by or through my wife.

When a woman senses that the time has arrived to give birth, she makes her way to the women's hut. While in labour, she is assisted by her mother and by other women. The women's or menstruation hut is also called a birth hut (*mì mangana' ae*).[1]

The birth itself normally takes place outside the hut, irrespective of the type of weather. Many times we heard of women who had given birth outside during the night, in the cold and often enough in the rain. This did not seem to bother them too much. The woman delivers the child (*mì deib-* or *mì mangka-*) in an upright position, and the baby glides onto a layer of grass or ferns between her thighs.

Most births occur without complications. My wife, who is a nurse, was never called upon to assist, except when labour became difficult and the relatives began to fear for the woman's life. For example, sometime in 1983, a newly married woman from Kwarangdua, Esìk Sùl, was unable to deliver her first-born child after many hours of labour. She was flown to the hospital in Wamena for a caesarean section; she survived, but the baby had already died. Another case was Ansa Kìroman, a young woman from the (former) village of Megum in the East Sela. She had already lost a baby during birth before. In October 1987, she started having difficult labour. The people thought that she was surely going to die. My wife sent a *mantri* ahead with medicines, then went herself. By the time she arrived in Weriduahak, the woman had given birth to a large baby girl. The outcome was particularly gratifying for the inhabitants of this village, for they had previously experienced many deaths.

Mì means both 'child' and '(baby) boy', and *kàlmì* '(baby) girl'. But when someone, after a child has been born, asks whether it is a boy or a girl, only then is a boy referred to specifically by the word *nìngmì* (literally 'male child').

The births of children, if they survive, are normally spaced about three years. If a child dies early, a woman may become pregnant sooner. Lately, however, this spacing has become much shorter in a number of families, especially of Christians. My impression is that these families are patterning their life style after that of the Dani who live together as nuclear families. Unlike the Dani, however, they have no access to anti-conception drugs, by means of which the reproductive process can be regulated. The result appears to be a higher frequency in pregnancies and births.

3.1.3 Infanticide

In an earlier paper (Godschalk 1990, see Appendix D), I reported and discussed

1 Among the Ketengban, however, the two are not the same (Anne Sims 1991:95).

the occurrence of (female) infanticide in the Sela area, particularly in the Weip valley. I recapitulate the data here. My conclusion is based partly on my 1984 census and its update in 1989. The sex ratio (see Table 2 in Appendix A) of the total population in the area covered by the census was 111.1 in 1984 (110.8 in 1989). But in the lower Hao valley and the Weip valley it was 149.5 in 1984, and even higher in 1989, namely 150.2. The sex ratio of the young age group throughout the area was 135.0 in 1984 (1989: 134.2), whereas it was 216.1 in the Southeast in 1984 (and 219.3 in 1989). In those years the population grew rapidly, by an annual average of over 2.2 percent. This, combined with the growing influence of the Christian teachings, would lead one to expect the sex ratio to decrease and level out, and this is indeed what happened overall. But, contrary to this trend, in the Weip valley the imbalance increased. Apart from this phenomenon, which could be a local anomaly, my inference is that the very high sex ratio is the result of female infanticide; the girls have in effect been 'removed' from the reproductive circuit, and through this form of human intervention the size of the population is influenced downward.

This statistical information was corroborated by what the people reported to us; we never witnessed a case of infanticide as the Schiefenhövels (almost) did (1978; for the discussion on preferential female infanticide, see also Schiefenhövel 1984, 1988). In March 1981, twins were born in Mùnamna. The boy was kept, the girl was abandoned. It was, however, found by the wife of the Dani evangelist and eventually adopted by this family. The reason given for this action was straightforward: there would not be enough food for both babies. Apparently, it was the decision of the father rather than the mother to dispose of the baby girl. Another point of interest was that he was a (newly) baptized Christian. In September 1983, twins were born in the West Sela (I was away at that time). Both were boys; one was thrown away. The parents were not Christians.

While it appears that the rejection of a baby is not punished or overtly condemned by society, Schiefenhövel did observe that there is an amount of ambivalence surrounding this practice.

When infants are abandoned, they are thrown away in (tall) grass, in the forest, in a ravine or in the river.

3.2 Youth

3.2.1 Childhood and adolescence

As can be expected, it is the mother who takes care of her small children. She nurses them until they are two to three years old. She feeds them solid food, starting soon after birth; at that stage she chews it first. She carries them along in

her netbag, and later perched on her shoulder (plate 9). There always is close body contact between a mother and her children.

At birth or soon after it children receive a *kuwìl/kubìl si*, a tentative name given to those who have not (yet) been initiated. The term *kuwìlmabù* refers to non-initiated children as a group, whether boys or girls. Boys are called *nìngmabù* and girls *kìlmabù*.

Children are raised and 'educated' in a flexible, informal way. Almost always they get away with what they want or not, and parents usually give in. Rarely are children spanked.

Girls begin to wear a small grass skirt when they are still quite young. Boys usually run around naked until they reach puberty; a small belt may be all they wear.

Potentially dangerous objects or situations are handled casually even by small children, and the adults don't seem to be worried about this. It is not uncommon to see them toying with a sharp knife or crossing a bridge by themselves. Nonetheless, accidents do occur.

Children, of course, play games together; however, girls play less than boys do.

When the girls are still fairly young, the mother begins to prepare them for the kind of work that is expected from them later in life. They go with their mother to the garden, carry netbags filled with food or a baby, take care of little children, and do all kinds of other chores associated with the life and work of adult females. Meanwhile, the boys still enjoy a life style that is a lot less demanding.

From early life children participate in the world of the adults. They are, for example, never shielded from the reality of death. Sexuality, too, is part of everyday life. On the other hand, a clear distinction is made between male and female. The (first) initiation of the boys marks this opposition in no uncertain terms.

3.2.2 The initiation of boys

This ceremony, called *wìt* or *wìs* at Sela Valley, is not performed anymore and, therefore, I have not seen it. Men who have been initiated in the past are the only source of my information. Other researchers in the Mek area have not observed this ritual either (cf. Heeschen 1990:110). Nevertheless, the *wìs* (Eipo *kwit*) resembles the *wît* ceremony among the Yali, which has been documented in great detail by Zöllner (1977:94-118; 1978:29-42).

I have no information on a similar form of female initiation other than that girls receive their 'real' name (*si sirik*) when they reach puberty. Females continue to be classified as *kuwìl* (non-initiated); according to the men (and women) there is no *wìs kìlabù* in the 'traditional' sense.

Boys may already be initiated when they are still quite young. My informant

gave two to three years and up as the age range.[2] The groups are small, numbering from three to five children. Boys from different clans are initiated together. Initiation does not take place at a specific time in the year; the exact timing seems to depend more on the condition of the boys.

Before the ceremony starts, the men have to hunt game in the forest and collect food plants; many pigs are also needed, for this is what the candidates are to eat.

An initiation hut (*wìs ae*), which is not fenced in, is built in the village; it may only be entered by the *wìt nang*, 'initiates'. I am not certain, whether such a hut is constructed each and every time, for my informant also told me that the boys are taken to the men's hut, where the ceremony is carried out.

At any rate, the boys are taken away from their mother and will not normally spend their days with her in the family hut anymore. Through their initiation they enter the community of the men's house. They are set apart from the realm of women. The expression *wìs seksiyik*, which refers to (the onset of) initiation, discloses the notion of separation; the verb *sek-* means 'to tear, break apart, light (fire)'. Yet, it is not the only aspect of the initiation.

The children walk into the men's house by themselves or their fathers may pull them in; they are apparently not carried in. Once inside, they sit close to the *yogaba* stones and the *kilabi* shields (see chapter 4.4), which are to watch over them. The boys are to behave like small children, and they are decorated by their elders. They are given presents, such as a pig(let), birds of paradise or other birds, or a bow. These are 'put in their hands' (*sae lena'*). Many gifts are presented to the boys, until they are almost completely covered. All these presents are to make them grow and prosper.

On the other hand, the boys present a piece of pig meat to their mother's brother (*mam*) on the tip of an arrow. This pig, which their father owned, had been killed earlier. Those who watch the ceremony also give chunks of meat.

From now on the initiated boys are called *wìtmabù* or *wìt nang*. My informants denied that they are referred to by solidarity terms similar to those used among the Eipo (*na neikye* 'my partner', *na kwit* 'my initiation friend'), where the boys are initiated into close-knit *kwit* groups (Heeschen 1990:112; cf. Michel 1983:42-43; Koch 1984:20).

Strict food taboos are now also imposed on the new initiates. They are not allowed to eat certain birds or animals (including the cuscus), the *nongì* plant, the large variety of the *begì* plant, the red pandanus (*ken*) fruit, or pig fat. If they eat any of this, they will not grow well. But they may eat sweet potatoes, the common

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2 Those who have worked in Eipomek give the following age ranges: Schiefenhövel (1978:54) three to fifteen years, Michel (1983:42) five to eight years, Koch (1984:20) four to five years and up, and Heeschen (1990:110) three to ten years. As I wrote above, all of us have to go by what we were told by the initiates.

variety of *begì*, and a little pig meat. If they eat meat, the women may not see them consume it, so they have to hide during their meal. These taboos are relaxed when the boys grow older.

The candidates are not subject to terrible ordeals; at the most they are frightened to some extent.

The focus, therefore, of the initiation of the boys into the men's house community appears to be on their development into strong and healthy men. This theme of growth seems, in my opinion, to overshadow the sense of withdrawal from the influence of women. It is necessary for the boys to be taken away, but the emphasis of the initiation as a total social fact is on growth, to be actualized through the process of a symbolic rebirth and with the assistance of the ancestors represented in the various sacred objects kept in the men's house.

It is interesting to note that the distinction between *kuwìl* and *wìt* is now also being applied in the context of the Christian religion. Those who have not been baptized are called *kuwìl nang*; those adults who have been 'initiated' through the ritual of baptism are called *wìs sektùb nang*. The new element is that the latter group now also incorporates women. Yet, the same informant stated later in the conversation that there are no *wìs kìlabù*, as I mentioned above.

3.3 Adulthood

There are a number of word pairs in the Sela language that roughly delineate the age levels of adult men and women. The first set is that of *kabìnì(-ngì)* and *kabìnìkìl*, and refers to a young adult man or woman who has not yet been married. The next set refers to (usually married) adults. An adult male is called *nìngabù* in the West Sela and *sal* in the East Sela and in the Hao valley (*tal* in the Weip valley). An adult female is called *kìlabù* (*nerabù* in Bidabuk). When men and women grow older (and having children may be another criterium), they are referred to as *hong yakni* and *hong yakkìl* respectively. An old man is called *nong nang*, an old woman *nong nimi*.

3.3.1 The lìla'

The next initiatory stage is the *lìla'*. The *lìla' dorobnì*, as the young man is called, is a person who has reached maturity. He is now allowed to wear the *mùm* hair appendage. His food taboos are lifted; he may use pig fat and rub his body with it. He may also marry now.

While the *wìs* focuses more on the well-being of the society, the *lìla'* deals more

with a single person who reaches a certain phase in his life and the focus is more on him. I am not certain if the *lila'* should be considered a second initiation or not. The members of the German Research Team have not reported a second initiation among the Eipo (Schiefenhövel 1978:54; Michel 1983:42-43; Koch 1984:20; Heeschen 1990:110-112).[3]

Neither have I heard of an initiation that resembles the *mûrûwal* (or *moroal*) which is held once every 30 years or so among the Yali (Zöllner 1977:124-141; 1988:45-52). The statement by Zöllner that the Yali may have adopted this ritual from their eastern neighbours, the Mek, where it was possibly known, may perhaps be questioned. An initiation ritual similar to the *kwalu* among the (southern) Yali and reported by Wilson (1986) does not to my knowledge occur among the Mek either.

3.3.2 Marriage

I begin with some demographic information, gleaned from the census data collected in 1984. At that time I tabulated 610 marital units involving 508 men and 610 women (in a population of 2633). Of the men, 422 had one wife, seventy-one had two wives, fourteen had three wives, and one man had four wives. This means that at that moment 17 percent of the men had more than one wife and together they claimed more than 30 percent of the married women. Polygyny, therefore, is not an insignificant factor.

The marital residence pattern is as follows (see Table 5 in Appendix A). In almost 40 percent of the marriages, the partners do not leave their natal village at all, although they may come from different wards within the village. In the Southeast it is over 50 percent. The virilocal variant is slightly less, just over 39 percent. The wife comes from another (sometimes preferred) village, usually located not too far away. Or she may come from an adjacent valley. Thus in the West Sela there are quite a few women who were born in the Erok or Dagi valley to the west. In the East Sela there were none from that area. A few women had moved in from the Eyme or Saynme valleys. Very few came from the north (Nalca), and none from the lowlands.

Almost 10 percent of the married couples settled uxorilocally; in that case it was the husband who moved away from his natal village. In almost 9 percent both partners had left their home village and set up a household in a new village (neolocal residence; none in the Southeast). Finally, in a few cases (less than 3 percent) a duolocal pattern of residence was found.

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3 Heeschen mentions that a second initiation ceremony, called *longkwalya* or *bamur kwit*, occurs to the east and south of Eipomek. I have not heard of a similar ceremony in the Sela area.

What this means is that most of the men (over 80 percent) remain in their own village after they marry, for their wives come from the same village (local marriage) or from elsewhere (virilocality), while a virtually equal number of women either remain in their natal village (local marriage and uxorilocality) or move away (virilocal and neolocal type of marriage). In other words, the men stay, the women either stay or move away in equal proportion.

When a man marries, he 'takes a wife' (*kil dob-*); this is an interesting formulation, for the connotation is that of abduction. It is even more interesting in light of the fact that a woman could play an active role in choosing a husband. Sometimes she takes the initiative herself by just going and appearing in the village of her targeted partner. Her appearance would give eligible men the shivers, for they can only guess what she has up her sleeves and on whom she has an eye.

Marriage is thus enforced by means of abduction or arranged by agreement between the families of the prospective husband and wife, in which case a bride price is collected and transfered to the family of the woman. The actual wedding ceremony is simple. When one of my informants married (his wife-to-be was from the Korupun area), the woman was already in his village, while her family had left. A number of people got together on a ridge near the village; the couple did not sit together, in fact I did not know the woman and could not make out who she was. The Dani evangelist read a few verses from the Bible and gave a brief sermon. It began to rain and everyone ran down to the village, where they had a meal together. That was it. It is my impression that the transfer (exchange) of gifts 'sealing' a connubial agreement between two families is more important than the marriage ceremony itself. In the case above the woman had originally been slated to marry the younger brother. But he stood up to his father and absolutely refused to have anything to do with his scheming. Since the bride payments had been handed over and were non-returnable (as was the woman), the father-in-law was stuck with her and the older brother had no choice.

A man cannot, or should not, marry a woman from a clan of which his mother is a member as well. This then would also rule out the possibility of (matrilateral) cross cousin marriage. Yet this rule is not altogether followed in daily life. From my census data I could identify the clan affiliation of both mother and wife of a man in eighty-three cases. In fifteen they were members of the same clan. The number was the lowest in the West Sela, less than ten percent.

According to Heeschen (1984:125), the Yalenang follow a similar rule, while the Eipo do not; there cross cousin marriage is not prohibited.

3.3.3 Pabya

When a man takes a woman from his mother's clan to become his wife (and has sexual intercourse with her) and this is discovered, it triggers a severe response by the society, for what the couple has done is considered not only disgusting, like eating human flesh, but also threatening to the well-being of the society as a whole. The offence is not taken lightly at all.

There are two expressions that refer to such a form of behaviour, which I very much hesitate to call 'incest' as others have done. The first is *sùlì kwelamla*. The man's behaviour is compared to that of the *sùlì* bird which runs around looking indiscriminately for female partners to copulate with. In the Eipo language the same verb is used in the expression *mong kweb-*, but this refers specifically to having intercourse with someone from the same clan (see Heeschen and Schiefenhövel 1983:147, 179). This could also be true for the Sela people, although this expression was given to me within the context of a discussion about *pabya*.

The other expression is *pabya phik balamla* (literally "he goes the road of the *pabya*"). The meaning of it can best be illustrated by means of a case I was once told.

Amol Sùl wanted to marry a woman called Manìngsae Kìroman. She had earlier been married to Igibum Sùl. The trouble was that the mother of Amol, Lùngae, was a member of the Kìroman clan as well. Thus his act constituted a case of *pabya*. The couple was apprehended. Stones were heated up and food was collected and cooked in a steampit. While this was underway, the two were given excrement to eat and the stuff was wiped off with leaves from the *kùbari* tree. Leaves were also wiped over a place where one had urinated and then given them to eat. But, more importantly, a huge ball was made by the villagers. Its core was built up by *du* plants (a kind of fern apparently), especially their base with the soil still attached (*du deiya'/dureiya'*). Then grass was wrapped around this until the ball had become as tall as the people. This ball is called *pabya*. The meal that had been cooked was for those who had prepared the *pabya* ball. After the meal, the violators had to stand with their legs spread apart so that the ball could be pushed through under them. To do this, they had to stand on a pole or a branch of a tree. People began to shoot arrows into the ball and also at the couple, but only to wound not to kill. This took place under loud screaming and hooting by everyone. Then the two were forced to pull the *pabya* ball with the *ulduga' sabu*, a very strong rope. Others pushed the ball from the back. It was taken downhill to a cliff and thrown into the river. Usually the violators were killed after the ceremony was over. In this case, Manìngsae Kìroman was killed by her former husband after some time, with the permission of the village leader. Amol Sùl later got sick and died.

In some of the cases of *pabya* mentioned to me the violators got away with it, notably after the arrival of Christianity. Despite the effect of the new religion in neutralizing and abandoning the (severe) sanctions, the deed of marrying into mother's clan is still considered very wrong. If it is not punished, people fear that hunger and death will stalk the community. People and pigs will suffer, turn sick and die. The gardens will also be affected and potatoes will wither away.

A cognate term, *pabî*, is found in the Yali language where it relates to the transgression of the rule of moiety exogamy. Zöllner (1977:85-91; 1988:25-27) uses the word 'incest'. Among the Mek no moiety system is found and the 'exogamy' rule, therefore, covers a smaller domain. The manner of punishing the violation is similar, however, in that the ceremony in essence is a cleansing ritual to ward off a disaster looming over the community.

3.4 When cords are broken

The life of the adults is predictable, even monotonous, especially that of women. Each day they go to their gardens to dig for potatoes, collect firewood and do other chores. Back at home, they prepare food and take care of the children and the pigs. If there is time, or when it becomes necessary, thread is twined and net bags are knitted. Men, too, are much engaged in plain regular work in the garden or in the village. But they are more mobile and go away every so often to hunt in the forest, trade goods, exchange gifts or see their friends in settlements elsewhere. Or, together with the other men in their own village, they organize feasts and dances, initiate groups of boys, construct houses and bridges, prepare land for gardening, engage in warfare or celebrate peace. Life flows like a river, now moving silently but swiftly along the valley floor, now roaring over rocks and waterfalls and descending through steep gorges until, finally, it reaches the countryside and flattens out.

Death is no stranger to the Sela people. It may strike at any moment during their lifetime, although the very young and the old people are in the most vulnerable position. In this section I will focus on what happens when a person dies.

In December 1991, an important man (*weik ni*), Markus Wùl, died in the village of Kwarangdua during the day. He was a *nong nang* and his death was not unexpected. He had two wives and he died in the hut of his younger wife, Wemdina Wakla, lying beside the fireplace, with his wife at his head and others sitting together in the small hut. That evening I heard many other people crying and wailing in their own huts.

The next morning I saw the body; it had been put in a netbag that belonged to Wemdina. She was quite active and composed. People did not go to their gardens,

and there were a number of people (relatives and others) who had come in. First a church service was held, although Markus was not a Christian, despite his new name. Then the netbag with the body was carefully lifted out of the hut and carried to the cremation site in an old garden by Hibum Wùl, who was not a direct relative of Markus but belonged to the same clan. There the pyre was prepared slowly and meticulously by the men, while a few women stood around. When it was ready, a little kerosene was sprinkled over the wood and the fire was lit. The body was quickly taken out of the netbag (this was returned to Wemdina) and placed on top of the pyre; Wemdina, too, helped with this. Then the body was covered with branches, so that it was not visible. Wemdina had spoken a few words, and after that everyone left. From a nearby path the pyre was closely watched, and it was inspected by a few men to make sure that the body would be completely burned. Finally everyone returned to the village where they had a meal together.

That evening the village was very quiet; not a sound was heard. The *kangi* ('spirit', but see chapter 4.2.1 for a fuller discussion) of the deceased was still roaming around in the village and was not to be disturbed; I will discuss this further in chapter 4.2.2. Later that night torrential rains began to come down. The following day the site was inspected again and finally fenced in.

There are several methods of disposing of the dead. The first is that of placing the body in a tree. This has been observed by the researchers in Eipomek (Eibl-Eibesfeldt, Schiefenhövel and Heeschen 1989:193-200, photo 110, 146; Schiefenhövel 1985:191-208), but when I arrived at Sela Valley in 1980, this custom was not practiced anymore. The body is tied up and then, in a sitting posture, tied to branches of several kinds of trees and covered up with banana leaves, grass, nets or a raincape. Then it is carried up into the tree. When it has desiccated, the bones are taken to another place to dry out. Finally, the bones of important men, such as their skull, jaw or thigh bones, are taken to the sacred men's house (*mem yùwi*), for they are there to help people or to revenge deaths. This 'bringing home the bones' is accompanied by a ceremony, called *(sùmaktùb) nimi songlena'*. This is to honour this person and ask for his permission to carry his bones to the village. The people will be punished if no feast is held. The spirit of the dead person, by now assuming a personality, leaves for the village of the dead. 'Tree burial' has been abandoned today under pressure of the mission/church and the government.

The second method is that of cremating the body. This was already being done in 1980. It is possible that the custom had been introduced by the Dani mission workers when they arrived in the area in the 1970s, for in Dani land the bodies of the dead are, almost without exception, cremated. The influence of the Mission may be considerable; in Langda the people, or at least the Christians, are buried, because the Mission there opposes cremation altogether.

The third method is that of burying the body in the ground. An L-shaped grave is dug. The body is wrapped in clothing or sheets or whatever is available and laid down in the niche at the bottom of the grave. This section is then closed off with planks, so that the body will not be covered with the earth when it is shoveled back into the grave.

I have not found a fixed pattern in the choice of how to dispose of the dead. My impression is that when a death is considered 'natural' the body is cremated, while in the case of, for example, the death of a baby or death caused by a sudden illness or by drowning, the body is buried. But I have noted exceptions. Moreover, a body that has been buried can still be exhumed and cremated. This happened once in 1982 with the body of a woman. Her spirit was said to be still around, bothering her husband.

Burial or cremation are carried out without much delay. If it concerns a child or a single, unmarried person, it is done and over with very quickly, without much ado. In the case of an important person, the process takes more time and involves more people.

Cremation sites are usually situated just outside the village in fallow garden land covered with grass. One time, however, when a man had been murdered, his body was cremated in the centre of the village of the suspected killers. He had been killed near the Olmin mountain pass. His body was found by his relatives and friends. They carried it down the mountain, raided the suspected village and burned the body then and there.

Graves are dug in fallow land as well, but once I saw a grave site in a new garden (the boy had drowned).

The house in which a person has died is usually, although not always, destroyed. Or the roof is torn off to let the *kangi* disappear. The hut is abandoned or taken down and is normally not rebuilt. It seldom happens that an entire village is abandoned and relocated, as was the case with Megum in the East Sela.

When a person dies of exposure high in the mountains the body may be left there. In September 1984, I was shown the body of a woman in the forest just below the Olmin pass at an altitude of 2750 m. She came from Korupun, but was married to a man in Oldomon. During a severe food shortage she decided to return to Korupun with her child. She did not make it; she had made a fire in a dry place under a rock overhang, but had died there. Her, partly mummified, body had slumped forward. The bones and teeth were in good condition; the skin was still partly attached to the body. There was no indication that the site had been disturbed; the remains of the fire were still visible.

Death by suicide is sometimes chosen by women, although not from every village. The most common method is that of jumping into the river from a large rock (see plate 14). The woman leaves a net behind at the point where she jumps

off, and this message is enough for others to realize what she has done.

I cannot determine whether suicide was frequent in the past. Genealogical records indicate that it was not uncommon. When I lived at Sela Valley, however, I rarely if ever heard of successful cases of suicide. Threats to commit suicide were heard more often, and they sometimes had the desired effect.

3.5 Kinship

3.5.1 Charts and table of kin terms

In the following charts (fig. 3.1–3), I delineate the kin terms used by EGO to refer to a (limited) number of both consanguineal and affinal relatives. Depending on the context, EGO may use, or has to use, different kin terms; this will be explained in greater detail below. In a few cases the kin terms could not be further verified or I question the accuracy of the information given to me. I was unable to obtain the kin terms of a few relatives, because of the make-up of the actual genealogies on which these charts are based. For the sake of clarity I isolate the charts marking the links of EGO with his/her children and siblings (fig. 3.2) from those marking the connections through the father and the mother (fig. 3.1). Because of significant differences in the kin terms used, I also give separate charts for male EGO (a) and female EGO (b).

The numbers in these charts refer to the Sela terms listed in table 3.1. In that table I also give a 'gloss' of the meaning of these terms, the generational distance from EGO, and a (more extensive) range of the relatives, both consanguineal and affinal, referred to by these terms.

3.5.2 General notes about the kinship system

The genealogies I wrote down in the early days of my sojourn at Sela Valley were shallow and incomplete. Initially my informants said that they did not know the names of those relatives of two generations back who were dead. Later it turned out that they were reluctant to give the names of those who were long dead. They were afraid that these people, even though they were dead, would learn of it and turn against them. This meant that I had to keep the genealogical information confidential. This problem dissolved more or less in later years, once we got to know each other better. In one case the information went back as far as five generations. But this was an exception, for in general the generational depth is shallow.

In some cases I obtained the information from two angles, namely by eliciting both the active and the passive use of kin terms.

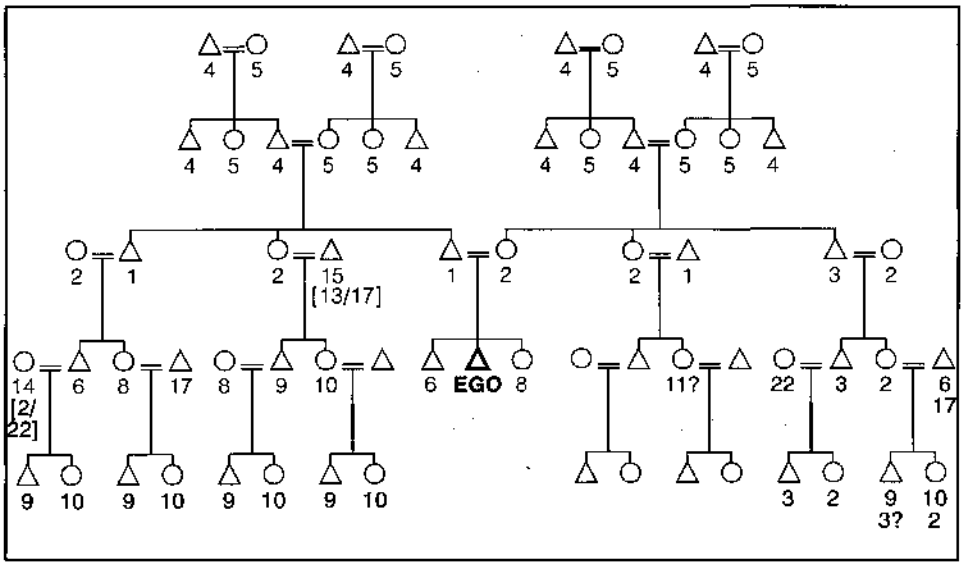

Figure 3.1.a Kin relations through father and mother (male EGO)

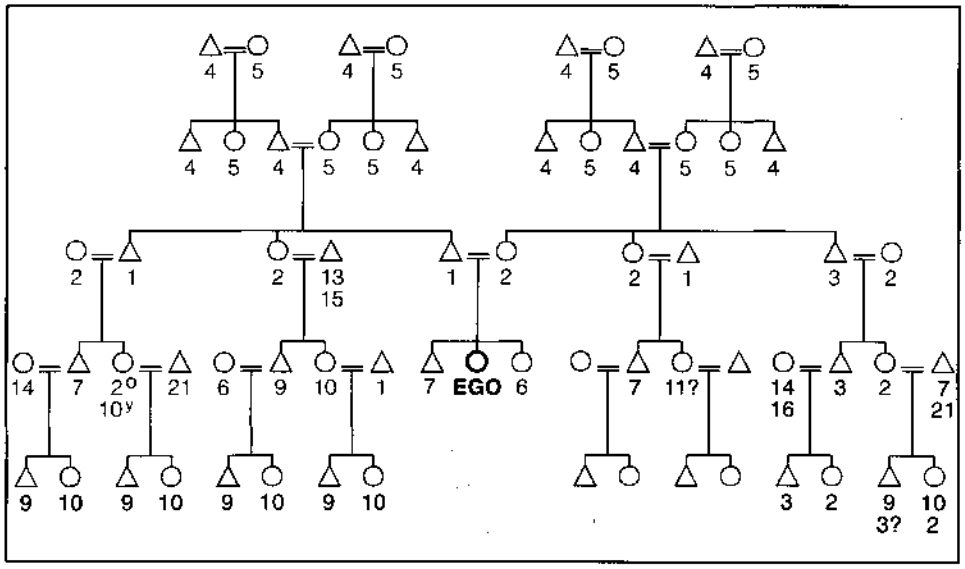

Figure 3.1.b Kin relations through father and mother (female EGO)

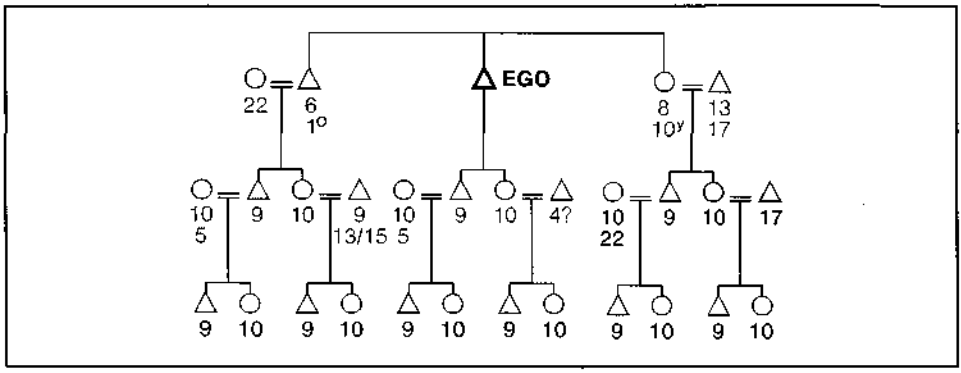

Figure 3.2.a Kin relations through siblings and children (male EGO)

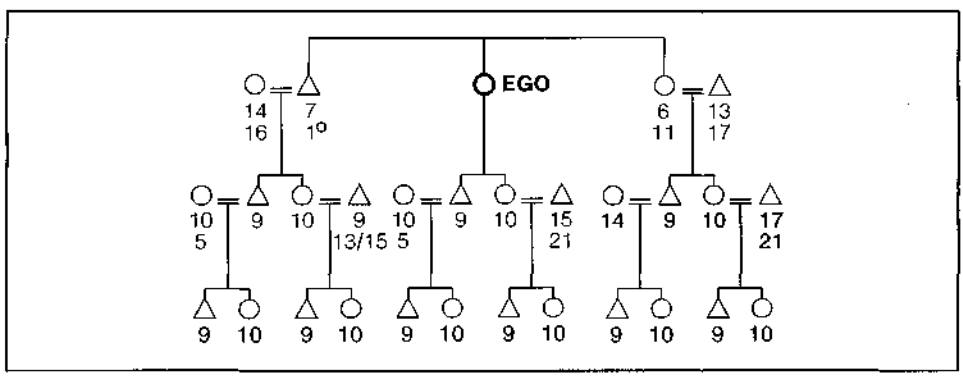

Figure 3.2.b Kin relations through siblings and children (female EGO)

The age difference is sometimes taken into account. For example, the kin term for WFZ usually is *yamalkìl*, the same term used for WM; the reciprocal term (for BDH) is *yamal* or *phay*. But if the WFZ of EGO is much older than he is, he uses the term *au*, while she refers to him as her *mì*. By using these kin terms, the generational distance is increased by a factor of one.

This may also happen among siblings. Normally, they call each other *alka* if they are of the same sex, and *mhalnì* or *mhalkìl* if they are of the opposite sex. But the oldest brother may call his younger sister(s) his *kìlmì*, while she calls him her *ayung*; his younger brother(s) he continues to call *alka*. The explanation given to me was that, if parents (or at least the father) would die at an early age, and this was not altogether uncommon, this brother usually would assume responsibility for the welfare of his younger brothers and sisters.

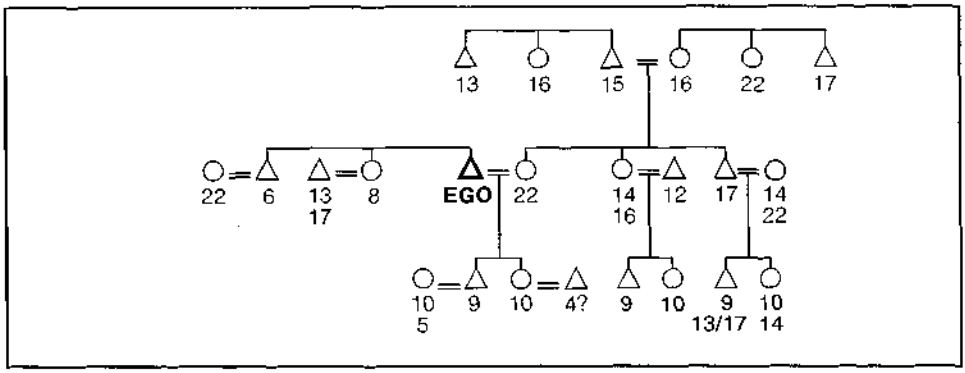

Figure 3.3.a Kin relations through wife

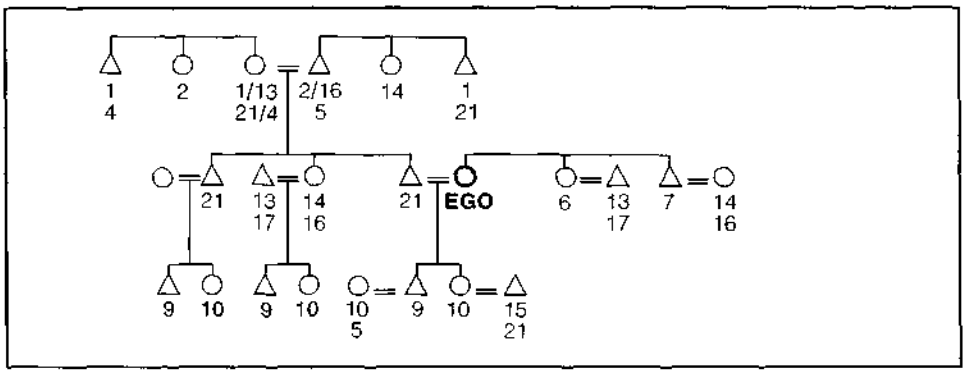

Figure 3.3.b Kin relations through husband

Whether two (affinal) relatives belong to groups that may intermarry or not, may determine the choice of kin terms. Let me give a few examples. First, a woman refers to her HB as her *nìngì*, if he is not too young. To distinguish him from her actual husband, she may refer to the latter with the phrase *nìngì sirik* 'true husband'. A man refers to his BW with the term *kìl* (or *nundi kìl* 'our wife'), and to his actual wife with *kìl* (or *kìl sirik*). Second, a woman calls her HMB *nìngì*, if he belongs to a group into which she may marry. If not, she calls him her *ayung*. The reciprocal terms (for ZSW) are *kìl* and *kìlmì* respectively.

Whether a relative belongs to the same clan as EGO or not, may also determine which kin term is used. If the two are of the opposite sex, the possibility of them being potential marriage partners yields yet another set of kin terms. An inter-

esting example is that of MBDH, who may be referred to in four (or five) different ways. If EGO is male and a member of the same clan as his MBDH, he calls him his *alka* and in turn is called by the same term. If they are not from the same clan, EGO calls his MBDH his *sarùm*, who in turn calls his WFZS his *sarùm* (or his *yamal*). If EGO is female and the two belong to the same clan (and for that reason alone could not marry each other), she calls her MBDH her *mhalnì*; if he is much older than her, she may call him her *ayung*. The reciprocal term for WFZD is *mhalkàl* (and, I presume, *kàlmì*). If they are from different clans, and members of these clans are allowed to intermarry, she calls him his *nìngì*, and he calls her his *kàl*. In other words, gender determines the choice between 'same sex' and 'opposite sex' terms, and clan affiliation determines whether consanguineal or affinal kin terms are used.

Similarly, if they are members of the same clan, a female EGO calls her HMBD her *alka* and vice versa, and her HMBS her *mhalnì* while he calls his FZSW his *mhalkàl*. They use the (consanguineal) terms for siblings.

One more example. A male EGO calls his FBSW his *in* (as he does his FBW), if she belongs to the same clan as his mother does. If she belongs to a clan into which he may marry, he calls her his *kàl*. The woman, on the other hand, calls her HFBS her *nìngì* in both instances. She calls her HFBD her *phaykàl*, and vice versa.

The cross cousin terminology[4] reflects the so-called Omaha system. The matrilateral cross cousins (called *mam* and *in* by EGO) have been terminologically 'raised' a generation, while their patrilateral counterparts (called *mì* and *kàlmì*) have been 'lowered'. This system, of course, is typical for strict patrilineally based communities, and has been found among the Western Dani and the Grand Valley Dani in the Central Highlands, and among the Yali, the Nalum Ok and most of the Mek societies in the Eastern Highlands of Irian Jaya.[5]

The order of birth is marked in the following way. The firstborn is called *yandùngì/-kàl*. If there are two children, the younger one is called *wìbsangì/-kàl*. If there are more than two children, the last one is called *kelìngì/-kàl*; *kelì sirik* means 'really the last one'. The one but last one (or the middle one) is called *nhabingì/-kàl*.[6]

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4 Cross cousins are the children of a brother and a sister.

5 Interestingly, Sims (1986:16) reports an Iroquois system (he applies this nomenclature to the entire kinship system, not just the cousin terminology) among the Ketengban living near the eastern border of the Mek culture area. This system is also found among the Me (Ekagi) in the Western Highlands.

6 The Eipo terms are *dunye/dukil* for the first born boy/girl, *nakaybye* for those born in the middle and *kelasirya* for the last born child (Heeschen and Schiefenhövel 1983:15-16).

Table 3.1 Sela Valley kin terms

nº	kin term	English 'gloss'	gene-ration	range: consanguineal	range: affinal
1	*ayung*	father	+1	F, FB, FFBS	HF, HFB, *HMB, MZH
			0	*B	FZDH(f), *MBDH(f)
2	*in*	mother	+1	M, MZ, FZ, MFZD	HM, HFZ, HMBW
				FFBD, MFBD	FBW, MBW, *FW
				FMBD, MMBD	
			0	MBD, FBD(f)	*FBSW(m)
			−1	MBSD, MBDD	
3	*mam*	mother's brother	+1	MB, MFBS	
				FMBS, MMBS	
			0	MBS	
			−1	MBSS, MBDS?	
4	*asyang*	grandfather	+2	FF, FFB, FMB	HFF, HMF
				MF, MFB, MMB	WFF, WMF
			+3	FFF, FMF	
				MFF, MMF	
			+1	FMBS, MMBS	HF, HFB, WF?
			−1	*FZSS, *FZDS	DH?(m)
5	*au*	grandmother	+2	FM, FFZ, FMZ	HFM, HMM
				MM, MFZ, MMZ	WFM, WMM
			+3	FFM, FMM	
				MFM, MMM	
			+1		HM, WM?, *WFZ
			−1	*FZSD	SW, BSW
			−2	*BSD, *BDD	
6	*alka/ka*	sibling, same sex (same clan)	0	B(m), Z(f)	*FZSW(f), *HMBD
				FBS, FFBSS	*MBDH(m), *WFZS
7	*mhalnì*	sibling, opp. sex (female EGO)	0	B	*HMBS
				FBS, MZS	*MBDH
8	*mhalkil*	sibling, opp. sex (male EGO)	0	Z	*FZSW
				FBD, FFBSD	*WFZD
9	*mì*	son	−1	S, BS, ZS	HBS, HZS
				FBSS, FBDS	WBS, WZS
				FZSS, FZDS, MBDS	*BDH
			−2	SS, BSS, ZSS	
				DS, BDS, ZDS	
			0	FZS	WMBS
			+1	FFZS, MFZS, FMZS?	

Table 3.1 Sela Valley kin terms (continued)

nº	kin term	English 'gloss'	gene-ration	range: consanguineal	range: affinal
10	*kilmì*	daughter	−1	D, BD, ZD FBSD, FBDD FZSD, FZDD, MBDD	HBD, HZD WBD, WZD SW, BSW, *ZSW(m)
			−2	SD, BSD, ZSD DD, BDD, ZDD	
			0	FZD, FBD(f), *Z(m)	WMBD
			+1	FFZD	
11	*khal/kal*		0	Z(f), MZD?	
12	*nha*		0		*WZH, and see *alka*
13	*phay*	brother-in-law	0		ZH, HZH, WB
			+1		FZH, WFB, HF
			−1		BDH, WBS
14	*phaykil*	sister-in-law	0		BW(f), WBW, WFBD HZ, WZ, FBSW, MBSW(f)
			+1		HMZ
			−1		ZSW(f), WBD
15	*yamal*	father-in-law	+1		WF, FZH
			0		WB, *WFZS
			−1		DH(f), BDH
16	*yamalkil*	mother-in-law	+1		HM, WM, WFZ
			0		BW(f), HZ, WZ, MBSW(f)
17	*sarùm*	male-in-law (different clan?)	0		ZH, HZH, WB FBDH(m), WFBS *MBDH(m), *WFZS
			+1		FZH(m), WMB
			−1		ZDH, WBS
21	*ningì*	husband	0		H, HB, HFBS, HFZS FBDH(f), *MBDH(f)
			+1		HF, *HMB
			−1		DH(f), ZDH(f)
22	*kil*	wife	0		W, WBW, BW(m) FBSW(m), MBSW(m) *WFZD
			+1		WMZ
			−1		BSW?, *ZSW(m)

NB Terms marked with an asterisk (*) are used in a qualified context

3.5.3 The kin terms

I will now briefly go over the kin terms one by one. The term *ayung* is glossed 'father'. The primary kin is F, and the term is extended to include his male agnates of his own generation (such as FB or FFBS). In the affinal range, the term is primarily used by a female EGO (MZH is the only exception I have on record). She may call her HF and HFB with this term, and her HMB if she cannot marry into his group.

The term of address is *na'nayung*.

The term *in* (*kwìn* in the East Sela and in Bidabuk) is glossed 'mother'. It has a wide range. First it refers to the M of EGO, then it includes essentially all the females of the generation of the parents through both consanguineal (for example FZ, MZ, FFBD, MFBD) and affinal (FBW, MBW) links. The term extends down one or more generations on the side of MB, because of the Omaha type of cousin terminology. In the affinal range, the term is once more used primarily by a female EGO, to refer for example to her HM and HFZ. If a man has more than one wife, the children call their FW also *in* as they do their own mother.

The term of address is *na'nin*.

As is the case throughout the (mostly) patrilineally organized societies in the highlands of Irian Jaya, the mother's brother (real or classificatory) has a special position within the kinship and social system. A separate kin term, *mam*, is used to refer to him as well as to his son, the matrilateral cross cousin of EGO, and down another generation. The term is extended to refer to consanguineal relatives whose relation to EGO includes a MB(S) connection directly or indirectly, such as FMBS, MMBS, MFBS, possibly also MBDS. A few affinal relatives are called *mam*, but in very restrictive conditions, related to clan membership.

The term *mam ayang* is used as well, but I have never heard it in connection with EGO's mother's brother.

The reciprocal terms are *mì* and *kilmì*.

The term *asyang* (or *aisyang*), glossed 'grandfather', refers to all males, both consanguineal and affinal, two generations above EGO and up. Eventually the meaning of the word flows into that of '(male) ancestor'. The ancestors as a group are called *asyang yabù*.

The term is also used to refer to relatives in the first generation above EGO. In the consanguineal sector, FMBS and MMBS are sometimes also called *asyang*. On the affinal side, a wife (female EGO) may call her HF and HFB by this term. A male EGO may use the term to refer to affines in the generations below his own, such as

DH, SDH and DDH; usually he uses the word *mì*.

The reciprocal terms are, as expected, *mì* and *kìlmì*. But I came across an interesting variant. When EGO's collateral 'grandchildren', such as for example FZSC or BDC, are still small, they may be called *asyang* and *au* respectively. I have not heard these terms being used to refer to EGO's own grandchildren.

The term *au* 'grandmother' has a range similar to that of *asyang*, except that it is not used to refer to (female) ancestors.

The terms for siblings are differentiated on the basis of gender. A male EGO calls his brother his *alka* or *ka*. This term is then extended to his male agnates of his own generation, such as his FBS or FFBSS. On the basis of the principle of patrilineal descent, they are also members of his clan, a criterium that as we have noted above operates in the affinal field of the term *alka* as well. Brothers are called *alka-alka*.

A female EGO calls her sister *alka* or *ka*, too, but also *khal* or *kal*. Sisters are called *alkal-alkal*, a term I have rarely if ever heard. A woman calls her husband's other wives also her *khal*.

If two men from the same clan marry sisters, they call each other with the term *nha*; it may relate to the greeting term *nhai*, used by a person to greet another individual. Otherwise, the (affinal) term *nha* covers the same affinal range as the word *alka* does.

A brother calls his sister *mhalkìl*, and she calls him *mhalnì*. The terms are then in general extended to include those whom my *mhalnì* or *mhalkìl* may call *alka*.

The term *mì* is glossed 'son'. It refers in essence to all males in the generation below EGO, except where the (matrilateral cross) cousin terminology filters through; in that case the term *mam* is used. The mirror image is found on father's side. Thus FZS, the patrilateral cross cousin of EGO, is called *mì*. As a consequence, a few relatives in the generation above EGO are also called *mì*, namely when the FZ segment forms a part of the connection. The reciprocal terms in these instances are *mam* and *in* respectively.

The term *kìlmì*, glossed 'daughter', is the female counterpart of the term *mì*. Once again, the cross cousin terminology affects the range of this term in the same way as it does its male equivalent.

The word *mì* also means 'boy' or more generally 'child', and *kìlmì* means 'girl' as well.

There are three (or four) sets of affinal terms. Each set has its own focus, but there may be a considerable overlap of its range with that of the other sets.

The first is the pair *phay* and *phaykìl*, which may be glossed 'brother-in-law' and

'sister-in-law'. The word *phay* refers for example to the ZH (and HZH) as well as the WB of EGO. In the next generation up it is one of the terms I have recorded for HF, and it also refers to FZH (and WFZH) as well as WFB. It also extends one generation down, to include BDH and WBDH, but the term *mì* is generally used for members of this generation. The term *phaykìl* (or *phagìl*) refers to both HZ and WZ, as well as to BW (female EGO) and WBW. It also extends one generation up (HMZ) or down (ZSW and WBD). In other words, this pair of terms is generally self-reciprocal, taking into account the gender of the two persons involved, but not necessarily limited to one generation.

The second pair is that of *yamal* and *yamalkìl* which are glossed 'father-in-law' and 'mother-in-law'. Males called *yamal* include for example WF and WB, FZH, but also DH (female EGO) and BDH. The term *yamalkìl* refers for example to both HM and WM as well as to WFZ in the generation above EGO (alternating with the term *au* if they are much older), and to BW (female EGO), HZ and WZ of EGO's own generation (alternating with the term *phaykìl*).

I have not been able to pinpoint the precise meaning of the term *sarùm*. It is used quite commonly and its range is broad. It is only used to refer to males (the term **sarùmkìl* is non-existent). With few exceptions (ZH, HZH), it is used by a male EGO only. My impression is that he uses the term *sarùm* to refer to a 'male-in-law' who belongs to a different clan as he does.

The final pair of kin terms is that of *nìngì* 'husband' and *kìl* (*ner* in Bidabuk) 'wife'. These terms refer in general to members of the opposite sex who belong to a clan into which they may marry.

Thus a woman uses the term *nìngì* to refer to her own husband (*nìngì sirik*) or to her HB if he is not too young, but also to her HFBS (her husband's *alka*) and HFZS as well as to her FBDH and MBDH if they are members of a different clan. Furthermore the term may include HF, and HMB or HFZH if there is no marriage restriction. In the generation below hers she may use the term to refer to her DH (*yamal* would be an alternative term) and ZDH. A wife refers to her husband with the phrase *neri nìngì* 'my husband'; when another person talks to a third party about him, quite a different term is used, namely *alìkni* 'her husband'.

A man refers with the term *kìl* to his own wife (*kìl sirik*), and to his BW, WBW, FBSW or MBSW; furthermore to his WMZ in the generation above, and to his ZSW and WBSW in the generation below if the marriage restrictions do not apply.

Finally, a man uses the affinal terms *yamal* and *yamalkìl* for his parents-in-law. A woman uses a variety of terms, but prefers the 'consanguineal' terms *ayung* and *in*, the same terms her husband uses. This corresponds with what Sims (1986:21) has reported for the Ketengban.

3.6 Clans

3.6.1 Terminological considerations

There are in the Sela area exogamous, patrilineal kin groups with (viri-)local marital residence, whose members claim to be descendants of a common ancestor, but who cannot always trace their mutual relationship; this ancestor then functions as a common symbol, from which they derive their identity. We may call these groups 'clans'.

The local term for 'clan (name)' is *sisya'*. This word also means something like 'generic name'; this meaning was identified when we were once talking about a list of medicines.

Furthermore, there is another word, namely *yìna'* (in the West and East Sela, *yìla'* in the Hao and Weip valley), with the meaning 'plant seedling, trap lever'. For example, *kwaning yìna'* means 'sweet potato shoots', and *dùbna yìna'* refers to the 'spring' (usually a small tree) of a trap. But the word *yìna'* also refers to a kin group within a *sisya'*, whose members can trace their mutual relationship through a common ancestor. Thus we may have three *yìna'* (*yandù*, *wìbsa* and *nhabi*) descended from three brothers who are members of the *sisya'* Sùl.

In Eipomek the word for 'clan' is *yala* (Heeschen and Schiefenhövel 1983:240; Koch 1984:17), which also means 'origin, plant seedling, trap lever'. I think that the word *yìna'* is a distant cognate of the Eipo word *yala* (via the Weip valley route), but would prefer to translate it 'lineage'. The cultural 'cognate' of the Eipo word *yala* is the term *sisya'*.

I heard the word *yìna'* in the sense of 'lineage' being used at a rather late phase of my studies, early in 1988, when my informant, Wanyasirik Sùl, mentioned it during a discussion about the origin of the Mirin clan. I had not learned of it before, not even during the census of 1984. One of the reasons may be that the clans are relatively small (see table 3.2), so that it is not always possible to form a *yìna'*. It is my impression that the *yìna'* exists, but that it does not have a function as specific as the *sisya'*. I should add that I did not pursue this matter further at that time.

3.6.2 The clans in the Sela area

Table 3.2 lists, in alphabetical order, the names of the clans that I have recorded in the Sela area. I also give the number of members for each clan, based on the census taken in 1984. Furthermore, I indicate the area in which each clan is found or is dominant (WS – West Sela; ES – East Sela, including Haromon; SE – Hao and Weip valley) as well as the area of origin (which is marked bold if a clan is considered 'indigenous').

Table 3.2 Sela Valley clans

	name	total	area	origin
1	Aima	1	SE	East
2	Alùwa	58	SE	Welp, East
3	Bafuki	5	WS	West
4	Balyù	1	ES	East
5	Biri	7	WS, ES	**Sela**, West
6	Boddoman	20	WS	West
7	Bulaf	7	ES	ES
8	Dabla	63	WS	WS, West, North
9	Dama	1	WS	West
10	Dil	13	WS	WS, North
11	Dùyila	36	SE	**West Welp**
12	Hagu	28	WS	?
13	Kiroman	342	WS, **ES**, SE	**East Sela**
14	Kunmok	10	WS	WS, North?
15	Magayang	198	(WS, ES), SE	Hao and Welp
16	Maling	148	ES, **SE**	East Welp
17	Medyal	1	WS	North?
18	Mirin	158	**WS**, ES	North
19	Minak	16	WS	?
20	Mùl	9	WS, ES, SE	Lower Hao
21	Nipsan	19	WS, (ES, SE)	West
22	Ou	61	WS, (ES)	**West Sela**
23	Ousu	20	WS, (ES)	West
24	Phikagin	2	WS	WS
25	Phub	8	WS	West
26	Sala	112	WS, (ES)	**West Sela**
27	Sam	1	WS	West
28	Sengket	63	ES	East
29	Sinat	7	WS	West
30	So	38	WS	WS, North
31	Sùl	263	**WS**, ES	North
32	Sùnyab	45	WS	West
33	Uk	25	WS	WS, North
34	Ùrin	1	WS	West
35	Ùtpan	268	WS, **ES**	**East Sela**
36	Wakla	82	**WS**, ES, SE	**West Sela**
37	Wale	215	WS, ES, SE	Sela, Hao
38	Waroman	41	WS, (ES), SE	WS, West Welp, East
39	Wisabla	40	WS, (ES)	WS?, Lower Hao
40	Wùl	35	WS	WS
41	Yalak	165	WS, (ES)	**West Sela**, West

Let me now briefly describe each of the forty-one clans. They are combined into five groups, as follows:

1. Five clans, whose members live in one of the three areas, but were born outside our area of study;
2. Thirteen clans, whose members were born in one of the three regions and continue to live there;
3. Six clans, whose members live in one of the regions, but some of whom were born outside the area where they now live;
4. Thirteen clans, whose members were born, and are living, predominantly in one of the three areas;
5. Four clans, found throughout the area of study.

The first group includes five clans, whose members live in one of the three areas and were born in places east or west of the greater Sela area. The members of the **Baluki** clan, a man with his two children and two women (and the three spouses) were all born in Wìlìlìng on the west side of the lower Erok valley. The (married) woman from the **Sam** clan was also born in this village. The **Dama** clan is represented by a married woman who came from the Dagi valley. The **Balyù** clan is also represented by a married woman. She was born in Yalar in the Eyme valley. She is the only person living in the Sela area whom I have on record as coming from this valley. By 1989 she had returned to her native village. An old widow from the **Aima** clan, living in Bidabuk, was born in Kubiyalar, a village just south of Mt. Goliath.

The second group represents thirteen clans, whose members were born in one of the three regions and continue to live in their respective areas.

There are ten such clans in the West Sela. The **Wùl** clan is concentrated in Kwarangdua and, to a lesser extent, Mùnamna. The members of the **Hagu** clan primarily live in Kwarangdua. The **Uk** clan is concentrated in the northern sector of the West Sela; all its members were born in one of the three villages of Oldomon, Orisin and Surumdamak. The **Boddoman** clan is concentrated in Phoy, where it is the largest clan. The members of the **Mìnak** clan were all born in Kwarangdua and still live there. There is a question whether this clan should be listed separately or be merged with the Hagu clan. The members of the **Dìl** (or **Deyal**) clan were born in three different villages and still live there. The **Kunmok** clan members live in Kwarangdua and were born there. The **Phikagin** clan is possibly related to the Ousu clan. Finally, the **Medyal** and **Ùrìn** clans are represented by females.

The other three clans are found in one of the other regions. The **Sengket** clan is concentrated in the eastern (upper) section of the East Sela. This clan is also found in the Eyme and Eipomek valleys. The **Bulal** clan members live in four villages in

the East Sela; most of them were born in the western end of the valley. The members of the **Dùyìla** clan live in the West Weip valley, many of them in Bolkiriknadua, where it is the largest clan. This village (or its vicinity) is considered the place of origin of this clan.

The third group consists of six clans. Their members live in one of the three regions, but some of them were born outside the area where they now reside.

Five of these clans are in the West Sela. The largest is the **Dabla** clan. The majority of its members, especially of the males, lives in Mùnamna. The females live throughout the area. The nine 'immigrants', from the Dagi valley or the Korupun area, are females, too. The **Sùnyab** clan is concentrated in the villages of Kwarangdua, Phoy and Mùnamna. The clan members from outside the area came from the Korupun area, from Wìlìlìng, and from Debula to the southwest. The So clan is primarily found in Orisin, and to some extent in Mùnamna. The one person from outside is a single adult man who was born in Olsikla near the mission station of Nalca, north of the range. The **Phub** clan, numbering only eight people, is found primarily in Kwarangdua. Four adults come from villages to the (south-)west. The (seven) **Sinat** clan members live in the northern sector of the West Sela. An old widow hails from the Duram area in the upper Erok valley.

Finally, the **Alùwa** clan is found in the Weip valley, and especially in Bidabuk, where most of its male members live. It is the females who have moved around. Four of them originate from villages to the east.

The fourth group of clans, thirteen in all, consists of those clans whose members were born, and are living, predominantly in one of the three areas.

Ten of these clans are found in the West Sela. The **Ou** clan is concentrated in the villages of Oldomon and those on the Eyup ridge, which is considered its area of origin. All of its members were born in the West Sela; only two live in the East Sela. The **Sala** clan, too, is considered an indigenous clan. It is concentrated in the northern sector of the West Sela, but its members are living in each of the West Sela villages (and a few in two villages in the East Sela). Three men have moved in from the region to the west. The **Yalak** clan is found throughout the West Sela, but especially in Oldomon and Mùnamna (or rather Sùlda), where it is the largest clan. Only two married women live in the East Sela. A fairly large group, nineteen altogether, originates from the west, from the Korupun area and from Wìlìlìng. Some consider it a clan indigenous to the West Sela. The **Wisabla** clan is concentrated in Kwarangdua, where it is the largest clan. A few members live in the East Sela.

All but one of the **Ousu** clan members live in the West Sela. Three adult women, living in Oldomon, were born in the Korupun area or in the Dagi valley. All the males of the **Nipsan** clan live in Kwarangdua; of the females, one lives in

the East Sela, one in the Weip valley, and the others live in the West Sela. Five of the members of this clan were born in villages to the (south-)west of the Sela area; the others were born in Kwarangdua. The **Sùl** clan is the largest clan in Orisin, Mekdou and Mundon, and the second largest in Surumdamak. It is also the largest clan in the West Sela. Thirty members are living in the East Sela; twenty were born there. The clan is concentrated in the northern part of the West Sela. The story of its origin points to the north.

The other three clans are more evenly spread in the Sela area. The **Mirin** clan is a large clan, of which 25 percent lives in the East Sela and the remainder in the West Sela. Four people come from west of the Sela. The clan is concentrated in the northern end of the West Sela (Orisin and the Eyup area) and in Megum, the nearest village in the East Sela. It originates in the north, according to the oral records. The **Wakla** clan is found predominantly in the West Sela, particularly in Kwarangdua where its origin is claimed to be, but its members are also found in the East Sela and in Sinayom. The **Biri** clan has seven members, of whom four live in the West Sela and three in the East Sela. Its only female member, a married woman living in Phoy, comes from the Dagi valley.

Then the other three clans. The **Ùtpan** clan is either the largest or the second largest clan in most of the villages in the East Sela. Its place of origin is said to be Megum, and the census data bear this out. A number of clan members live in the West Sela; none in the valleys to the south. The **Maling** clan is concentrated in the Hao and Weip valleys, especially in Bidabuk where it is the largest clan. Its origin is to the east. Finally, the **Magayang** (or **Mhayang**) clan. This is the largest clan in Sinayom, Kwelamdua and Yalidomon and in fact the largest clan in the Hao and Weip valleys. A few females live elsewhere in the region.

The fifth group comprises the four clans which are found throughout the area. The **Kìroman** clan (whose ancestor is said to be Thay Bùangì) is the largest in the entire area, and also the largest in the East Sela (including Haromon), where the majority of its members lives. Only in Mùnamna in the West Sela are no members of this clan found. The East Sela is considered its place of origin. The **Wale** clan is spread evenly throughout the area, but is more dense in the Eyup area and in Sinayom. The **Waroman** clan is found mostly in the West Sela (especially in Phoy) and in the Weip valley (primarily in Kwelamdua). Three married women, living in the East Sela, were born in the Bomela area to the east. The **Mùl** clan has only nine members, but they live in all three regions; its origin probably is the lower Hao valley (Manadam).

When we combine the data on current residence and place of birth of the clan members, and take into account which clans are designated indigenous clans (*ad*

yana' nang) and which ones immigrant clans (*sìgil yangkana' nang*), an interesting pattern emerges. There are eighteen clans whose members reside in the West Sela only. Of ten clans, all the members were also born in the West Sela. The members from the other eight clans who were born 'abroad' came from valleys to the (south-) west or the north, never from the east. There are ten clans whose members are predominantly living in the West Sela. Three clans are found in the East Sela only (none of its members were born in the west) and one, large, clan predominantly. In the Southeast the picture is even clearer. There are three clans only found there (again none of its members were born in the west), and of the two large clans concentrated there no members were born in the West Sela. Finally, four clans are found in all three regions.

While the clans in the Sela area cannot be said to be localized groups, often they are concentrated in one or few villages, not necessarily adjacent to each other, or in certain areas. Moreover, many (24) clans are found in only one of the three areas, and if members of the other clans are living in the other two regions, this kind of movement is restricted. The West Sela area in particular counts many, generally smaller, clans that are not found elsewhere, or whose members are born in valleys to the west. My tentative hypothesis, therefore, is that we encounter in the Sela area a western and an eastern layer of clans, which overlap to some extent.

This hypothesis, however, is tempered by two, interrelated, findings to which we now turn.

3.6.3 Clan clusters

Unlike the Yali and the Grand Valley Dani, the Mek have no moiety system by means of which exogamous relations or other social (or religious) rights and obligations are defined and regulated. The community is not divided up into two exogamous (descent) groups.

Yet the exogamy rule is applied, ideally at least, above the level of the clan. For in the Sela area we find clusters of two or more clans within which certain clan pairs are not allowed to intermarry, or men of one clan may not marry women from its partner clan, but not vice versa. There is no specific term for such a unit. However, the kin terms *alka-alka* 'brothers' or *alkaya-alkaya* are used to express the mutual relationship between the two clans. Or the clans are said to relate to each other as *mhalnì* to *mhalkìl*, 'brother' to 'sister'. Although I heard the expression once, I am not sure whether the two clans are always believed to constitute one clan (*nhonok sisya'*). An expression more often heard is *neik sisya'* 'same/similar clan'. The intent, however, is clear: intermarriage is forbidden or restricted.

The motif generating this rule appears to be found in the origin stories of the

clans. For example, the ancestors of several clans originally came from the north. There a man cut up a pig once. Its head was put in a cave, and out of it the Mirin people came into being. The remainder of the pig was cut into strips, which were then given a name and from which other groups originated, including the Sùl clan. Hence Sùl men are not allowed to marry Mirin women, but Mirin men may marry Sùl women, for their clan came first. Another such cluster is the combination Mirin-So.

Clusters within which intermarriage is not allowed are, for example, the pairs Wakla-Dabla and Wakla-Hagu, or the combination Sala-Ou-Biri. The combination Yalak-Sinat is not possible either, for another reason. This became apparent when a married woman once switched her clan name from Sinat to Yalak. In the East Sela, the clan names Ùtpan and Magayang are often interchanged.

It was impossible for me to draw up a consistent and coherent list of clan clusters and discuss the exceptions to the rule found in the demographic data with my informants each and every time. My impression is that the rules are in general, but not always, adhered to.

I prefer to call the combinations clan clusters, because each of the constituent units is often called *sisya'* in this context and always so at other times. Heeschen (1984: Tables 6-12) seems to vacillate between the terms 'clan' and 'sub-clan'.

Clans are also linked together on a regional basis, and in that sense may be considered territory-based. Examples are the combinations Yalak-Maling and Sala-Magayang. The clans Yalak and Sala are found primarily in the West Sela and further west, whereas the Maling and Magayang clans are found in the East Sela and above all in the Hao and Weip valleys. Now when people move, they often switch their clan name accordingly. Needless to say that the custom of changing both clan and personal names becomes a demographer's nightmare when he updates his census lists after a few years.

Despite this rather long discussion of the clans in the Sela area, it seems to me that the emphasis is not on descent as a principle by itself to organize social life. Rather, it is used as a symbol to emphasize a sense of unity. The focus of the social organization is in my opinion located in the community of the village (ward) or hamlet, in which the men's house is central.

3.6.4 The marriage system

Let me briefly recapitulate the various marriage rules and try to identify the order of significance. The first is that of clan (or clan cluster) exogamy. A man should not marry a woman from certain clans, certainly not when her clan has a special rela-

tionship with his clan, based on origin charters. Clan exogamy is strictly adhered to. I have found no exceptions to this rule in my census data. Clan cluster exogamy was harder to verify, because I could not obtain a complete picture of which clusters actually are found in the Sela area. My impression is that this rule is in general, but not always, followed.

The second is that a man should not marry a woman from his mother's clan. This also rules out (matrilateral) cross cousin marriage. If he violates this rule, the two partners may be accused of a serious offence and be forced to submit to the *pabya* ritual (and possibly be killed afterwards). Yet I have come across exceptions to this rule in my census data.

Another 'rule' is virilocal residence of the married couple. Strict virilocality, though, is mitigated by the fact that, while a man almost always continues to live in his natal village, his wife comes from the same village (although not necessarily from the same ward) just as much as she comes from another settlement.

I have mentioned that a person may have a (multiple) choice when referring to another person of the opposite sex. If a woman, for example, belongs to a group from which the man has, or may seek, a wife, affinal terms are used. If that is not the case, consanguineal kin terms are used. One of the more important criteria is of which clan this group forms part. In this way, clan membership, marriageability, and kinship terminology are brought together to form a marriage 'system'.

3.7 Community leaders

The 'leaders' in the traditional communities in the Sela area (and throughout the Mek culture area) are not formally chosen or elected, but derive their position from certain prestations (the achieved form of leadership). In that respect one may characterize these communities as forming an egalitarian society.

Nonetheless, there are persons in the Sela who exercise greater influence than others. In the Highland ethnographic literature they are usually referred to as Big Men, and in recent years also as Great Men. The Sela people refer to this category of men in various ways. One term is *weik nì* (or *weik nang*) which literally means 'big man'. It refers to a man who is still active and able to work. When such a man grows older, he may also be called *whi ngì* 'mature man' or *ni nong nì* 'old(er) man'. Another term is *dùb nì* (*dùb nang*) which means 'big man' or 'wealthy man' (literally 'top man'). The word *dùb* means 'top, crown' (cf. *mìn dùb* 'mountaintop', *kal dùb* 'treetop'). A third term is *ad bùnùb nì*, which means something like '(male) village leader' or 'leader in a larger area'. At the time I obtained the last term, my informant also added the term *ad bùnùb kìl* '(female) leader'. There are, therefore,

women who are similarly recognized for their influence, perhaps because of their healing powers.

These men share a number of characteristic traits. They are usually strong, and sometimes dominating, personalities. They are also industrious and hardworking, and often maintain large gardens, have many pigs and are married to two or more wives. They have, furthermore, a well-developed sense of generosity and share their wealth with other people to help them, while not forgetting the benefits they will eventually reap, when the expected counter-prestations are made. They are not as flamboyant in their behaviour as, for example, Dani leaders are. Finally, although there is no guarantee that their word holds sway each and every time, their persuasive powers are finely tuned and they have a keen ability to express themselves well and clearly. In other words, they are often one or two steps ahead of the others and in this way are able to sense in which direction people are leaning and appeal to them for their cooperation.

Their role becomes visible when, for example, a men's house is constructed, or when new gardens are prepared by a group of village men. If they initiate a war and are, therefore, as the *mal deiya' nì* 'warleader' (literally 'man at the base of the war') responsible for its course of action, they have to give a pig as a payment when a person is killed. Their influence is more pronounced, however, when they display their knowledge of tradition handed down from the ancestors during ceremonies and rituals. Koch (1984:22) calls them "protectors of tradition".

3.8 Exchange and trade

Within the village, and to a lesser extent between the villages, goods are usually exchanged by means of gifts and counter-gifts. Food in particular is shared frequently.

When greater distances are involved, and someone has to go to other valleys or to the lowlands, the desired goods are obtained through trading. Usually people combine this with attending a feast.

I have never seen large trade groups travel through the Sela area. A few individuals at the most may decide to go somewhere for trading purposes. The people travel in smaller groups and less often than, for example, the Mountain Ok do (Michel 1990:1-4). Apparently fewer resources are available to be traded.

A person maintains a network of (trade) partners on whom he can rely for shelter, food and safety when he travels far out to distant valleys. For example, a man from the Sela area may have such partners in the Nalca area across the central range, at a distance of three days' walking.

Such a trade partner is called a *nimi ùrùn*. This may be translated 'visitor, guest' and then also 'friend'. The Sela people have no abstract word for 'friendship', but refer to this concrete expression to explain its meaning.[7]

3.9 Conflict and its resolution

The word used in the context of a conflict is *mal*. The literal meaning of it is 'arrow'; when used in combination with other words, it may relate to a conflict situation, such as feud or war. In their language, the Sela people do not differentiate between types of conflict as the Eipo do who make a distinction between *abala* 'fight within a section of a valley' and *(isa) mal* 'war with traditional enemies from another valley' (Heeschen 1984:120; 1990:260). There is a phrase, *bisa' mal*, in the Sela language, which is a cognate of *isa mal*, but this means 'piercing pain (felt in chest or abdomen)'.

Despite the absence of the terminological differentiation, the categories of conflict in the Sela area, and especially in the valleys to the south, are similar to those of the Eipo. There are (groups of) villages from the same or different valleys, whose inhabitants traditionally do not like each other, to say the least.

The major causes for conflict are discord between marital partners or a dispute involving a third party, damage caused by pigs, theft of possessions, violation of rights on land, (suspicion of) sorcery, or unsettled claims from the past.

Within a village, fighting resulting in bodily harm is rare. The people who feel hurting may vent their anger or frustration with a loud voice for all to hear. This usually triggers a large commotion, followed by endless talks outside or in the (men's) huts, until some sort of consensus has been reached how the dispute can best be settled and what payments are to be imposed. Men may carry bow and arrow around, or a stick, and make threatening moves, but usually that's all there is to it. Occasionally a man gives his wife a couple of blows with a piece of wood, and she may return the favour in kind. But in general measures are quickly taken to neutralize and isolate conflicts within the village, which as we have noted in chapter 2 is small in size and compactly built. Everyone has an interest in ensuring that a state of peace is maintained within this community.

Fights between villages or groups of settlements are more serious and may have far-reaching consequences. Certain villages tend to stick together. In the West Sela there are a few such groups. Kwarangdua and Phoy are allies. So are Oldomon,

7 The Eipo people use the cognate word *orona* (Heeschen and Schiefenhövel 1983:197) as well as the expression *ninye bún* (Heeschen 1990:9).

Orisin and Sùlda. The villages on the Eyup ridge stick together, and may assist Kwarangdua over against Sùlda. The villages in the East Sela are divided in their allegiance. Their support depends on where their married women come from. The West Sela villages have had their share in conflicts with villages in the upper Erok valley. Kwelamdua in the Weip valley and Debula near the lower Thay valley have, until recent years, maintained a state of traditional enmity, marked by raids and abductions.

According to the early mission reports, Kwarangdua was involved in fighting with other villages in the West Sela in 1973. In 1975 there was continuous fighting between several villages in the East Sela. In 1979, Kwelamdua and Bidabuk were at loggerheads.

A large war erupted in the late 1970s. A man from Orisin had married a woman from Surumdamak. But trouble arose, and the two villages opposed each other. Then East Sela people became involved. Some of them were killed. This aroused their anger. About one hundred heavily armed men crossed the Thay river. They went to Orisin by way of Eyup. But the Orisin people had been tipped off and fled to Korupun, together with the inhabitants of Oldomon. The village of Orisin was totally destroyed. The people from Kwalboron and Sùlda, living on a slope across Orisin, became frightened and moved to a new (garden) site, Mùnamna. I arrived in the Sela in May 1980; in fact, the decision to open the mission post Sela Valley was made in response to the flow of reports of continuous fighting in the Sela. By the time of my arrival, the war had stopped (*mal lùb-*) and the reconciliation process had begun. Gifts of pigs were being exchanged between the warring parties. In every village involved in the war the exchanges were followed by singing parties (*mos seblamang*) indicating a return to some form of peace.

From 1980 until 1989, when I lived in the Sela or made occasional visits, there were no large scale wars in the area. There was only one brief but sharp conflict between Kwelamdua and Debula about a marriage payment, that occurred when I was away for two years.

In 1989, when it dawned on the people that the white people who had lived among them for nine years would leave for good, they told me that they were afraid that fighting would resume and that the situation would return to what it had been before 1980. There was good reason for them to fear this, for a man had just been murdered in cold blood.

In April 1989, Asabìng Mirin from Korupun was killed near the Olmin pass. He had never married a woman. We knew him well, for he had often carried our mail between Korupun and Sela Valley. Men from Korupun started a search and found his body after a week. They carried it down to the village of Oldomon, where the suspected killers lived. The people were rounded up and many of their belongings were confiscated, including pigs whose owners lived elsewhere. No one was killed.

The huts were not destroyed, the gardens were. The body of the victim was cremated in the centre of the village. There were no further repercussions.

What was the cause that led to this outburst of violence? A woman had married a man [A] from Oldomon, who died (or was killed). Then another man [B], living in Orisin, wanted to take her as his second wife. She refused, and instead left and married a man [C] from the Mirin clan in Korupun. But he [C] did not make any marriage payments (presumably to the relatives of her first husband [A]). The woman became pregnant. The other man [B] noticed this when she was in Oldomon on the occasion of a church opening early in 1989. Within two months Asabìng was dead. He was a relative of the present husband [C] of the woman and a member of the same clan. Being a bachelor, he was vulnerable and could be taken out without all too serious consequences. One of the alleged killers was a younger relative of the former husband [A] of the woman. What began to trouble many people, however, and made their remarks to me understandable was the fact that the man [B] who had eyed the woman in the first place was the same who had escalated the conflict in the 1970s by killing some of the East Sela people. In both cases he was considered the *mal deiya' nì*, the person responsible for initiating a *mal*.

Plate 13 Mundon women picking fleas

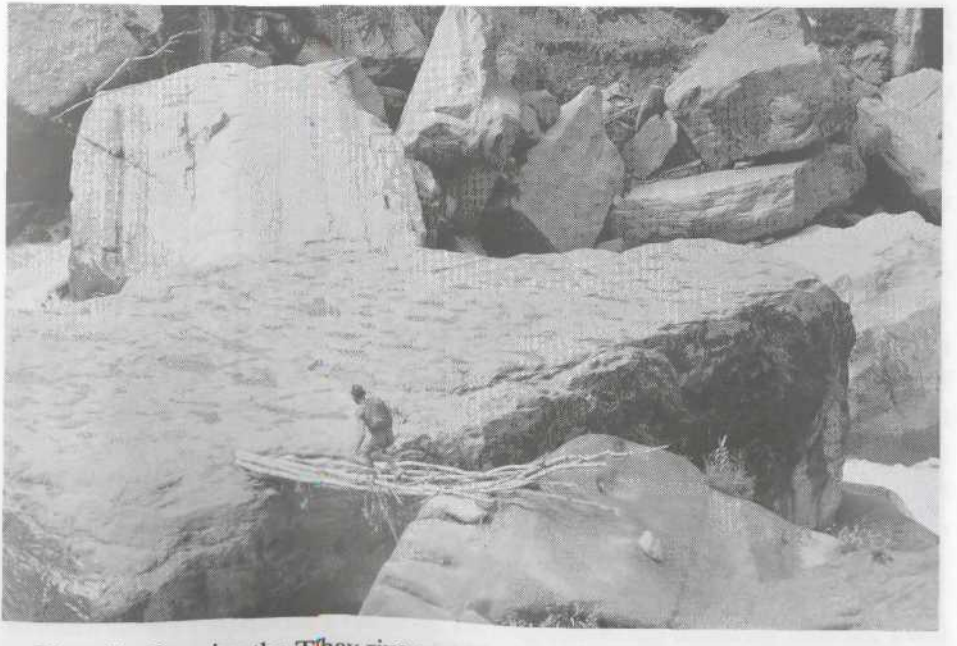

Plate 14 Crossing the Thay river

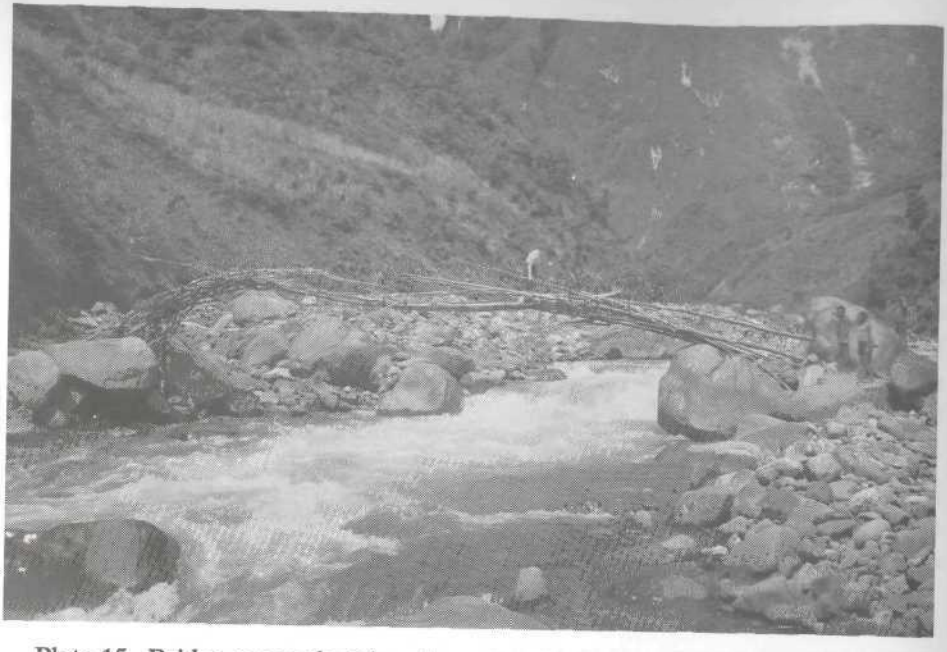

Plate 15 Bridge across the Thay river

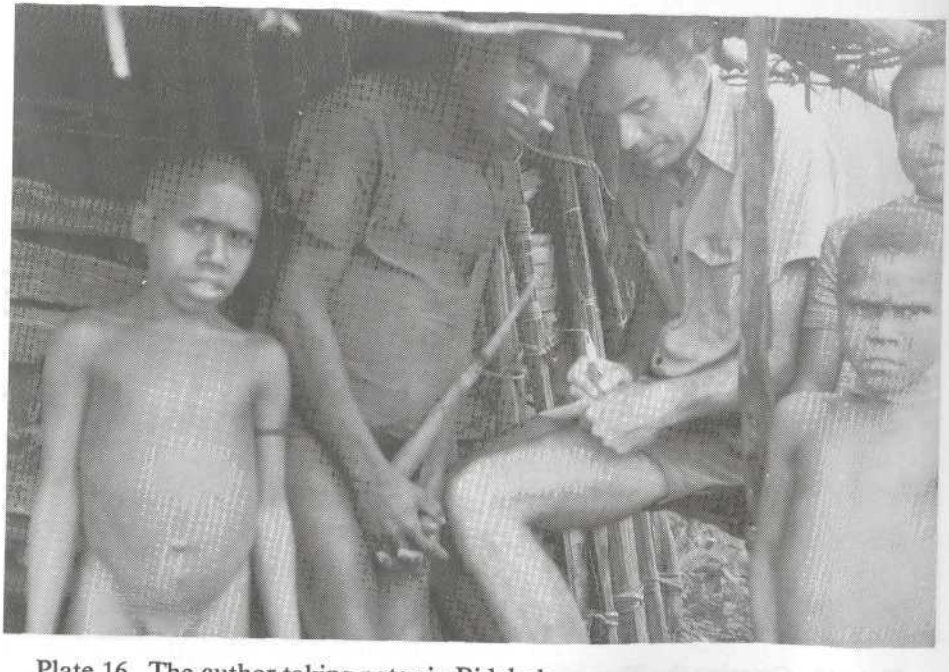

Plate 16 The author taking notes in Bidabuk

Chapter 4

The Sela Valley People and their Universe

The religious dimension of the culture of the Sela people is hard to grasp. On the one hand, it penetrates the economic and social dimensions we have touched on in the previous two chapters, forms a symbiotic whole with them, and therefore becomes to a large extent indistinguishable. It is there, yet it is hard to define what is there. On the other hand, the information that people shared with me or that I asked about surfaced in bits and pieces. It was then up to me to discover the inner sense and coherence of this facet of the Sela culture. Again, it was meaningful, very meaningful, but it was hard to pin down. So my data are sketchy and, therefore, tentative.

Furthermore, in order to be able to have a fair and open discussion about matters that were important to my partners, I had to be certain that they trusted me completely and without reservations. Of course, I had to assure them too of my genuine interest in these matters, irrespective of what my own opinion would turn out to be. For that reason, I waited a long time before I felt free to initiate a more substantial discussion in which we could go into details without being bothered by 'background noise'. In the meantime, I studied other aspects of the culture.

In addition, Christian beliefs began to percolate through. As the people began to wrestle with another belief and ethical system, it is not surprising that this encounter, which took place within the context of local beliefs and *mores*, did not yield cut and dried results. There were no neat and simple answers to matters of utmost importance. I was not always sure whether a new foundation was being laid or whether new buildings were being constructed on the old foundation. In short, I had to be careful in my attempt to understand what the people shared with me. I also had to be alert that I was not just being told what they believed I wanted to hear as a missionary rather than a student of local beliefs.

So much for my introductory remarks. Turning now to the following sections, I will begin with a discussion of the conceptions of, and stories about, the origin of the

universe and its inhabitants, as members of the various clans.

Then the spirit beings and their influence will be discussed. In this context, I will also pay attention to the current notions about sickness and death.

Next, the role of persons, both male and female, who are considered qualified and able to communicate with the 'other' world, will be considered.

Finally, I will deal with sacred and other important places, constructions or objects.

4.1 Origins

4.1.1 The universe

The Sela Valley people conceive the universe of being made up of three regions. The upper one is called *im* 'sky'. Whether or not other people live up there, is unknown to them. The sun (*hìng*) is considered female and the moon (*wal*; *emìya'* in the Hao and Weip valley) male. Their mutual relationship is compared to one between wife and husband (*kìl* and *nìngì*) rather than sister and brother. On the other hand, unlike human beings, the sun at least possesses neither *nong* 'body' nor *kangì* 'soul, spirit'. I have no story on record as to where the sun is believed to come from.

The second region is the earth (*sùgù*), inhabited by the human people and the spirits. The mountains on the earth are one of the more prominent features in the origin stories.

Underneath the earth is the 'underworld' (*amu sùgù* or *sùgù amu*). There some kind of people live as well, called the *sùgù amu nang*. They are also known as the *ìmalunga kwatkwarì nang*. I could not exactly pin down the meaning of this phrase. These people are believed to walk around with their umbilical cord still attached (the word *ìmalunga* means 'umbilical cord'). Furthermore, a large kind of earthworm (*koluma*; the generic term is *phì*) lives inside the earth. Whenever it moves over, earthquakes occur. The *yùli kal* is also sometimes thought to grow inside the earth (see below).[1]

This universe is believed to have always been there. Its existence is assumed in the origin stories. There is no notion of a world that once has been created in the strict sense of the word. The landscape (mountains, passes, valleys, rivers) as the

1 The composition of the universe differs somewhat from what Sims (1991:40-44) has reported for the Ketengban, who distinguish four layers. First, the *im deike* 'top of sky', the realm of the sky beings. Second, the *im nitamai* 'middle sky' and the *tuai mutu* 'earth', the realm of mankind. Third, the *tu(ai) amutara* 'area under the earth', the abode of the major spirits. Fourth, an unnamed region which sometimes is included in the *tuai amutara*, where the spirit Bawa Bo dwells.

people know it has been formed in the primordial past, not created.

4.1.2 The concept 'origin'

Heeschen (1990:19-21) has well delineated the contours of the concept *kwemdina* among the Eipo. Anything that is considered *kwemdina* is related to the beginning or origin (of the world, of time, and so forth). It may be a place, a mountain, a plant or animal, an object or house, but also a name, a song or a narration. The concept cannot be translated into English with exact terms, but may be circumscribed by words like 'creation, origin event, foundation, sacred, old'.

Heeschen also refers to the equivalent concept, *ukuma* 'foundation, basis', found among the Larye and Yale people.

I have found neither word (or cognates) being used or recognized in the Sela area, although both verb roots in the verbal noun *kwemdina* occur also in the Sela language, namely *kweb-* 'to take out' and *deib-/dìb-* 'to put down'. Instead, the cognate concept appears to be rendered by the word *deiya'/deya'* 'lower back, base (of plants), basis, origin'. The term for 'origin stories' is *deiya' yùbù*.

4.1.3 The origin of the people

There are several strands in the traditions about the origin of the people. One is that they originated from the mountains, or appeared from mountain caves. Another is that they came into being when a pig was cut up. Yet another is that they were formed from the leaves of a primordial tree. These themes are sometimes closely interwoven.

A basic conception is that the people originated from certain mountains. One mountain is mentioned frequently in the origin stories and it seems to be the place of origin of many people and clans. This is the Limabenal(a) or Benal. Another name is the Limlimkona. I am not certain whether or not both names refer to one and the same mountain. Heeschen (1990:19-20) refers to two mountains, the Binal and the Lim, in addition to others. Sims (1991:55) mentions the Limgonai, which he identifies with Mt. Mandala (Mt. Juliana). At any rate, the mountain is not visible from the Sela area. Although many clans arrived in the Sela from the north, the origin mountain is thought to be situated somewhere in the east. The names of the mountain(s) are known from the stories, but the actual geographical position is not (exactly) known.

Or people are believed to have appeared from a cave. One such cave is found in the Weip valley, just north of Bidabuk. It is a *khei ayak*, a 'bat place'. But only one clan appeared here, the Alùwa. My informant had learned of similar (Western) Dani beliefs, when he attended a school in the Tagi valley, north of the

Grand Valley, and he brought both traditions together.

The ancestors of a number of clans traveled into the Sela area from the north (*soli*). There a person cut up a pig by way of example. He put its head away in a stone cave and it was called Mirin. The remainder of the pig he cut up into strips, which were not eaten. He named these strips of meat, and so the corresponding clans came into being. Eventually some Mirin people crossed the range and arrived in the Eyup area; they were followed by members of the Ou, Sùl and Wale clans. Thus both the Mirin and the Sùl clan originate from a pig, but the relative position of the parts of the body from which they came forth (head versus body) is until today reflected in their mutual relationship; the Mirin clan is senior to the Sùl clan (see also chapter 3.6.3). Although this story reveals that the Mirin clan was founded in the north, another one traces its origin back to the Limabenal mountain.

4.1.4 The yùli kal

In the primordial past, a tree, called the *yùli kal*, grew high in the lower East Sela near Megum. Its branches fell in different directions, and from its leaves human bodies came into being. According to one informant, the first branch fell towards the Giribun area in the lowlands. Other branches fell towards the west (Duram) or the east (Langda). Another informant, who lives much closer to Megum, told a more detailed story. The first branch fell towards Korupun and further west, as far as the Paniai area (this may be a recent elaboration, for the Paniai [Wissel Lakes] area is several hundred kms away). The other branches fell in different directions, too. The highest, and smallest, branches fell nearby, and that is why there were only small people left to live in the Sela area.

Another variation is that the tree grows inside the earth, and only becomes visible after an earthquake.

This person also added more to the story. The Megum people tried to fell the tree, but were unable to do so. Therefore, they invited a man from Eyup and a member of the Sùl clan, who came with a bow and an arrow called *yin waldìngkà mal* (*waldìngkà* is a type of grass, *Imperata conferta*). He aimed the arrow at the tree, released it and down came the tree. In this way the passes were made. Before this the earth was fairly flat. The central range consists of a long plateau, from just east of the Grand Valley to the border with Papua New Guinea and beyond, with erosion valleys descending to the north and, very steeply, to the south. This plateau is interrupted in the Sela area at the Valentijn plateau, but continues again east of the Eyme valley, with Mt. Mandala being the highest peak. The skyline shows the heavy erosion that has taken place in the Sela area. The people, however, attribute this to the effect of the crashing down of the *yùli kal*.

Some people at Sela Valley are now aware, that the Yali to the west know of a

story in which the Yeli tree fell down and turned into a pig. I have not heard of a similar story in the Sela area. The theme of the *yùli kal*, however, resembles very much that of the Yeli tree (cf. Zöllner 1977:58-60; 1988:18-19). But there is a significant difference. While the Yali locate this tree far to the east, either on the north side or on the south side of the range, depending on the vantage point of the story teller, but always beyond their culture area (and in fact somewhere in the western Mek area), the people at Sela Valley locate the *yùli kal* in their own valley. It rose up and fell down right there.

Thus the *yùli kal* is believed to be the origin of mankind (and pigs), or rather from its leaves people came into being, and it became instrumental in forming the landscape. In both cases, it is by falling down (or being shot down), that the creative events are set in motion.

The reality of the *yùli kal* was once brought home to the Sela people in a dramatic and totally unexpected way. In the late 1930s, the first planes flew over the Sela area. They passed over from west to east and returned by virtually the same route. What the people saw, was of course not an airplane. They heard a whirring sound, looked up and noticed something moving in the air that had appeared from the ground behind the mountains to the west. It passed by and disappeared into the earth beyond the mountains to the east. A little while later it rose up from the ground again, flew by and fell down somewhere in the west. By then the people had freaked out or were hiding wherever they could. The sudden appearance of this 'something' caused lots of talk among the people. Their perception was that they had seen (a part of) the *yùli kal* rising up from where it had crashed down in the ancient past, moving by through the air, going down in the east, but appearing again and finally falling down once more in the west. The verb used, *malyungkàyùk* or *bùyùk* 'fell down', reflects the association of the planes with the *yùli kal*. The sound of the planes also was very similar to that of this tree coming down.

4.1.5 Clan relations with the natural world

Clans have a specific relationship with, or in some cases originate from, a certain animal or plant. On the basis of this relationship the clan members are sometimes not allowed to eat this plant or animal. Some scholars have called them totems or totem creatures (Heeschen 1990:20-21; Sims 1991:47-48). I hesitate to use such terms. But I quite agree with Heeschen, that these animals or plants are considered instrumental in the creation if not of the inhabited world, then at least of the clan to which they are related, and furthermore that relics have in the past been kept in the (sacred) men's house.

My list is incomplete, for my informant did not always know the 'totems' of

smaller or foreign clans, and is in some cases contradictory. But it gives a fair representation of the kind of animals or plants to which clans are related. Among them are the pig (*mìya'*), dog (*kam*), cassowary (*sùwe*, *sanib*), cuscus (*bìringì*), snakes (*baga'*, *menù*), earthworm (*phì*), birds (*dìmdi*, *kouwa*, *solùlana*, *yalma*), bats (*khei*), fish (*dìban*, *walìnggì*), as well as the red pandanus (*ken*) and red cordyline (*mùli*).

The pig is almost always associated with clans that originate in the east, such as the Maling, Balyù or Aima clans. It is also in the (east) Weip valley that we encounter a taboo on eating pig meat.

Although I discussed the two subjects on different occasions and not in connection with each other, my data show that there is a close similarity between the clans of a cluster relative to their 'animals'. Of the local type of clan clusters, the Sala-Ou-Biri trio of clans shares the *solùlana* and *kouwa* birds, the Yalak-Sinat pair has the *baga'* snake in common, the Wakla and Hagu clans share both the *yalma* dove and the *bìringì* cuscus, and the Mirin and the Sùl clan (although they are said to originate from a pig) both relate to the *dìban* fish. Concerning the interregional type of clan clusters, I received different replies. One person did not indicate that such clans shared the same animal, although he did for the local type of clusters. But another informant clearly linked certain clans to each other. According to him, the Yalak and Maling clans have the *menù* snake in common, and the Magayang, Sala and Ùtpan clans share the *dìmdi*, a small bird. It seems to me, therefore, that the animals to which clans are related may also reveal a specific relationship between certain clans. But this will have to be verified in the 'field'.

4.2 The spirit world

4.2.1 The make-up of a person

According to the Sela people, a person is made up of two constituent 'elements', called *nong* and *kangì*.

The *nong* is the physical body, more particularly the trunk of the body. A heavy-set man has a *nong kùgu* 'strong body'. A *nong* may be said to be *kas* 'hard, sturdy' versus *yongon* 'soft, weak', or *bùbù* 'hot' versus *saregen* 'cold'. The word also occurs in a context not related to a human body, such as *nong kal* 'tree trunk', or *nong hak* 'main village'. It gravitates towards the meaning 'essence'.

Blood (*ìnìng*) is an important element within the body. Also important is someone's *hin* 'breath'. At death, a person's *hin dakla/dakdùbla* 'breath separates'. It is one of the indicators that death has set in.

The second element of a person is his or her *kangì*. The meaning of this word is

harder to grasp. It may refer to what is called the 'seat of emotions' and could then be translated 'heart'. *Kangì ngingang* means 'to be happy' (Indonesian *senang hati*). The word may also mean 'soul' or 'spirit'. It is not yet present when a child is born (*kangì kàm*). It is this element which leaves at death, but continues to exist and eventually is transformed into a *bisa'*, 'spirit'.[2]

4.2.2 Illness and death

A person's health can be affected in several ways. First, by wounds or sores (*susu*; *mem susu* 'framboesia') or boils (*sora'*) on the surface of the skin, caused by simple everyday injuries, by arrows or by (tropical) ulcers. Second, by pain affecting other parts of the body. This sort of pain located deeper in the body is called *ùk*. Thus *ùsya' ùk* means 'headache', *boga' ùk* 'sore throat', and *deìya' ùk* 'back pain'. And one says of a sick person, *ùk nìklamla* 'he/she suffers pain, is sick'.

These kinds of illness, pain or discomfort do not inexorably lead to death. They can be treated by the person affected. For example, when a man has a headache, he may attach a few leaves to a string and put these on the side of his head. The leaves of a nettle plant (*bìb*; *Laportea decumana*) are used as a counter-irritant to treat other pains or plain tiredness (cf. Hiepko and Schultze-Motel 1981:61). If pains persist, a healer (*whena' kìl*) may be called in to assess the illness and remove the underlying cause.

But other illnesses are considered very dangerous and could easily result in (sudden) death. One category is, from a western point of view, hard to diagnose as a sickness at all; Schiefenhövel (1980:226-228) thinks of psychogenic causes. But the Sela people point to sorcery as the source, and both victim and bystanders realize that the outcome may well be death. Another category of sicknesses, including for example viral infections and pneumonia (and today also cerebral malaria), is attributed to deadly spirits, the much feared *bisa' kìl*. Once again, survival is not at all assured. One may recall that an entire village in the East Sela, Megum, suddenly moved to a new site in 1987, after a sudden death of a young man was attributed to an attack by a *bisa' kìl*.

In chapter 3, I described the cremation ceremony of an old and influential man in Kwarangdua, Markus Wùl, whose death did not come as a surprise and was considered 'natural'. I will now discuss what the response of his fellow villagers was following his death, especially in relation to what they all knew survived his

2 I have not noticed that the Sela people assume a third constituent component of a person as the Ketengban do according to Sims (1991:44-46). They also conceptualize these dimensions somewhat differently. The *nonge* is the physical body. The *sambala* is the soul/spirit essence. It exists already before birth, resides in the heart, and after death becomes the *nimi isok* or *isok isa*. The *kange dipru*, literally 'mind and heart', refers to both the cognitive and the emotive aspect of a person, which are recognized as being one.

demise, namely his *kangì*.

The people are afraid of the *kangì* of a person who has just died. It has left the body at death, but continues to roam about the village for a couple of weeks. A woman told my informant late in the afternoon of that day to go home to his village quickly, before dark. People are afraid to go out alone at night for as long as the *kangì* is thought to be around. That night the village was eerily quiet, in contrast to the previous evening when I heard many people crying and wailing loudly. Now not a sound was heard, so that the *kangì* would not be disturbed and begin bothering them. It, too, needs time to say farewell to its familiar surroundings. Later that night torrential rains began to come down, lasting until the next morning. I was told that this meant that the *kangì* was weeping on and on. The cremation site was also inspected carefully. One bone was found in the grass and it was burned once more. During a cremation people also listen if they hear a hissing sound (*bunguna'*), like the crackling of a bamboo section when it is placed in the fire. And the smoke of the pyre is watched; if it goes up straight, it is allright.

Finally, after a few weeks, the *kangì* is ready to leave the area. It has taken on a *nong* 'body' and has assumed its own personality. It goes and joins the other spirits of the dead (*bisa'*) in the *bisa' hak* 'the village of the dead', high in the mountain forest.

The *kangì* may turn into a tree marsupial or a bird. Now when a person goes hunting and wants to spend the night in the forest, he prepares a place and lights a fire. When it makes a hissing sound, it is a sign that he is to flee for his life. He runs away to a safer place. If he has nerve, he may watch from a distance, ready with bow and arrow. But he knows for sure that a *kangì* is waiting nearby to kill him.

4.2.3 The bisa' kìl

Once the spirit of a person who has died joins the other spirits of the dead, the *kangì* is transformed and has become a *bisa'* (or *bisya'*). The same term is also used to refer to a kind of forest or mountain spirit, and then widens its field of meaning to include that of a spirit generally. In that case, however, it is more often known under a related term, namely *bisa' kìl* 'spirit woman'.[3] The female nature of these, potentially dangerous, spirits was not particularly emphasized in the discussions, but it was not considered accidental either.

A *bisa' kìl* dwells along a riverbank, living in a stone (or in a net). She is feared much, because she is capable of attacking, killing and eating people. She causes heavy fog (*abùwa*) to move in, making people vulnerable to sickness. On the other

3 The cognate term in the East Weip is *isaner*.

hand, the annual season of fog (called *mùru*) during the months of June through August is not attributed to this spirit, but is believed to be caused by the sun. The annually recurring shortage of food supplies during this period is not blamed on her either, but rather on the people themselves who did not make gardens in time, but went to the forest instead to hunt animals or collect the *yùwìn* nut pandanus.

One of informants told me that in the past there were many more *bisa' kìl* active than there are today. According to him they have gone into hiding. The influence of the *bisa' kìl* may have lessened, but their existence is not denied.

The word *bisa'* is also used in other combinations, and this sheds some light on its meaning. When a person experiences a piercing pain in the chest or abdomen, not necessarily because of an arrowhead lodged inside the body, the pain is called *bisa' mal* (or *bisa' yin*). A *bisa' mì* is a child that cries continually. *Bisa' kwanìng* refers to bad food (sweet potatoes) that makes people sick. When the mountains light up brilliantly red late in the afternoon as the sun sets in the west, a rare phenomenon in the Eastern Highlands, one may hear people say *bisa' hìng dìngkal* 'the "spirit" sun rises', in addition to the more prosaic expression *im bia wabla* 'the sky turns red'. It is possible that an oblique association is made with the *bisa' hak* 'village of the spirits of the dead' believed to be situated high in the mountains that are being lit up briefly.

4.2.4 Other spirits

Besides the *bisa' kìl* which features prominently in the domain of the spirits, other spirits are believed to be around as well. I have not been able to get a clear picture of who they are and what their impact is. There are apparently groups of certain spirits as well as individual spirits who are, however, only known to certain people.

A *soma* (Bidabuk *toma*; I have also recorded the term *soma kìl*) is a spirit operating in the forest. It (she?) is thought to be malevolent. The *sarùm* also is a forest spirit, but it appears to help people, and visits the *memnì* (meaning uncertain).

I am not sure whether the word *sununba'* refers to a spirit associated with the sacred grove Mùklabu (see below), a stand of primary forest near the village of Phoy.

The *yùga' kìl* is a kind of water spirit, dwelling in what I have recorded as a *bisa' mak* 'spirit stream'.

The *khìmban kìl* is a spirit associated with, or originating in, the west, as her name suggests; *khìmban* means 'west'.

The *moserega* is a kind of (small) spirit, apparently active at night. It could be associated with bats flying around. Once a name of this kind of spirit was given to me as Sìsìm. The word *sìsìm* appears to mean 'bat' in Korupun.

A *kei* is a kind of sky spirit, recognized by its whistling sound. When it is around, it is believed that the next day there will be fighting.

Spirits of the dead are sometimes referred to as *khama'*; the Korupun term that was given to me in the Sela is *kasìma'*.

4.3 Ritual practitioners and practices

There are no religious 'specialists' in the Sela. But there are people, either men or women, who appear to be qualified to communicate with the 'other' world and who derive their authority from this ability. They use their powers to try to help other people or harm them. In the first case we have to do with a healer or curer, in the second with a 'harmer' or 'curser' or, in more technical terms, a sorcerer or sorceress. In this section, we will discuss both types of practitioners and their activities. Not all ritual activities can be placed in either category, since the people are able to perform simple rites themselves, too.

4.3.1 Whena' 'healing'

The word *whena'* refers both to the treatment and to the person who performs it. In the latter case, however, more often than not one speaks of a *whena' nì* 'medicine man' or above all a *whena' kìl* 'female healer', since in most cases the healer is a woman.

The ritual state of possession into which a person sometimes falls is called *sìrìm*. If this person happens to be a woman, for example, she is called a *sìrìm kìl*. Inquiries are made through her, to which she replies in a manner as if the answer comes not from her, but from 'higher up'. Such people are also believed to be able to move around 'like a *yalma* bird'. Interestingly, the whites are sometimes compared to this kind of person, because of their ability to move about in a similar way.

Certain implements may be used by a *whena'*. Thus a medicine man uses a kind of flat ritual stones (*yogaba* or *birak yae*) to treat, for example, new gardens. Almost always these stones are rubbed with pig fat. A *whena' kìl* may use sticks from *bùrùlok*, *kùlu* or *thal/thala* wood.

We will now describe a number of rituals performed to treat or heal a person, to deal with food shortages or rain, or to make hunting successful. The information on Una magic gathered by Louwerse (1987:265-271) has been useful for comparative purposes.

One of my informants, a fairly young man still, once used the services of a

whena' kàl when something was stuck in his eye. She heated up some grass and slapped this on his eye for several minutes. Then she took it away and sure enough something resembling a pig tooth had come out. Her patient was startled at seeing the result of the treatment.

To heal a person, a *whena' kàl* may rub the body with leaves. This is called *somùna'* in the West Sela, and *wanana* in the Weip valley (*anana* in Bidabuk).

Another method is that of pulling at the eyebrows (*haing dibu debna'*) of the patient, or at his hair, finger knuckle or joints (*hong/sae/yan tùktùk klina'*). Or he may be beaten with leaves (*pha klebna'*).

The patient may also have water poured over him to lower his fever; this is called *mak yìkna'*.

The healer, who is then called a *haing lararobnì*, may stare at a patient (*dilukna'*).

A rattan string or leaves strung through it may be tied around the head to treat a headache (*ùsya' ùk*).

During childbirth, a rattan string may be tied around the abdomen of the pregnant woman and then untied (*sabu sang kilikna'* or *sabu lobna'*).

If a patient is comatose, incantations are sung over him by a healer to bring his *kangì* back into his body. This is called *ìnibùga bayangkana kangì*. The medicine man does this by himself. He searches for the spirit which enticed the *kangì* to leave the body. Under much screaming he brings the *kangì* back in a bundle, containing leaves, grass, and a small marsupial, which may not be seen. While the net trembles and shakes, the *kangì* returns to the body. A pig is to be killed if a medicine man is invited.

My informant once witnessed a similar treatment at the request of a man in Eyup. His wife had died, and his small child was sick. He asked a *whena' kàl* to come. She went to a nearby river, where a net was placed on the fontanel and the *kangì* moved back in. The child, however, died later.

Another method involves the use of steam and a kind of wrapper. A bundle of leaves or a netbag is put in a steampit and cooked. While steam escapes, the patient is waved over it, and then covered with the leaves. Under incantations the leaves are pushed away. Then the healer makes a kind of ball, called *sùgù lìlìna'*, places worms in it, and holds it over the steam. Then it is rubbed over the body, while incantations are held again.

Other healing methods consist of blowing over a patient, called *phùana'*, or the patient is held in the smoke of pig fat (*nìnìmna'*).

When it becomes apparent that the sweet potato plants yield only leaves, but no potatoes, a ritual is carried out. Certain leafy trees, such as the *kinkin*, *dekna*, *kùbare* or *benale* trees are collected and the potato plants are covered up with

them. The plants are also rubbed with pig fat.

Another ritual to stave off food shortages is called *kal samùn nùbna'*. People decorate themselves and start dancing and singing. Then they take a certain stick with them and make their way up a large hill. At the top they tie this stick to a special kind of tree. This stick seems to function in a way similar to that of the *yo lakaswe* among the Eipo (Heeschen 1990:92-95).

When there is a prolonged dry spell, a ritual is performed to cause the rain to come. Stones are first heated up. Then they are picked up with tongs (*sìb*) and thrown into the water. The hissing sound ensures that rain will be coming. On the other hand, when it is a foggy day and one wants the sun to shine, stones are baked in the same way.

The same rain ritual may also be carried out for negative purposes. For example, some people have killed a pig and eat the meat only among themselves without sharing it with others. When they hear of it, this ritual is performed to terminate the feast. Another example is the following case. In April 1989, the church building of Oldomon was dedicated. It rained heavily on that day. The people from Oldomon felt that others had caused this rain to fall by using this ritual.

Hunting 'magic' consists, for example, of addressing the dogs (*kam kìsa dana'*), applying black eye shadow (*haing kun debna'*), or planting red cordyline (*mùli yìna' mena'*).

Cordyline is also planted when epidemics strike the region.

4.3.2 Kìt 'sorcery'

The focal term for the practice of harming someone is *kìt/kìra*. By itself the word could be translated 'curse' or 'sorcery'. More often it occurs within a phrase linked up with a (verbal) noun representing the notion of taking (*dob-*), giving (*dod-*), or pulling (*deb-*). Thus another term for sorcery is *kìttona'* or *kìra dona'* (*kìra dobìk* if the verb is used). The person who engages in this activity is called *kìt thoin nì/kìl* (Korupun *kìt dosin nì/kìl*) 'sorcerer' c.q. 'sorceress', while yet another term is *kìt debsin nì/kìl*. The various expressions reflect some of the actions utilized.

These individuals are greatly feared for their power to harm or kill other people. They learn their trade in a hut in the forest. As I indicated, they may be either men or women. They may also be married. In each village there are two or three people who practice this 'trade'. If they are discovered they must be killed. My informant dryly added that in this way bad people are eliminated. A swollen neck, arm, groin or leg is evidence of who they really are. Such people are called *bon sùb nì/kìl*.

There are several methods to carry out sorcery. According to one method, the sorcerer takes something that has been part of the victim's body (excrement, hair

or a nail) or that has been in touch with the body (food scraps), and places them on hot stones to produce a sort of sizzling sound. If that happens, the victim will turn sick and die. Despite the use of such objects, no special care is taken to prevent them from falling into wrong hands. Another way of getting the same result is by crushing skinny fruit, such as sugarcane, bananas or *begì*, between two large stones. The essential element is the skin of the fruit. Or the victim is offered skinny fruit to eat. The sound of crushing leads to sickness and death. The expression *sìlsìla olamnìl* reflects that the victim realizes that he/she has been attacked through *kàt* 'sorcery' and will die.

The spell of sorcery seems to have been broken today, according to my informants. They were released from the fear of it, so they said. What may have helped break the dreadful scare is the requirement of the church of sorcerers to confess their 'sins' during the baptismal ceremony, when they are incorporated into the Christian community. One must not underestimate, however, the powerful effect of sorcery or even just the threat of it in the past. My records leave no doubt about this.

The same confession was required of another type of person who possessed powers to seriously harm people, too. He was called *ken thaìb* (East *dagìb*, Korupun *dasìb*) *nang*. This person also had the power to fly. A man who once fell while jumping rocks, hurt his legs badly. He screamed that a *ken thaìb nang* was out to kill him.

4.4 Sacred places and sacred objects

4.4.1 Sacred places

There is in the West Sela, not far from the village of Phoy, a stand of what looks like primary forest. It is completely surrounded by gardens or fallow land, owned mostly by people from Phoy but also by some from Kwarangdua, and is isolated from the forest higher up the slope of the mountain. This grove is called Mùklabu. It is clearly visible on the aerial photographs taken in February 1945. I am not sure if this place is inhabited by a certain spirit. But it is avoided by the local people. They do not plant gardens in there. Instead, Dani mission and medical workers have begun developing the land. I arrived in the Sela in May 1980. In 1982, the grove was being cut open on the west side and gardens were made. In the course of time, the cluster of trees has dwindled, but at the end of 1991 there was still a small stand of trees.

There are certain places in the gardens and in the forest that are associated with local spirits or the ancestors. They are referred to as *mem ak* 'forbidden

places'. People are not allowed to look at these, so they pass by with their head hung down, or leave these areas alone. Depositories of bones or skulls of dead people would not be visited very often either.

Within the village, the yard in front of the men's house, which doubles as a dancing place for the men, should be avoided by women and children. However, as long as I have lived in the Sela, I have not noticed that this 'taboo' was strictly enforced or adhered to. The place has no particular name either. It is simply called *yùwa abaram(-ak)* 'place in front of the men's house'.

4.4.2 Sacred constructions

In February 1981, I saw a kind of spirit gate over a path just outside the village of Bidabuk in the East Weip valley. It was called *toma ateba* in the language spoken at Bidabuk, and was said to be associated with the *soma kìl/toma kìl* spirit. I have never encountered them since. A missionary (McLeay 1980:2) has come across two gates, one up the trail to Korupun not far from Oldomon, the other near Eyup.

Another construction is a sign found in gardens, called *kwanìng hagya ikna'*; the word *ikna'* also means '(weight) trap'. It has two purposes. The first is to ward off people (and spirits?), but not pigs. The second is to promote the growth of the sweet potatoes.

During the same trek in February 1981, I came across a wall just outside the village of Sinayom in the lower Hao valley, which was made from branches of the *kwae* tree and was built across the trail. In the wall was a sort of door opening. The construction was called *ùmbo'*. It may have been a section of a fence to enclose an area where the initiation house is located. The new initiates had to squeeze through the opening before re-entering the village (cf. Sims 1991:75, 79).

But the most important sacred construction is the *mem yùwi* 'sacred men's house'. There are no more such houses in the Sela area, and I have never had the chance of entering one. Usually each main village (*nong hak*) at least would have had a *mem yùwi*, in addition to the regular men's houses, the *mali yùwi*. In this sacred men's house, a number of sacred objects would be kept in the back, such as the skull (or thigh bone or jaw) of a *weik nang* 'big man', meant to help people, and possibly parts of animals with which clans would have a special relationship. Furthermore the *whau* handdrum, mentioned in chapter 2. And finally, the *kàlabi* shield and a certain type of *yogaba* stones, which will be discussed now.

4.4.3 The kìlabi shields

The *kìlabi* or *kìrabi* shields are not seen anymore, for they have been burned in the late 1970s, perhaps at the same time when the sacred men's house began to fall

into disuse. They were wide and flat ceremonial shields of a fairly large size, with a design painted in black and white. They were kept in the *mem yùwi*, against the back wall. A missionary (McLeay 1980:2) has seen what he calls "spirit boards" in some of the men's houses, among others in Kwarangdua and Megum. They had a small hole in the centre, and were located against the back wall of the house, about 200 cm off the ground. These boards may have been *kìlabi* shields. There were reportedly not many shields in the area. Whether the shields were found in the West Sela is not entirely certain, for the information given to me is not consistent. But they existed in the East Sela and in the Hao and the Weip valley (and even as far as Giribun in the lowlands, according to one informant).

The shields were usually not passed by, because of their association with the *bisa'* 'spirits'. It was said that they could make a sound. On the other hand, having a *kìlabi* present in the men's house made people feel content, for this assured them of being able to keep in touch with the *asyang yabù* 'ancestors'. In which particular ceremonial or ritual context these shields were used, I do not know.

4.4.4 The yogaba stones

The *yogaba* stones are fairly large greenish stones that are used in rituals on the occasion of certain important events, such as the opening of new gardens or the construction of a men's house. They are associated with the *yùli kal* and are considered to be splinters of it. But there is no story that such stones or splinters had been used in the primordial past to stabilize the earth, as the Yali believe.

The stones are distinguished in several ways. First, flat stones are called *kìl* 'female', and roundish stones *nìng* 'male'. Furthermore, there are coarse stones and finely polished stones. A story has it that the women made coarse stones, but these were thrown out and turned into *yogaba* stones. The men made fine stones which were used as stone adzes (*kìrik yae*).

The fine stones (*pherob nì*) were kept in the sacred men's house. They were quite large and were sometimes 'clothed', representing people. These stones have now been abandoned. The rough type of stones (*mali ngì*) were kept and are now regularly being offered for sale to outsiders.

The stones are rubbed with pig fat, for example, when new gardens are opened, to secure a prosperous harvest. Or a stone is rubbed over the skin of pigs to promote their growth and well-being. They may be seen by women and perhaps also be used by them.

I am not sure whether the texture of the *yogaba* stones resembles that of the *yao* or *ye* stones found among the Western Dani and the Grand Valley Dani. The *yogaba* stones, however, are not used in marriage payments.

Chapter 5

Currents of Change

Traditional societies as a rule are not static, but dynamic. There have always been changes of some sort, even though the horizon of the world with which the highlanders are familiar virtually remained the same, and they could not move too far out because of marriage regulations, trade restrictions or war frontiers.

But this horizon has expanded considerably in recent years. This in turn has set off an avalanche of changes that the inhabitants of the valleys perhaps never had experienced before nor had to cope with. These changes in many ways turned out to be irreversible. As a man in Kwarangdua said to me once in a slightly different context, "Never will it be the same again here."

These changes were for the most part introduced from the outside, and then primarily through foreign missionaries, first joined (and occasionally preceded) by church evangelists and medical workers from other parts of Irian Jaya, and later by school teachers. Government officials have rarely visited the Sela Valley area, and then only when they were requested to come in. Foreign tourists were hardly ever seen, for this area was far away from the circuit frequented by them.

But changes were also introduced by the Sela people themselves. They picked up new ideas while they were away from their homeland to further their (church or general) education. After their return they introduced, or enforced, these ideas which were sometimes even more drastic and far-reaching.

Furthermore, changes came about from 'within'. This is to be expected, but is harder to document.

Some of the changes have not taken hold, or one was forced to let go of certain 'benefits'. One cannot speak in terms of a progressive, unilineal process of development. There have been setbacks and readjustments to the new way of life through a process of what, from a Western perspective, is called involution.

In the following sections we will deal with changes that occurred in each of the three domains (economic, social and religious) discussed in the previous chapters. But first we will sketch how the Sela people responded to the arrival of the whites

and what their perception was of these newcomers and everything that accompanied them. To this we will add a brief sketch of the other main participants in the process of change, the Mission and the Government.

5.1 Participants in the process of change

5.1.1 Who are the whites?

De Kock (1912:157) wrote that, when he and his companions met the inhabitants of a village in a valley near Mt. Goliath, they were recognized as human beings not spirits, but also that the local men noticed the difference in skin colour of the Europeans, the Javanese and the men whom Albert Meek had brought with him from the other side of the island of New Guinea. De Kock was not incorrect, although not exactly the way he thought.

I already referred in chapter 1 to the first flights ever of Dutch airplanes over the Eastern Highlands in the 1930s. In chapter 4 I noted how the Sela people responded to this event, a first for them as well, and how they associated these 'splinters', which appeared from the ground to move through the air and then disappear once more, with the *yùli kal*, the primordial tree which once grew in the East Sela, but whose branches fell down in different directions.

Then from the 1960s on, white missionaries entered the Mek region, built small airstrips and established mission stations. The post at Korupun in the Erok valley was opened in 1963. The resident missionary, Mr. Phil Masters, visited the Sela area once or twice before he was killed in the Seng valley in 1968. One of his successors, Mr. Bruce McLeay, showed considerable interest in the Sela area and had the airstrip built at Sela Valley in the late 1970s. The mission post was opened in 1980. By then the whites were no strangers anymore to the Sela people. But who were they and where did they come from?

The whites were called *ayang nang* 'red people'.[1] They were believed to live inside the earth and to have appeared from there. They were thought to be (relatives of) the *ìmalunga kwatkwarì nang* (see chapter 4.1.1), the inhabitants of the realm under the earth, who are also known as the *sùgù amu nang* and who live like people on the earth. The Western Dani co-workers of the missionaries were thought to be the adoptive children of the whites.

The whites earned another distinction. They came, not empty-handed, but with supplies (Indonesian *barang*) seemingly without limit, and for that reason were also

1 The word *ayang* refers to one of the brilliant hues, such as red or yellow, on the colour spectrum as distinguished by the Sela people.

called *damnang yaknang* 'wealthy people'. It did not escape the Sela people that, when they finally could see a mission airplane from close by, it released goods in abundance. Not that this stuff was not appreciated. On the contrary, they quickly discovered the usefulness of shovels for example, and were happy with things like salt and razor blades. But many stories were shared about the whites, and especially their *barang*, which they were bringing in with them from their place of origin underneath the earth.

The airplanes, too, caused a lot of surprise. When the first reconnaissance flights were made by MAF planes in the Sela Valley area to check out the valley and the approach path of possible airstrip sites, the people watched in awe. When a plane once turned around over a place called Bilum and showed its white underside, it was believed to have snatched away the *kìlabi* shield from Bilum. In other ways, too, airplanes were placed in the category of living, if not human, beings. For example, it was thought that a plane also had a wife, living elsewhere. Moreover, it would take pigs and (dead) people out to be consumed by her. This is not as strange as it sounds, for sun and moon were also believed to occasionally eat human flesh. Furthermore, the plane was also smart, for it could take dead people out and bring them back alive and well. The Sela people also tried to figure out the role of the pilot. They wondered, for example, who in fact carried out the landing manoeuvre, the pilot or the plane itself.

The houses of the missionaries fascinated the people, too. Whenever a pressure lamp was lit, the house was thought to look around with this 'eye'. Windows, too, caused some consternation. When people saw themselves reflected in it, the first impulse was to throw a stone against it. The ancestors live in houses with similar windows. So the people passed by with their heads hung down, as if they were near a *mem ak* 'sacred place'. The (two-way) radio, used by missionaries to communicate with pilots and other missionaries, was considered dangerous, for if the people became angry, the radio would report it to the folks under the earth.

By the 1980s, however, the Sela people had become accustomed to having whites around and even live with them. They were no strangers anymore. The airplanes also lost some of their mystique.

None the less, I still have a hunch that the Sela people continue to perceive the whites as human beings, it is true, but still different from them. They have seen that the whites came with an abundance of wealth that surpassed their imagination, wealth of which they received their share, but only up to a point. After the departure of the whites (the resident missionary family repatriated in 1989 and since then no other whites have lived at Sela Valley), the flow of wealth turned into a trickle. It is only self-evident that the Sela people correlated these two events and linked them together.

5.1.2 The Mission

The missionaries working in this part of the Eastern Highlands are members of a mission organization called RBMU International (formerly Regions Beyond Missionary Union). They come from various parts of the (Western) world. The Mission is made up of three autonomous Home Councils, in the United States, Canada and Australia, which co-ordinate their policies and activities through an International Council.[2] While the Mission as a non-denominational para-church organization is not under the control of any one church denomination, the doctrinal basis reflects a conservative evangelical baptist outlook. It is this kind of teaching that is passed on to the new believers on the 'mission field'.

The first RBMU missionaries arrived in (then) Dutch New Guinea in the 1950s. Their first area of ministry was the Swart valley, populated by the Western Dani. Later they branched out to other parts of Irian Jaya, namely the Central Lakes Plain (numerous small societies), the riverine area south of the Asmat (the Sawi and Kayagar people), the Eastern Highlands south of the central divide and the adjacent Southern Lowlands (Momina and Obini groups). In the course of time, they also initiated a number of specialized ministries, such as a flying program (Regions Wings) to support the work in the Lakes Plain, a printshop and a Bible *cum* vocational school, both in Sentani near Jayapura.

The first contacts in the Eastern Highlands were made with the Southern Yali in the Heluk valley in 1961, when a mission post was established in Ninia, and later on (1972) in Holuwon. The missionaries then started working among the Hupla (Soba station) to the west of the Yali, as well as among Yali people living further east, in the Seng and Solo valley (Lolat post). The Mek people living in the Erok valley were contacted for the first time in 1963, when the mission post Korupun was opened. The outreach was initially limited to those living close to the post, although the other valleys to the south and east of Korupun were occasionally visited. The area is vast and there were simply not enough missionaries to make the rounds. This remained so until the end of the 1970s. By that time more attention could be given to the people in the greater Sela area. The mission post Sela Valley was established in May 1980, and two missionary families, including my wife and me, were stationed there.

The mission policy of the RBMU is summarized as follows. An unequivocal distinction is made between the so-called primary (spiritual) and the secondary or supporting ministries. The spiritual ministries include evangelism, church planting, religious teaching, Bible school training, Bible translation, and so forth. The ancillary (or auxiliary) ministries include medical care and training, analysis of language (and culture), literacy training, community development projects,

2 The Council in Great Britain pulled out several years ago, but kept the old name.

communications (airplanes, airstrips), and so on. While the supporting ministries are considered necessary (and of course are indispensable in most cases), the primary focus is on the spiritual ministries and they take precedence. Although the policy statements have improved over the years and are now well formulated, I do not have the impression, at least not from my own experience, that the various ministries are so integrated that they constitute a 'total fact', whether social or religious. The differentiation still reflects a Western (American) outlook on life and service, rather than a worldview based on Biblical principles.

Concerning the organizational structure of the RBMU in Irian Jaya, the members are organized in a Field, which operates under the leadership of an executive committee, selected by and from the membership. The Field is fairly autonomous, among other things because it has to deal with three Home Councils, and because of the temperament of its members. The same can de said of the mission posts which are not infrequently represented by just one missionary couple. It is thus possible for missionaries to carry out their work quite independently and without much 'control'. Station reports are submitted to the annual Field Conference, while the Field Chairman (or Director) visits each station once a year. In the 1980s, regional consultative meetings were introduced, but they do not form another level within the structure of the Field. The flexibility in this form of organization enables a creative execution of mission work and allows for close and effective cooperation, if it is not hampered by an individualistic approach and spoiled by the (often unconsciously implied) distinction between first-class and second-class missionaries, derived from the conceptual dichotomy of the ministries of the mission referred to above.

A brief comment on the Heluk Project, to which we will refer a few times below, and its historical context. In the mid 1970s, a rebellion broke out among the Western Dani and other highland groups against the Indonesian government. In most places it was swiftly put down by the military. However, some missionaries had already begun designing community development projects, as an alternative and as an outlet to deal with well justified feelings of frustration and resentment. These (five-year) projects were funded by World Vision International, an evangelical American-based relief organization. The first projects, among the Western Dani, came on stream towards the end of the 1970s. In an essay co-authored with Giay (see Appendix C), I have described in which way, and from which background, the Western Dani have responded to these projects. Following this initiative, other missions got on the bandwagon as well and many projects were launched in other areas of the highlands, too. The Heluk Project was one of them. Submitted by RBMU missionaries and named after the Heluk valley, it incorporated a number of separate development projects in the Eastern Highlands, including the greater Sela area.

5.1.3 The Government

The role of the government has been indirect at the most. There is no effective administrative structure in the Sela area, for the *desa* level of government is only in its incipient stage.

On the medical side, at one time the government allowed local medical orderlies (*mantri*) trained by medical personnel from the missions and with enough experience, to apply to become a government-paid worker. The only ones in the Sela area who qualified were the two Dani medical workers. Medical doctors have sometimes come to the Sela area, after epidemic outbreaks have been reported. Medical reports are required to be filed through the church of the mission offices. Medicines can be ordered free through the government offices in Wamena, if supplies are available.

The elementary school at Sela Valley has now become a so-called Inpres school. The government provides supplies, pays the salaries, and assigns new teachers. A delegation from Wamena came to Sela Valley for the official opening of the school.

One cannot escape the impression that the government so far has not spent a great deal of effort in looking after the interests of the people in the Sela area. This may be due to the fact that the area is extremely rugged, difficult to access, and far removed from the centres of government. Another reason may be that some government officials are less interested in developing this and other regions of the Eastern Highlands and are less than fascinated by the challenge of participating in a very interesting process of change.

5.2 Changes in the economic domain

The mission organization which established its presence in the Sela area introduced or facilitated many changes in the Sela Valley community. Apart from carrying out its stated primary objective, the conversion of individuals to the Christian faith, it also began to implement programmes, such as primary health care and literacy training, to support this objective. In addition, small community development projects were occasionally introduced through the years. In the early 1980s, however, a large-scale project was initiated by the resident missionary. The funding agency, World Vision International, did not want to deal with a fairly small project (by its own standards) and tacked it on to a much larger program being carried out in the Eastern Highlands, the Heluk Project. Many changes, especially within the economic domain, were initiated through this project.

Let us now turn to some of the changes brought about in the economic sphere.

5.2.1 Domestic animals

The domesticated pigs in the Sela area are blackish, fair-sized and lean animals. The average number of pigs raised by a family is not too large. Fewer pigs are killed on more occasions than in the past. There is no taboo on eating pork in the Sela area proper. Thus the pig population is small, but constant.

In order to acquaint the Sela people with another strain, a few pairs of piglets were purchased through the Heluk Project from a pig raising program in Mamit run by the Western Dani; later some Dani workers in the Sela area also purchased piglets from the same source, but used them primarily for their own benefit. Regarding the pair looked after by a church leader in the West Sela, the sow died before it became productive. But the boar was in great demand, and local sows were brought in and impregnated for a small payment. After a few years the boar was killed during a sort of thanksgiving feast. Its offspring is now well established in the area. The introduction of a fatter and larger strain of pig has been well received by the Sela people.

The introduction of rabbits was less of a success. They were first raised by the missionaries and sold or given out singly or in pairs. Initially, some people did well in raising them. But the cages in which they were held became a problem. The bottom in particular, which consisted of square metal wire netting, rusted through or clogged up with droppings and dirt, and was hard to replace, because this netting was very expensive or was not available at all. A bottom made from strips of reed did not work well, either. Moreover, the rabbits had to be fed greens daily and this was not always done. In the end, the interest flagged. However, some people 'localized' the way of raising rabbits and came up with some simple ideas. Thus today one finds rabbits in some of the villages. They are allowed to run around free and live in rabbit holes in the neighbourhood. Or they are, like pigs, kept overnight in the family hut, but can enter a small fenced-in area through a small opening during the day, where they are fed greens or can rummage around without escaping into the village.

Chickens are now also a fixed part of the village scene. They do well if the dogs are kept under control. They find their own food and are often seen scrambling for the food scraps that are thrown out the huts. The people do not particularly raise them. It is for the meat rather than the eggs that they care to have chickens. When eggs are found and offered for sale to the whites, they are often not fit for consumption anymore.

5.2.2 Food plants and cash crops

One type of sweet potato appears to have been introduced in the past, possibly by the Dani. It is called *mulia kwaning*. It has an orange/reddish colour, little or no fibrous texture, but a high sugar content. The Sela people are not too fond of it. Moreover, they complain that it is readily eaten by mice because of its sweetness.

The people were encouraged to cook and eat sweet potato leaves, something the Dani families were already used to. Some women, mostly younger ones, are doing this now.

White potatoes have been introduced by the missionaries and the plants grow quite well in the area. The tubers are rarely eaten by the Sela people themselves, for according to them they have no taste, but are rather sold to the whites. In the mid 1980s, the resident missionary began to encourage the cultivation of potatoes, which he would then purchase and ship out as a backload on the MAF planes. Soon large quantities were 'exported' to the coast to supply the demand from hostels and fellow missionaries. Thus the white potato became a kind of cash crop, but not for long. The purchases were suddenly terminated, leaving those who had invested land in growing this crop rather than sweet potatoes stuck with food they did not eat themselves. It stands to reason that the local people were not particularly happy with this decision.

Chayote (*Sechium edule*), possibly introduced from the north (Nalca), is a firmly established component of the diet today. Corn, too, has been well received; it is easily roasted in the ashes.

A new kind of banana (Indonesian *pisang ambon*) has been tried out; it grows well in the lower part of the valley. Lemon trees were also introduced some years ago. Its fruit was to be used primarily for medical and nutrition purposes.

Other introduced crops are cabbage, tomatoes and winged beans. Carrots are grown only if seeds are supplied, and are then sold rather than eaten.

In 1991, about one hundred coffee tree seedlings were obtained in Wamena by a student and taken to the Sela area, where they were planted in a few villages and nearby gardens, although of course without shade trees. In December 1991, I saw a few beans being dried on the roofs of huts. It remains to be seen whether this kind of cash cropping will be successful, for no one has been trained to properly process coffee beans.

5.2.3 Non-perishable goods

Trade goods are usually obtained by purchasing them in the local trade store managed by the mission or church, or in the stores in the 'big' city, Wamena. In the early days of the presence of the missionaries, goods were also made available in

lieu of monetary payments for labour provided. And, of course, goods are given and received as a gift. But I noticed a significant difference in the circulation pattern. Goods received for work carried out remain in the hands of the owner, whether he/she is a man, woman or child, and become an economic asset. Goods received as a gift, however, quickly enter the 'circulatory system', to the surprise – or chagrin – of the European outsider, and in this way help establish or consolidate a social network.

A partial list of goods acquired in such ways includes clothing (shorts, pants, dresses, T-shirts, hats, belts), (iodized) salt, soap, razor blades, combs, running shoes, umbrellas, towels, blankets, pots and pans, bowls and simple cutlery, matches, steel axes (the most expensive item), machetes, shovels, knives, yarn, beads (for making necklaces), needles and thread, flashlights (and batteries), writing books, pencils and ball-point pens, religious materials (either in Indonesian or in the dialect spoken at Korupun), and so forth.

Over the years such goods have come to be accepted and used in the Sela area, provided they are available in the trade store and there is enough money in circulation to purchase them. A downward trend on both counts became apparent after 1989. Prior to that year there was a net inflow of trade goods purchased with, or received in lieu of, money generated by working for the missionaries or for projects initiated by them. The flow of money generated by the Heluk Project lasted for about five years, the usual lifetime of a project. Furthermore, the resident missionary wound down his activities and left in 1989. So the sources of income dried out. Money became scarce and goods could not be purchased anymore, or the supply of goods could not be replaced. When I visited Sela Valley in November 1990, I noticed that the local economy, in as far as it had been dependent on outside resources, was collapsing through a process of involution, to the point where it could sustain a new balance supported primarily by internal resources. For example, new steel axes which had always been the most expensive singular item, were now simply beyond the reach of almost everyone, all the more so because the cheaper variety of axes, imported from China, had never been accepted. The blades of steel axes still in use were getting so short that they hardly could be sharpened anymore. In the men's houses I noticed several new stone adzes. Another example are matches. They had run out of stock and new supplies were not coming in, because there was no money. As a result, the traditional fire making equipment (the firesaw) was making a comeback.

5.2.4 Market and trade store

The market (Indonesian *pasar*) and the trade store (Indonesian *toko*) are institutions introduced from the outside. Although I am not completely certain, the idea

of starting a *pasar* came from the resident missionary in the late 1980s, to replace the custom of selling vegetables and other local goods to missionaries at the doorstep of their homes, a practice followed on many mission posts. Wherever the government establishes posts, its officials usually end such practices and change to the format of a *pasar* for the purpose of trading foodstuffs and other goods. In the few places where it is occasionally held in the Sela area today, the *pasar* appears to have a social rather than an economic significance. This at least is my impression from the discussions, for I myself have not seen it operating.

The trade store came hand in hand with the arrival of the missionaries at Sela Valley. It was eventually phased out and replaced by a cooperative (Indonesian *koperasi*) under the control of local church leaders. The cooperative started with a small capital provided by the missionary, and goods left over from the operation of the mission store were transfered to the cooperative after the missionary had left. He had also instructed the new managers where to buy new supplies, how to calculate the selling price, how to do the bookkeeping, and so on. But within a year the cooperative was on the rocks. The money had simply disappeared, and no one could figure out why.

Now Indonesian money had been in use in the Sela area for quite a while, and the people knew the value of both coins and banknotes and could buy goods, even if it meant purchasing the same item one by one; it just took a little more time to complete the transaction.

That money seemed to vanish from the coffers of the cooperative had nothing to do with fraud. But funds were withdrawn – in small amounts, it is true, but continually – to pay for the maintenance of the airstrip and other facilities, and for plane tickets for the person who had to make the rounds in the stores at Wamena. The turnover of the store was not high enough to cover these recurring expenses, and the result was a net outflow of money until there was no more. Goods were not given away to meet kin or other obligations, a custom that has led to the closure of many a trade store when the goal of increased status and prestige has been reached, sometimes purposely so. But the principle that if certain expenses, other than those for resupplying stocks, are not covered by net profit income, capital funds are being used to make up for the difference, was not understood. The result was predictable; money did not disappear, it just left the local economic system.

5.2.5 Trails, bridges and airstrips

A network of trails connects the villages in each of the valleys in the Sela area. There are also trails leading to other valleys via mountain passes (a section of the trail near the Olmin pass is clearly visible on the photographs taken in 1945), and over the high ranges. A few bush trails lead down to the southern lowlands.

Bridges are built across rivers to facilitate the flow of traffic. For the highlanders, rivers form a more formidable obstacle than mountains.

The trails are narrow and can be muddy, especially in the gardens. The bridges are simple constructions, and sometimes consist of no more than a number of logs tied together; there are, at least in the Sela area, no suspension bridges. Their lifespan is relatively short, for they are easily washed away after heavy rains, or the timber disintegrates because of moisture or sunshine.

The project which the missionary initiated under the umbrella of the Heluk Project also included the construction of new trails, a suspension bridge across the Thay river, and an airstrip at Kwelamdua. In fact, these components did not only give the impetus to the starting up of the project, but also constituted its core and used up most of the funds dispensed.

A network of new trails eventually connected most of the villages in the West Sela and some in the East Sela. Initially they were made in such a way that they enabled the missionary to ride his trail bike around. That pastime, however, lasted only for so long, for soon fences were built over the trails and ditches dug to keep pigs away from garden areas. Moreover, trails and bridges began to deteriorate almost immediately, for they were not regularly looked after and kept in shape or repaired. In other words, the local people who were paid for the construction of the new trails and bridges but not for their maintenance, took care of them as they had done of the old trails and bridges, unless of course new funds were released. Thus today, some sections of the trail system are in reasonably good shape, while other segments are overgrown, uprooted by pigs or washed out by rains or mud slides. Virtually all the bridges have collapsed or are falling apart. The people are not overly bothered by this, for they can still move around as easily as they did in the past. The main point, however, is that the initiative to start up this project was taken by the missionary, not by them and, related to this, that they were paid for what, from their perspective, would primarily benefit the missionary. Pospisil (1978:103-105) encountered precisely the same problem in the Paniai area in the 1950s. Dutch government officials decided to have a road built in the Kamu valley (and elsewhere). They provided the tools and equipment and even paid the workers a reasonable amount of money. There was some enthusiasm at first, but it dwindled fast. Pospisil suggested to the Dutch officer that, if he provided the tools, the Kamu people would build the road for free, since they would profit most from it. It was *their* (emphasis by Pospisil) road, owned individually, a significant social feature among the Me people. Pospisil won his bet (a bottle of champagne), for he offered a culturally more appropriate alternative, which proved its worth within a few years. Apart from the bet, a similar approach was suggested for the Sela project, but it was not entertained by the missionary. The outcome was, therefore, predictable.

The (steel cable) suspension bridge over the Thay river has, as late as

December 1991, not been built, for the riverbanks are so unstable and 'mobile' on the proposed site that it would be difficult if not impossible to anchor the bridge on either side and secure a safe passage. The river is still crossed over via a bridge built in the traditional way (plate 15).

Finally, the airstrips. As I mentioned above, the strip at Sela Valley was constructed in the late 1970s, and in 1980 two missionary families arrived to begin their work there. Such an approach is common throughout the highlands, where since the 1950s scores of airstrips, small and large, have been built, after which the mission airplanes brought in the families of the missionaries and many loads of cargo. It is not surprising, therefore, that the construction of new airstrips remains high on the 'wish' list of many a highlander, even in places where no plane could ever make a (safe) landing.

Within the framework of the Heluk Project, an airstrip was built near Kwelamdua in the Weip valley, with the purpose of making it easier – and in the long run cheaper – for both foreign and national missionary workers to get to this valley from Sela Valley or other places, who now had to use the MAF helicopter or walk in over the trail. The construction of the strip took several years. The local population did not carry out this work alone, for their number was low, they were not overly eager to do the job all by themselves and they were not used to a full day's work. Occasionally, men from other valleys came to work there for a few weeks at a time, and a crew of Dani workers was also brought in at one stage. The strip was officially opened in January 1988, a few planes landed there, and that was it. In June 1989, I walked in from Sela Valley. The community leaders appeared to be quite disappointed. Not only did they feel abandoned by the missionary who had regularly visited them while the construction of the strip was in progress, but had not cared to come anymore once the work was finished (this was not altogether the case, but they had a point), but also the airplanes did not come as often as they had expected to unload their cargo in their midst. They were still waiting for a missionary family to come and live among them. Their hopes had not been fulfilled and they felt neglected. As a result, the strip was not being maintained and, although it had been built well, the effect of slow but steady erosion could already be seen. Once again, there was a glaring discrepancy between the objective of the 'agent of change' and the expectations of the local people.

5.3 Changes in the social domain

5.3.1 From birth to death

The process of giving birth has not changed at all. Only when serious problems arise, is it now possible to have a woman flown to a hospital (almost always in Wamena) for a surgical procedure. This option is rarely needed, for not often does a woman have complications before or during the delivery that threaten her life to such an extent that an emergency flight is called for. The case mentioned in chapter 3.1.2 is just one of the very few emergencies for which transportation by air to a hospital was requested (other cases involved broken limbs or an seriously injured back). There appears to be no opposition against making use of this alternative, if there is no other option apart from certain death. Funds, usually available from (designated) donations to the mission organization, continue to keep this option open.

Abandoning (female) infants may still occur occasionally in my opinion, but I have no hard data to prove this, apart from the statistical information based on the census figures. I would prefer to consider the imbalance of the sex ratio in the Weip valley to be a local anomaly. The church discourages this practice on religious and ethical grounds. The custom may, therefore, slowly wither away.

There are indications, however, which are also based on the census data, that a contrary trend will gain influence, namely the shorter spacing of pregnancies (and births) by Christian couples. Once this custom becomes a sort of norm, it will inevitably result in an explosive growth of the population. The contours of this process are already becoming prominent.

As far as I can ascertain, boys have not been initiated in the Sela area anymore in recent years. But I am not sure whether baptism as an act of incorporation into the Christian church community is being considered a modern version of the same tradition or an entirely foreign institution. When someone is called either *wìs* 'initiated' or *kuwìl* 'non-initiated' today, it may answer the question whether that person has been baptized or not.

The marriage system remains virtually intact. It is possible , however, to violate it with impunity today. For example, *pabya* (sexual intercourse with proscribed partners) is still considered wrong and dangerous, but it is not punished anymore in the traditional fashion.

Clan membership is reckoned patrilineally. From her birth on, a daughter is considered to be affiliated to her father's clan. If she moves because of marriage, she may switch her clan name, but only to that of a related clan. Her husband's clan, of course, cannot be part of this clan cluster, or she could not have married him in the first place. One time, however, a young man stated in no uncertain

terms that a wife should take the name of her husband's clan. Asked why he felt so strongly about this, he answered that she should do so because they would have sexual intercourse (he used the Indonesian verb *bersetubuh*, literally 'become one flesh'). He and his wife had been away from the Sela area for several years to attend a Bible school near Pyramid in the Grand Valley. I still wonder whether he picked up this idea from an Indonesian teacher or from a western missionary.

Polygynous marriages are decreasing in number in the Sela area, almost certainly under the influence of the Christian church, which accepts the partners of such unions into its membership, but does not allow its members to begin new polygynous relationships. If they do, they are disciplined or removed from the membership roll; 'to be debaptized' is, I believe, the expression used for this procedure. It remains to be seen what will happen, for elsewhere in the highlands (for example among the Western Dani) polygyny is on the rise again, even though Indonesian law forbids such practices except for Muslim believers.

Finally, in respect to the disposal of the dead, the custom of placing a body in a tree has been abandoned altogether, and has been replaced by either cremation or burial. Both these practices are known throughout the highlands.[3]

5.3.2 Health care

Health care has always been an essential component of the approach of Christian missionaries. This has also been the case in the Sela area.

In the late 1970s, a Dani medical worker (Indonesian *mantri*) was allocated to the Sela area, together with Dani evangelists. At the same time, a young man from Mundon (who later became one of my main informants) left the Sela to attend a school elsewhere, with a view to receiving medical training after that. When the first missionary nurse arrived at Sela Valley in 1980, she began a simple primary health care program. The sick and injured were treated locally, or referred to hospitals elsewhere if there was no other choice. A nutrition program was started, with special attention to the health of children under the age of five. Occasionally preventive or diagnostic campaigns were organized to assess or treat certain illnesses found throughout the area, such as amoebic dysentery, eye diseases, or whooping cough.

From the outset, local (or Dani) men and women were being trained in simple health care. The candidates were in general selected by their own (church) community. The failure rate has been relatively low over the years.

With funds from the Heluk Project clinics were constructed in a number of

3 Where cremation is opposed, it is almost always the result of the teaching of missionaries from certain Reformed churches, primarily from the Netherlands, in whose circles cremation is condemned on religious grounds.

villages and manned by the local *mantri*. In the meantime, simple toilets were being, and continue to be, built near the villages.

Initially, the Sela people were reluctant to come to the clinic or ask for medical help. They had to 'wait and see', whether the alternative healing approach would be effective. But that attitude changed after a while, and since then this kind of medical treatment has been well received. The clinics are busy with people seeking routine treatment. And if a person's health is in serious danger, for example because of obstructed labour, high fever, or broken body parts, the case is immediately reported and the patient is treated in the village or in the clinic, or flown out to a hospital.

In the early years, a sick hut was built next to the central clinic at the mission post of Sela Valley. Sick people could stay there with their relatives to be observed and treated. If death appeared to be certain and imminent, patients were released and carried back to their village to die in their own home, surrounded by their relatives and friends. If someone happens to die in the sick hut, others would refuse to stay there and the hut could not be used for a considerable time.

Despite the diagnosis of serious illnesses by western or non-traditional standards (cerebral malaria, tetanus, obstructed labour), the reality of spirits being the ultimate cause of the illness (and resultant death) is never denied or doubted by the Sela people. The destructive activities of the fearsome *bisa' kil* in particular were dreaded. Indigenous conceptions of sicknesses and their underlying cause have not changed. But an alternative, and often more powerful, therapy became available, and it was eagerly embraced. To what extent the local healers (*whena' kil*) continue to be consulted I cannot say. If they are, their role is inconspicuous. They are not frequently mentioned, and there are not many of them being recognized as such.

5.3.3 Literacy

Literacy, too, is an essential part of the package of new ideas offered by missionaries. If the new believers are encouraged or expected to read the Bible for themselves, then those who are interested ought to be given the opportunity to learn to read (and write).

The Sela people have always shown quite an interest in acquiring this ability, but only a few of them have become reasonably good readers and writers, because of the teaching environment in general and the teaching methods in particular, which made it more difficult than necessary for them to learn good literary habits. For example, I have seen them learning strings of alliterative letters by rote, or trying to learn the skill of writing while seated down beside a fireplace in a hut in near darkness. That literacy was surrounded by an aura of mystique or that it was

approached in a mechanical fashion, became unmistakable.
But the problem the Sela people faced above all, often without realizing it, was the hastiness with which the literacy program was introduced and carried out. There was no prior analysis of the language spoken in the Sela area, and when linguistic reports became available, the literacy booklets were not rewritten accordingly and, therefore, continued to contain linguistic, and cultural, errors. Moreover, the alphabet used in the literacy program did not reflect the linguistic values of the Sela area proper, but was rather imported from Korupun. The reason for this was that both missionaries who had prepared literacy materials had begun their work there. Each of them had also introduced a different alphabet. In addition, the linguist-missionary at Korupun had once more revised the alphabet used in that region. Thus the Sela people wrote their words down in all sorts of ways and the various alphabet layers could be easily tracked down and identified. Reading poses less of a problem. There are few materials available, almost all religious booklets written in the language spoken at Korupun. Whenever a text is being read (out loud), it is without hesitation transliterated into the language spoken in the Sela area.

Indonesian, in addition to being the medium of education, is now also being taught in the elementary school. It is too early to tell what the effect of this language on the literary efforts in the local language is

5.3.4 Formal education

A few new social (religious) institutions have appeared on the scene. The church and its affiliated organizations will be discussed in section 5.4, because their role is religious rather than social. The other institution is the school.

In 1988, the resident missionary had a three-classroom building constructed at Sela Valley, and he hired a schoolteacher. The six-year elementary school (*Sekolah Dasar* or SD) was later transfered to the Indonesian public school system as a so-called Inpres school, and more teachers were assigned to work at Sela Valley.

The students come from the villages in the West and East Sela primarily. If their home village is farther away, they only go home over the weekend. Most of the students are, as can be expected, children. But some are adolescent boys, and one or two fathers join their children in the classroom. Girls are accepted, too, but they are not allowed to continue their education beyond, I believe, either grade 3 or grade 6. It has more to do with their age and their physical development, for by then they come under pressure to stay at home and help their mother in the gardens, and, moreover, they are about to become nubile ladies. This arrangement appears to work well under the present circumstances, although it will certainly change in the future.

There is no lack of interest on the part of the children (and their parents) in this form of education.

The teachers are from other parts of Irian Jaya, and so far they are all highlanders, too. Their attitude towards local cultural expressions and customs is sometimes negative and condescending, even though they have grown up in the same highland environment. They may have been educated in this way, I presume. They give the appearance of being paternalistic in their behaviour towards the children, and in respect to the education process and what it entails. Thus children and their parents are expected to attend generously to the needs of the teachers by bringing in chickens, firewood, and other contributions. Children are required to do all kinds of chores around the school as part of their curriculum. I have the impression that teachers have more power at their disposal to influence and change local customs and patterns of behaviour than the church or mission workers (the whites included) ever had, and that they are aware of this. The parents want to let their children participate in the education process, for they may feel that by supporting this goal they themselves may also benefit. It is not difficult for the teachers to abuse this desire for their own benefit and so make their life on an isolated outpost a little more comfortable.

When students graduate from the school at Sela Valley and want to continue their education, they have to go to Wamena and enter the (lower) high school (SMP) there. Because more and more children are heading that way – it takes them about a week to walk the distance of 120 km – a sort of hostel (a simple house) has been built to accomodate children from both Sela Valley and Korupun. Other youngsters have made their way to Wamena or other places on their own initiative in previous years, and a few have already entered the (upper) high school (SMA).

At the initiative of the missionary at Sela Valley, a number of young men, and their families if they were married, left the Sela area for several years to attend a Bible school (Indonesian language) near Wamena or elsewhere. Later on (1987), students also began to go to a Bible school in Korupun, thereby remaining within their own cultural and linguistic environment. When they returned to the Sela area and began – or continued – their church ministry, some of them in particular proved to be much more effective as church leaders and motivators than those who had gone 'abroad', because they had stayed close enough (both geographically and culturally) to their fellow people to avoid the trappings of a new culture and a new status.

Medical training has always been provided 'in the field', either at Sela Valley or at Korupun. A promising *mantri* has been partly successful in continuing his medical education through a recognized training program.

5.3.5 New status symbols

Those who have been away for a longer period of time, the men among them in particular, tend to display their experience of, and participation in, a different way of life through what I would call new status markers or symbols. By using these they convey the message that they have begun taking part in a world which is not the same as the one they have been growing up in. These status symbols may be perfectly practical and useful by themselves. But they acquire an 'added value' when they are used by the person who claims these symbols to mark his or her new status.

The goods used as status symbols have not necessarily been acquired voluntarily. For example, at certain Bible schools students are required, on penalty of not being allowed to take classes or not having their marks validated, to purchase a set of clothing (a pair of black pants, socks, long-sleeved white shirts, a tie) and a pair of black shoes, a heavy financial outlay for the student and his supporting church. The reason of this requirement is that this is the kind of dress that preachers in Indonesia are expected to wear when they conduct a church service. But this clothing becomes a status symbol, when 'back at home' the young graduate dresses himself in this style, where shorts and a shirt will do, where every member of the local community goes barefeet and where no one has a tie, let alone wears it, including the white missionary. By adopting this style the student who has gone 'abroad' marks himself also off from those who graduated from the local Bible school in Korupun.

It is, as I hinted at, not always the white man's lifestyle which provides the impetus for change. Thus a graduate student returned home, began to preach in his home church and teach in a local Bible school, and built himself a large, grass-roofed house adjacent to and slightly above the compound where his students had built themselves simple huts in the local style. His 'mansion' was built Dani style.

Another marker of a new status are typewriters. Furthermore glasses, especially sun glasses, which are sometimes worn rain or shine. Occasionally men are seen walking around stately with an Indonesian Bible in their hand.

Women, especially Dani women, have started dyeing their hair pitchblack and fluffing it up afro-style. But this may just have become a popular custom today.

5.3.6 Old 'garments'

In this section I want to briefly discuss a few customs and institutions which have been abandoned outright in recent years or put on the backburner. I have already referred to some of those above.

Female infanticide has not been infrequent in the past, but there are indica-

tions that mothers of newborn infants resort much less to this method of disposing of their child today, whether on their own initiative or at the urging of their husband.

No outsider has witnessed the *wis* initiation of young boys. The ceremonies were last carried out just prior to the arrival of missionaries or researchers and have never been repeated since then.

The *pabya* violation of certain marriage rules is still considered very wrong and taken seriously, but it is not being punished as it was in the past.

The *mos* dances and songs are not seen or heard anymore. The songs in the church services are sung with Dani melodies, which were almost certainly introduced by the Dani co-workers of the missionaries.

When, in 1988, I recorded a number of local songs, the men sang lustily, inside a cookhouse. But after a while a church leader interrupted the session, saying that it was getting dark and that we should stop. I found it very significant, however, that a few months earlier a young student, who had been attending school in Wamena for some years, had gone around the valley with a cassette recorder, taping *mos* songs. Apparently nothing was put in his way, except that he had to do his work during the day, not in the evening.

In 1990, a visiting missionary wanted to see and record a *mos* dance, in order to make pictures (or possibly a video). Being the perfect model of an American tourist, he persuaded the men to wear their gourds. A Dani evangelist led in the service. But soon one of the men intervened, for he did not want to hear the *mos* anymore. For him it represented a way of life from the past to which he had said farewell.

I have sometimes asked my friends at Sela Valley if they had ever considered transforming the *mos* for use in church services, to replace the Dani style of singing which is clearly non-indigenous, and follow the custom of other Mek groups where Christian songs are now also sung on *mos* melodies during worship services. They seemed to hesitate about contemplating this idea. It could be that they were not ready yet to take this step. But wherever local songs and melodies have been transformed for Christian use, it has released an abundant flow of creativity and greatly strengthened the sense of identity and self-worth (see Wilson 1988 for the response of the Yali people in the Heluk valley to a similar challenge).

Finally, warfare. It is remarkable that during the years that missionaries were living at Sela Valley there have never been serious outbreaks of fighting. There were altercations within the village community as can be expected, and a few times some villages were at odds with each other, but this did not lead to serious fighting. There was peace in the land, that was the prevailing view of the Sela people.

None the less, when the whites left in 1989, several men expressed their misgivings to me that the situation would return to what it was before the whites arrived and that war could well resume again. This was no figment of their imagination, as the senseless killing of a lone man in 1989 proved (see chapter 3.9). It is possible that they realized that a more permanent state of peace was not yet within reach. A part of the reconciliation mechanism was left intact, namely the exchange of pigs. But another part, the *mos* singing and dancing, had ceased to function under the pressure of the mission and church. I am not sure whether a comparable alternative based on the new teaching has ever been suggested. I should add, that at the end of 1991 the situation was quiet in the Sela.

It will be noted that the arrival of the mission and the establishment of the church had a significant impact on the changing or abandoning of certain customs, irrespective of whether the Sela people themselves were ready for it. This leads us to the following section.

5.4 Changes in the religious domain

The mission post of Korupun was established in 1963, after the airstrip had been constructed in the Erok valley. For the first ten years or so the influence of the mission in the Sela area was minimal and incidental. Its representatives visited the area only occasionally, and this was understandable. The Sela people, at least those living in the West Sela, who had fairly close (marital) relationships with their neighbours in the Erok valley, had of course some idea of what was going on in Korupun. It remained a distant affair until the mid 1970s, when the mission spread its wings and turned its attention to the valleys in the eastern sector. Western Dani evangelists were recruited and sent to a number of villages in the Sela area. They began to teach the message in customary Dani fashion, namely with a legalistic slant to it, but also caused a whole lot of problems, so much so that some were forced by the Sela people to leave the area and most of them were back in their homeland by 1980, the year that I arrived at Sela Valley. By that time an iconoclastic wave had washed over the area and pyres had burned in many places. We will discuss this first.

5.4.1 "We did not sin!"

Many years later my informants went over the events with me and told me what had been thrown onto the pyres to be destroyed. The objects included first of all *yogaba* stones, sacred stones associated with the *yùli kal* and believed to have

splintered off when the tree fell down, and used for example in rituals to secure the prosperity of pigs. Not all stones were thrown out, only the fine and smooth ones (*pherob ni*), while the coarser stones (*mali ngi*) were held back and are now offered for sale to outsiders. Also destroyed were stone adzes (*kirik yae*), at least those whose blades were made from the finer sort of *yogaba*, and *lùli* (decorative) bone daggers. The *mùm* hair appendages went into the flames as well. The same way went a kind of case, called *dabesùma'* or *kus* by my informant. It was kept away in a *kolongna ak* 'hidden place' on a rack inside the family hut. It contained nets, feathers of birds (*kwilib* bird of paradise, *yalon*, *kare*), decorative paraphernalia attached to the tail of the *mùm* (*sanid*, *wirimù*, *bid mùm* and *wibi imin*, the tail of a kind of cuscus), sashes (*weik*), gourds (*bik*), necklaces (*ongob*), and items that were used as little gifts to people one meets on the road. The handdrums (*whau*) were apparently burned, too.

The men with whom I spoke about what had happened in the 1970s told me that today they regretted that these burnings had taken place. "We did not sin!," they said to me. But they were forced by the Dani evangelists to abandon their valuables to the fire. According to them, they could have saved these things and sold them, as some of them had seen the Dani do it in Wamena, where the 'market' today is flooded with, for example, *yao* stones.

It seems to me that the Dani mission workers, whose parents' generation had attempted to bring about and hasten the return of the utopian state of *nabelan-kabelan* in their own land in the late 1950s and early 1960s through massive burnings of both sacred and utilitarian objects, enforced their own view on the Sela people, namely how they should make a clean break with their 'heathen' past. But in my opinion they and their compatriots are inconsistent. For did the Western Dani themselves break with their past? The fact that the *nabelan-kabelan* movements continue, in a variety of forms, until today, makes me rather think that they, whether they are Christians or not, are still firmly rooted in their own traditions. Secondly, we now know that the Western Dani did not throw every sacred object onto the pyre as they made the missionaries believe. They held some back deliberately, as a kind of insurance in case the expected benefits would not materialize. Or they agreed among themselves that some men would remain pagan, just in case. Whatever happened in Dani land, it appears that the early evangelists did not leave room for the Sela people to make up their own mind as to what should be done.

5.4.2 The local church

After the arrival of the Dani evangelists in the 1970s and the white missionaries shortly thereafter, it was only a matter of time before the contours of a new socio-

religious body became visible, the church. People began to meet together regularly in their villages on Sundays and during the week under the leadership of the evangelists to be instructed in the tenets of the Christian faith. This took place in a lively fashion; church services were never dull, and the teacher could count on it that his hearers would not hesitate to reply to what he had to say. Before long new believers were incorporated into the church through the sacrament of (adult) Baptism and celebrated the sacrament of Holy Communion (the Lord's Supper) together. The church activities were guided by a council, and informal groups (youth, women) were also active. A Dani evangelist picked up an idea from Korupun and organized a local Bible school to train young men and women for service in the young or nascent churches. In recent days the Sela church commissioned some of its own members to go and pass on the Gospel message to groups in the lowlands with whom they have some contact, mostly through trade. In other words, an organization came to life, which has many characteristics in common with the church universal, but whose roots are firmly embedded in local soil. We have already outlined some of the impact of what the church representatives taught on local customs and ways of behaviour. In this section we will focus more on the church itself and discuss some of its features.

Entrance into the church community is confirmed through the sacrament of baptism, which parallels in several ways the initiation of the boys into the men's house community. But there is a significant difference, namely that women are accepted into the membership of the church without any restriction. In fact, the very first person baptized in the Sela area was a woman from Kwarangdua. I have not noticed that women are considered second-class church members, and given their subtle but effective influence in social life, I doubt whether the men would be able to relegate the women to such a role. The church has not become a men's club. During the worship service men and women sit separately, to the left and to the right. There are sometimes two entrances, but they may be used by either group. This contrasts with what I have once seen among the (Southern) Yali, where men sit in the front and the women at the back of the building, where men and women each have their own entrance and woe the woman who dares to enter through the wrong door.

Baptismal instruction and examination, the feast that precedes the ceremony, the procession of the candidates to the baptismal site, and the act of immersing a person, these are all elements that, to a greater or lesser degree, parallel features of the initiation ritual. The candidates are also baptized in large groups, usually around Easter time. I do not recall having watched a baptism of a single person. One waits until there are enough candidates ready in a given area. This means that, although the pattern is irregular, baptismal ceremonies circulate throughout

the area. Furthermore, baptisms were, at least until he repatriated, only carried out in the presence of the white missionary. If he happened to be on furlough, for example, no baptisms were scheduled while he was away.

Zöllner (1978:163-165) has noted close parallels between the initiation rituals and baptism among the Yali. Although I have not noticed that the Sela people recognize or state similar parallels in explicit terms, it seems to me that the two rituals are 'interpreted' by them along common lines. In addition, I will give one more illustration of the way in which this new ritual is being incorporated in a traditional context. The first baptismal ceremony in the Weip valley was not held until April 1988. But when it finally took place, it was just after the new airstrip had been opened and outside guests could be flown in. While the two events were conceptually separated by the missionary on whose initiative the strip was built, they were of course not by the people themselves, irrespective of whether they were Christians or not. The fact that the candidates, even though some of them were ready for some time, had to wait until the strip was operational, indicates that they had to await a "favourable occasion" to quote an expression by Zöllner. Aside from this, an interesting point is that the missionary apparently never realized, or simply ignored, this linkage. Until that time he played his role well in the eyes of the people.

A few words about the celebration of the sacrament of holy communion in the Sela area once every three months. During the church service, men and women sit separately and, if the service is held in a church building, sometimes use separate entrances. This is a custom found throughout the highlands, and perhaps elsewhere in Irian Jaya, too. But when, after the regular service is over, the communicant members stay behind to celebrate the Lord's Supper, men and women sit side by side in long rows to receive the elements, a sweet potato morsel and a little juice made from a kind of raspberry (*kirikna'*). I do not know whether this custom is followed elsewhere, too.

The church as an organization, however loosely structured, is an entity surpassing local or valleywide boundaries, and as such is a newcomer on the social scene. Whether this will enable the church members, and the population at large, to achieve a greater sense of cohesion and so overcome, for example, barriers of traditional enmity, remains to be seen. My guess is that for now, at least on the part of the Sela people, sentiments of local or regional solidarity are more dominant than those forged by ecclesiastical bonds. But once again, this may be understandable, given the short span of the history of the local church. Fact is that the church as a social and religious phenomenon has been accepted remarkably well so far.

Finally, some comments about the leadership of the church and their training Almost from the outset, the resident missionary held a weekly class in which h instructed young men from the community, together with the Dani evangelists These men in turn passed on in their own village what they had learned there. I the course of time, some of them were, on the advice of the missionary, sent awa – and at the same time taken out of their linguistic and cultural environment – t attend one of the Bible schools in the highlands. Others began to attend the loca Bible school started in 1988 at the initiative of the Dani evangelist based at Sel Valley, a man with a long experience in the region, or were (from 1987 on) sent t the Bible school in Korupun. Concurrently, after a few years of missionar outreach and teaching, a kind of church council (Indonesian *majelis*) was formed a Sela Valley, consisting of a number of men considered able to manage the affair of the church in the Sela area. At that time virtually none of its members ha attended Bible school, and in fact the person who became chairman and has bee in this position since, never made the effort of taking some form of Bible scho training. They were not necessarily young men either. Eventually, elder (Indonesian *gembala*) were chosen from this pool of leaders and students. Late the decision was made by the combined church of Sela Valley and Korupun that all the church leaders should have a Bible school training.

From the beginning, indigenous leaders, the *weik nang*, were not included in the church leadership, even though some of them had been baptized and were faithful Christians. There was, and still is, almost no overlap to speak of. The question then arises whether the men on the forefront in the church should be considered a kind of ritual 'specialists' rather than church leaders. Their position is not primarily supported by qualities attributed to the community leaders. It is not based on achievement, but rather on selection or election. They are in most instances not proven leaders. Yet, within the confines of the church they are accepted as such, sometimes even wanted. It is my impression, but this is hard to substantiate, that they are being accepted in this role, because they have the potential ability to access another realm through ritual means, from which the participants, the church members, can draw benefits. The role, for example, of the present chairman of the church council and the status he has not only acquired but also been accorded by the church and the community, leads me to conclude that both types of leadership are non-congruent. He is not considered a 'natural' leader in the traditional sense. He has not shown pastoral qualities, the lack of which he himself may be aware of, since at one time he refused to consider becoming a candidate for the office of elder. Yet many want him to stay on in his present position, which he assumed through the active support of the missionary.

5.4.3 Other changes

I briefly refer to a few other changes in the religious domain. First, the belief in the reality and efficacy of spirit beings, especially the *bisa' kil*, has not changed. What is changing slowly, however, is the perception that something can be done to counter their destructive powers by resorting to more powerful forces provided by the new religion, the Christian faith. But the efficacy of the new powers must be proven. Thus, when someone who is supposed to die because he has been attacked by a certain spirit, does not die but gets well instead after fellow Christians for example have prayed for him, such an event conveys a powerful message to the bystanders, friend and foe alike.

The same can be said with regard to the threat of sorcery. It is not denied that someone can effectively carry it out, but the sting of the act can be countered and neutralized, so to speak.

Finally, I have already mentioned that today there are no *mem yùwi*, sacred men's houses, found in the Sela area anymore. They have gradually fallen into disrepair, especially after the sacred paraphernalia kept in these houses have been abandoned to the fire. Sooner or later they became redundant in the process of change.

5.5 Cargoistic aspirations?

At the end of this chapter I want to briefly deal with an issue that has become very relevant in other parts of Irian Jaya. The question is, whether cargoistic aspirations of some sort have surfaced in the Sela area in the course of the years.

The question is not academic. Religious movements, often called cargo cults, have occurred in Irian Jaya for many years, and it can be safely assumed that they have been around even prior to the arrival of the Europeans, who learned of them and began to report them as early as the middle of the last century. A steady stream of reports has appeared since then, until today. Over the last decade, movements have broken out or have resurfaced after having been dormant for a while, in many areas of Irian Jaya, throughout the highlands as well as in the lowlands and along the coast, in rural areas as well as in an urban context, among village people as well as among those educated on schools and universities. For information on a representative sample of recent movements, I refer to Strelan and Godschalk (1989), Godschalk (1992), and Giay and Godschalk (forthcoming; included as Appendix C in this study).

In respect to the Mek culture area, I have no record of cargoist movements that

have taken place in this part of the Eastern Highlands. The only bit of information I ever received was through a casual remark by a missionary (Louwerse, pers. comm.) about some kind of ritual activities that had been reportedly carried out in a village far to the east of Langda.

But a measure of cargoistic thinking appears to be present. For example, when we talked about the first encounters between the whites (missionaries in this case) and the local people, the first impressions the Sela people had of the whites always included the goods they had brought with them. The two were invariably linked together. Furthermore, during the heydays of the Heluk Project, it struck me time and again to what extent the Sela people were attracted by the wealth of goods which were being released, in the form of wages, payments or otherwise. There was such a shift in what occupied their minds that in my opinion the ultimate objective of the mission outreach was being compromised. The projects reinforced expectations that the missionaries could not meet. A prime example was the airstrip at Kwelamdua. Its construction stimulated expectations of planeloads of goods to be delivered, in conjunction with the arrival of a missionary couple to live in that valley. When that did not happen, the leaders expressed their disappointment. Finally, once I received a letter from a person living in Korupun who claimed to speak on behalf of his fellow men and women, in which he assured me that my presence in the area was welcomed and that those he claimed to represent were happy for me to be around, whether at Sela Valley or in Korupun. I felt something more was expressed through the lines of this letter.

Thus, in conclusion, one should not be surprised if cargo movements would at some time break out among the Mek people, too. The basic worldview which underlies the appearance of movements in other places of Irian Jaya, namely that a time will come when everything will be different, that the outer layer of today's life will be unwrapped to reveal the real life, and that the ancestors or the whites have something to do with the arrival of this new era, in short a universal quest for salvation (but in Melanesian terms), this worldview can also be recognized among my friends in the Sela area.

Summary

In this study I present an ethnographic sketch of a cluster of communities in the greater Sela area, which is situated in the southwest corner of the Mek culture area in the Eastern Highlands of Irian Jaya, Indonesia. These communities inhabit the valleys of the Thay, the Hao and the Weip river. The population numbered approximately 2900 people in 1989. Because very little is known about the Sela people, this study is no more than a first attempt to chart the economic, social and religious dimensions of their culture.

Chapter 1 begins with an overview of the various groups found within the Mek culture area. This is followed by a brief description of the neighbouring societies of the Mek communities. In this way, a rough outline is drawn of the geographical and cultural mosaic in which the Sela people find their niche.

Information is then given about the weather patterns in the Sela area and the impact of the climate on the life of the people. The average rainfall over a period of ten years is 4035 mm per year; the average number of raindays is 287 per year. A few other natural 'events', such as earthquakes and mountain winds, are also referred to.

In 1984, a census was taken by me in the Sela area. The demographic information was rechecked and updated in 1988/89. A number of significant changes were noted at that time, and they are included in the discussion. Some of the data (about households, age groups and migration patterns, for example) are presented in this chapter, while information on marriage and clans is found in chapter 3.

After this a brief account is given of what is commonly called the history of the contact between the Mek communities and the 'outside' world, which began in 1910, but developed in earnest in the 1960s.

The last section of this chapter deals with the conditions under which I carried out my research among the Sela people.

In Chapter 2, the economic domain of the culture of the Sela people is discussed. In other words, what are some of the ways in which they interact with their environment and utilize it to maintain a sustainable way of life? The first part of this chapter deals with the food resources available to the Sela people. One way of obtaining food is by gathering (that is to say collecting, hunting or trapping) certain

plants or animals. Another, more important, way is by raising domestic animals, particularly pigs. However, the Sela people are essentially agriculturalists, as almost all highlanders are. Sweet potatoes is their staple. Other important food crops are taro, sugarcane and bananas. Their agricultural activities, such as preparing gardens and maintaining them, are generally well adapted to the harsh environment in which they live. How food is grown, prepared for consumption and also shared with others, is briefly mentioned.

In the second part of this chapter, the various forms of the material culture are discussed. They have been divided into the following categories: attire or clothing, self-decoration, tools and utensils, weapons and defensive equipment, and finally houses and settlements. This is followed by a section on expressions of art, in particular the *mos* songs and dances. In the final section I outline the counting system used by the Sela people, which has a base of 27. A list of the numerals and the body parts to which they correspond ends this chapter.

Chapter 3 deals with the social dimension of the culture of the Sela people. Various ways in which they interact with one another, as individuals and as a community, are considered. The chapter begins with an overview of the major phases in the life cycle of a person, namely his or her birth, childhood and adolescence, adulthood and marriage, and finally old age and death. As part of the overview, the occurrence of (female) infanticide, the *wìt* initiation of the boys and the *lìla'* ceremony for young men are discussed. The form of behaviour known as *pabya* (sexual intercourse between proscribed marriage partners) and the way in which the society takes action to contain its perceived danger are also examined.

Then the kinship system of the Sela people is presented. The kin terms are outlined in a series of charts. Their consanguineal and affinal ranges are tabulated. Each of the terms is briefly discussed. A description of how the system actually functions ends this section.

After this, the clans (*sisya'*) are discussed. There are approximately forty of such social groups in the greater Sela area. Many of them are clustered together; their mutual relationship is compared to that between a brother and a sister. It appears that a western and an eastern layer of clans, with some overlap, are found in the (actual) Sela area. At the end of this part, the impact on the marriage system is considered.

The final sections focus on the community leaders, on exchange and trade, and on conflicts and the way in which they are resolved.

In Chapter 4, some of the aspects of the religious domain are explored. My information is sketchy and tentative. The conceptions and stories of the origin of the universe and its inhabitants are first considered, including the role of the *yùli*

kal. This is a tree believed to have risen high in the centre of the Sela area. From its – falling – branches various peoples are thought to have come into being.

Then the spirit beings and their impact on the life of the people are discussed. In this section I also pay attention to beliefs concerning sickness and death.

Some people within the Sela communities are qualified and able to communicate with the 'other' world, as healers or as sorcerers.

Finally, the chapter gives some information about sacred places, sacred constructions, and sacred objects of which the *kilabi* shields and the *yogaba* stones are mentioned in particular.

In Chapter 5, the changes in recent years within the economic, social and religious spheres of life are documented. The horizon of the world as the Sela people have long known it has widened without precedent because of these processes. They have not always had a positive effect. When the Sela people became too dependent on outside support to maintain their new way of life, they were sometimes forced to readjust after the departure of the 'outsiders'. This never results, however, in a complete return to their former way of life.

These changes have been introduced primarily from the outside, most of all by foreign missionaries. From the beginning, however, church evangelists and medical workers from other parts of the Central Highlands in Irian Jaya were just as much, if not more, instrumental in bringing about changes. At a later stage, school teachers arrived at Sela Valley. The role of the government has been mostly indirect.

The Sela people never became passive recipients, however. On the contrary, some of them adopted new ideas and introduced them to their own communities.

For this reason, I do not think that we can (continue to) speak in terms of 'agents' or 'recipients' of change. Together, we are participants in this process of life – a fundamental gift to mankind – and we are, therefore, also together responsible for protecting (tradition) and developing (change) it. This means two things.

First, if the 'agents' of change themselves do not change in and through this process, they cannot be participants of change in the true sense. Both partners change, indeed they cannot do so otherwise.

Second, because they are human beings, participants in this process are equal to each other, in identity, in dignity and in self-worth. In respect to the Sela people as well as other highlanders, this means that they are fully qualified and competent to actively participate, as mature and capable partners, in the processes of change that are now underway, on the local as well as the national level. I have full confidence in them, and they deserve our respect and loyalty.

Samenvatting

In deze studie wordt een etnografisch overzicht gegeven van enkele samenlevingen in de Sela-regio, welke gelegen is in het zuidwestelijk deel van het Mek-cultuurgebied in het Oostelijk Bergland van Irian Jaya, Indonesië. Deze gemeenschappen bevolken de dalen van de rivieren Thay, Hao en Weip. In 1989 telde de bevolking ongeveer 2900 personen. Omdat er nagenoeg niets bekend is over deze bevolking, is deze studie niet meer dan een eerste aanzet om de economische, sociale en religieuze dimensies van hun cultuur in kaart te brengen.

Hoofdstuk 1 begint met een overzicht van de verschillende groepen die in het Mek-cultuurgebied worden aangetroffen. Dit wordt gevolgd door een korte beschrijving van de samenlevingen die grenzen aan die van de Mek. Op deze wijze wordt in enkele ruwe trekken het geografische en culturele mozaïek geschetst waarin de Sela-bevolking haar plaats inneemt.

Vervolgens wordt enige informatie gegeven over de weersomstandigheden in het Sela-gebied en de invloed daarvan op het leven van de mensen. De gemiddelde regenval per jaar, gemeten over een periode van tien jaar, is 4035 mm; het gemiddelde aantal regendagen per jaar bedraagt 287. Verder worden enkele natuurverschijnselen, zoals aardbevingen en bergwinden, in het kort aangestipt.

In 1984 werd door mij een census in het Sela-gebied gehouden. De demografische gegevens werden in 1988/89 opnieuw gecontroleerd en tevens bijgewerkt. Er werden toen een aantal belangrijke veranderingen genoteerd en deze worden in de discussie betrokken. Gegevens over ondermeer de huishoudens, leeftijdsgroepen en migratievormen worden in dit hoofdstuk behandeld, terwijl informatie over huwelijk en clans in hoofdstuk 3 te vinden is.

Hierop volgt een korte beschrijving van wat doorgaans de geschiedenis van het contact tussen de Mek-samenlevingen en de 'buitenwereld' genoemd wordt. Dit contact kwam voor het eerst in 1910 tot stand, maar werd pas in de zestiger jaren intensief.

In het laatste deel van dit hoofdstuk worden de omstandigheden, waaronder ik mijn onderzoek in de Sela heb uitgevoerd, behandeld.

In Hoofdstuk 2 wordt het economische aspect van de cultuur van de Sela-bevolking besproken. De vraag is op welke wijze deze mensen 'omgaan' met het milieu

waarin zij leven en er gebruik van maken bij de vormgeving van een verantwoorde levenswijze. Het eerste deel van dit hoofdstuk behandelt de voedselbronnen die de Sela-mensen ter beschikking staan. Voedsel wordt allereerst verkregen door het verzamelen (inzamelen, jagen of strikken) van bepaalde planten of dieren. Als bron van voedselvoorziening is het varken van grotere betekenis. De Sela-mensen zijn echter, zoals bijna alle bergbewoners, in hoofdzaak landbouwers. De zoete aardappel is hun hoofdvoedsel. Andere belangrijke gewassen zijn taro, suikerriet en bananen. De landbouwactiviteiten, zoals het maken en onderhouden van tuinen, zijn over het algemeen bijzonder goed aangepast aan de harde omstandigheden waarin de Sela-mensen leven. Het verbouwen, oogsten en bereiden van voedsel wordt in het kort geschetst, evenals het delen ervan met anderen.

In het tweede deel van dit hoofdstuk worden de verschillende vormen van de materiële cultuur behandeld. Deze is verdeeld in de volgende categorieën: kleding, tooi, gereedschappen en huisgerei, wapens en verdedigingsuitrusting, en tenslotte woningen en nederzettingen. Hierna volgt een bespreking van kunstuitingen, in het bijzonder van de *mos*-liederen en *mos*-dansen. Tenslotte wordt het telsysteem, dat het getal 27 als grondtal heeft, geschetst. Een tabel met telwoorden en lichaamsdelen die daarmee corresponderen is toegevoegd.

Hoofdstuk 3 behandelt de sociale dimensie van de Sela-cultuur. Het gaat dan vooral om de verschillende wijzen waarop de Sela-mensen met elkaar omgaan, als individu of als gemeenschap. Het hoofdstuk begint met een overzicht van de belangrijkste fasen in de levensloop van de Sela-bewoner, namelijk zijn of haar geboorte, jeugd en puberteit, volwassenheid en huwelijk, en tenslotte ouderdom en dood. Binnen dit overzicht wordt ook aandacht geschonken aan de gewoonte om pasgeboren kinderen te verwerpen, bij voorkeur meisjes (*preferential female infanticide*), aan de *wit*-initiatie van jongens en aan de *lila'*-ceremonie voor jongemannen. Tevens worden de gedragsvorm die bekend staat als *pabya* (sexuele gemeenschap tussen partners die niet met elkaar mogen huwen) en de wijze waarop de samenleving maatregelen neemt tegen wat als een grote bedreiging voor de gemeenschap wordt gezien, in dit kader besproken.

Vervolgens wordt het verwantschapssysteem behandeld. De verwantentermen worden in een aantal genealogische schema's aangegeven. De reikwijdte van deze termen onder zowel bloedverwanten als aanverwanten wordt verder in een tabel weergegeven. Daarna wordt elke term afzonderlijk behandeld. Verder wordt beschreven hoe het systeem in de praktijk functioneert.

Hierna worden de clans (*sisya'*) besproken. Er worden ongeveer veertig van dergelijke sociale groepen in de Sela-regio aangetroffen. Vele ervan zijn in groepen gebundeld; de onderlinge relatie wordt vergeleken met die van broer en zuster. Het blijkt dat in het eigenlijke Sela-gebied twee elkaar enigszins overlappende

lagen van clans worden aangetroffen, een westelijke en een oostelijke. Aan het eind van dit gedeelte wordt de invloed van het clansysteem op het huwelijkssysteem behandeld.

Tenslotte wordt in het kort aandacht geschonken aan de vooraanstaande persoonlijkheden in de gemeenschap, aan handel en ruil, alsmede aan conflicten en de wijze waarop deze worden bijgelegd.

In Hoofdstuk 4 worden enkele aspecten van het religieuze domein van de Sela-cultuur verkend. Mijn informatie is bij lange na niet volledig en is daarom voorlopig van aard. Allereerst worden de voorstellingen en verhalen over de oorsprong van de wereld en haar bewoners besproken. Daarin speelt de *yùli kal* een belangrijke rol. Dit is een boom waarvan men (in de eigenlijke Sela) gelooft dat deze eens hoog oprees in het midden van het Sela-gebied. De verschillende volken zijn voortgekomen uit de – neervallende – takken van deze boom.

Hierna worden de geesten en hun invloed op het leven van de mensen behandeld. In dit gedeelte schenk ik ook aandacht aan bepaalde voorstellingen rond ziekte en dood.

Sommige personen binnen de Sela-samenleving worden 'bevoegd' geacht en zijn in staat om met de 'andere' wereld te communiceren, ten voordele (genezing) of ten nadele (ziekte, dood) van hun medemensen.

Tenslotte beschrijf ik enkele sakrale plaatsen, constructies en voorwerpen, waarvan in het bijzonder de ceremoniële *kilabi*-schilden en de *yogaba*-stenen worden vermeld.

In Hoofdstuk 5 worden de veranderingen, die zich in de afgelopen jaren binnen de economische, sociale en religieuze levenssituaties hebben voorgedaan, gedocumenteerd. De horizon van de wereld, zoals men die in de Sela van oudsher heeft gekend, heeft zich als gevolg van deze processen zonder weerga verbreed. Deze veranderingsprocessen hebben niet altijd een positief gevolg gehad. Toen de Sela-mensen teveel afhankelijk werden van de buitenwereld voor het in stand houden van de nieuwe levensstijl, werden ze soms gedwongen tot een herstructurering daarvan na het vertrek van de 'outsiders'. Dit leidt echter nooit tot een volledige terugkeer naar de oude levensstijl.

Deze veranderingen zijn voornamelijk van buitenaf geïntroduceerd, vooral door zendingswerkers uit het Westen. Maar van meet af aan hebben evangelisten en medische werkers uit andere delen van het Centrale Bergland van Irian Jaya een even grote, zo niet grotere, rol gespeeld in het teweegbrengen van veranderingen. In een later stadium kwamen hier de schoolonderwijzers nog bij. Het bestuur heeft tot nu toe een meer indirecte rol gespeeld.

De Sela-mensen hebben zich echter nooit passief opgesteld in dit proces.

Integendeel, enkele van hen hebben nieuwe ideeën opgepikt om die vervolgens onder hun dorpsgenoten te introduceren, soms met veel enthousiasme en een grote overredingskracht.

Daarom denk ik niet dat we kunnen (blijven) spreken in termen van 'bemiddelaars' of 'ontvangers' van verandering. Wij zijn tezamen deelgenoten van dit levensproces – een fundamentele gave aan de mensheid – en zijn daarom ook gezamenlijk verantwoordelijk voor zowel de instandhouding (traditie) als de ontwikkeling (verandering) ervan. Dat houdt tweeërlei in.

In de eerste plaats, als de 'bemiddelaars' van verandering zelf niet veranderen tijdens of als gevolg van dit proces, dan kunnen ze in wezen geen deelgenoten hiervan worden. Beide partners veranderen, en er is volgens mij geen alternatief.

In de tweede plaats, omdat zij mensen zijn, zijn de participanten aan dit veranderingsproces aan elkaar gelijkwaardig, in identiteit, in waardigheid en in zelfwaarde. Dat betekent met betrekking tot zowel de Sela-bevolking als de andere bewoners in het Centrale Bergland, dat zij geheel en al bekwaam en gerechtigd zijn om als volwassen en competente partners actief deel te nemen aan de veranderingsprocessen, die nu op zowel plaatselijk als nationaal niveau op gang zijn gekomen. Ik heb het volste vertrouwen in hen, en zij hebben recht op ons respect en onze loyaliteit.

Ringkasan

Dalam studi ini ditunjukkan suatu sketsa etnografi dari sejumlah komunitas, yang penduduknya berjumlah sekitar 2900 orang pada tahun 1989, di wilayah Sela, yaitu di lembah-lembah Sungai Thay, Sungai Hao dan Sungai Weip, yang terdapat pada bagian Timur Pegunungan Tengah di Irian Jaya, Indonesia. Penduduk tersebut mendiami bagian baratdaya dari daerah kebudayaan Mek. Oleh karena sedikit saja yang diketahui tentang orang Sela, maka studi ini merupakan upaya awal untuk menggambarkan dimensi ekonomi, sosial dan agama dari kebudayaan mereka.

Bab 1 dimulai dengan suatu pandangan umum tentang berbagai golongan etnik di daerah kebudayaan Mek. Pandangan umum itu disusul dengan suatu deskripsi singkat tentang masyarakat-masyarakat tetangga dari komunitas-komunitas Mek. Dengan demikian, diberikan suatu gambaran umum tentang keadaan geografi serta kebudayaan tempat orang Sela terdapat.

Selanjutnya diberikan beberapa keterangan tentang keadaan iklim di daerah Sela dan pengaruhnya terhadap kehidupan penduduk setempat. Rata-rata curah hujan setahun dari satu periode selama sepuluh tahun adalah 4035 mm, sedangkan rata-rata hari hujan selama setahun adalah 287 hari. Selain itu, beberapa peristiwa alam juga ditunjukkan, seperti bencana alam dan angin gunung.

Kemudian dilanjutkan dengan suatu ringkasan tentang beberapa data demografi (meliputi keadaan rumahtangga, golongan umur dan pola-pola migrasi); keterangan-keterangan tersebut diperoleh dari hasil sensus penduduk yang dilakukan pada tahun 1984. Pada tahun 1988/89, data-data itu diteliti kembali dan diperbaharui, selanjutnya perubahan-perubahan penting yang terjadi didiskusikan. Keterangan sensus tentang perkawinan dan klen-klen dimuat pada bab 3.

Sesudah itu diberikan suatu uraian singkat tentang apa yang pada umumnya dinamakan sejarah kontak antara komunitas-komunitas Mek dengan dunia 'luar', yang mulai pada tahun 1910, tetapi baru berkembang secara sungguh-sungguh pada tahun 1960-an.

Pada bagian akhir bab 1, dibicarakan kondisi-kondisi yang saya alami ketika melakukan penelitian di antara orang Sela.

Dalam Bab 2 didiskusikan unsur ekonomi dari kebudayaan orang Sela. Atau dengan perkataan lain, cara-cara apa yang digunakan untuk berinteraksi dengan

lingkungan dan memanfaatkannya demi mempertahankan dan memelihara pola kehidupannya. Pertama-tama, bab ini meliputi sumber-sumber pangan (makanan). Cara pertama untuk mendapat makanan adalah meramu berbagai tumbuh-tumbuhan atau hewan (mengumpulkan, berburu dan menjerat). Cara kedua adalah beternak hewan, khususnya babi, adalah sangat penting. Akan tetapi, seperti halnya penduduk Pegunungan Tengah lainnya, orang Sela adalah terutama petani. Tanaman pokok yang diusahakan adalah *sweet potato* atau ubi manis; jenis-jenis tanaman penting lain yang diusahakan adalah *taro* atau keladi, *sugarcane* atau tebu dan pisang. Aktivitas-aktivitas pertaniannya seperti menyiapkan dan memelihara kebun-kebun, pada umumnya disesuaikan dengan baik terhadap lingkungan alam yang berat, yang merupakan tempat kediamannya. Juga diberikan gambaran singkat bagaimana bahan makanan pokok ditanam, disiapkan untuk konsumsi dan dibagikan kepada orang lain.

Kemudian didiskusikan berbagai bentuk kebudayaan materialnya di bawah kategori-kategori berikut: pakaian atau busana, menghias diri, peralatan dan perlengkapan, senjata dan peralatan pertahanan, perumahan dan perkampungan. Uraian-uraian ini kemudian dilanjutkan dengan suatu seksi tentang ekspresi seni, terutama nyanyian atau lagu-lagu dan tari-tarian *mos*. Dalam bagian akhir dijelaskan secara ringkas sistem berhitung yang digunakan oleh orang Sela yang didasarkan pada perhitungan 27. Berkaitan dengan itu saya memberikan daftar angka-angka dan bagian-bagian dari tubuh yang berkorespondensi dengan angka-angka itu.

Bab 3 membahas dimensi sosial dari kebudayaan orang Sela. Di dalamnya saya menguraikan cara-cara yang digunakan untuk saling berinteraksi antara mereka baik secara perorangan maupun secara komunitas. Bab ini dimulai dengan suatu gambaran umum tentang fase-fase utama pada lingkaran hidup dari seseorang, yaitu kelahirannya, masa kanak-kanak, masa remaja, dewasa dan kawin, dan akhirnya usia lanjut dan mati. Dalam gambaran umum ini didiskusikan juga peristiwa *(female) infanticide* atau pembunuhan bayi (perempuan), upacara *wit* atau inisiasi pemuda maupun upacara *lila'*, dan bentuk perilaku yang dikenal sebagai *pabya* (hubungan seksual dengan calon partner kawin yang dilarang) dan cara masyarakat mengambil tindakan untuk mencegah bahayanya.

Kemudian perhatian diarahkan pada sistem kekebaratan. Dalam bentuk-bentuk diagram saya menyusun istilah-istilah kekeberatan baik yang ada hubungan darah langsung maupun jarak hubungan kerabatnya jauh. Setiap istilah kekeberatan itu saya jelaskan secara singkat, dan juga saya menjelaskan bagaimana sesungguhnya sistem tersebut berfungsi.

Lebih lanjut, didiskusikan *sisya'*, yaitu suatu unsur masyarakat yang saya namakan 'clan' (klen). Ada kurang lebih empatpuluh golongan sosial serupa itu di

seluruh wilayah Sela. Banyak di antaranya membentuk kerumunan berkelompok, yang diumpamakan oleh mereka seperti hubungan antara saudara laki-laki dengan saudara perempuan. Seterusnya, di daerah Sela ditemukan pelapisan klen-klen dari barat dan timur, yang saling bertumpangtindih dalam tingkatan-tingkatan tertentu. Pada akhir seksi ini saya memadukan semua data sejauh data tersebut ada pengaruhnya terhadap sistem perkawinan.

Bagian akhir dari bab ini membicarakan kepemimpinan dalam masyarakat, masalah-masalah pokok mengenai pertukaran dan perdagangan, dan konflik-konflik serta cara-cara menyelesaian konflik.

Dalam Bab 4, saya membahas beberapa aspek tentang bidang keagamaan atau religi. Perlu untuk dikemukakan di sini bahwa data yang saya gunakan untuk membahas aspek ini masih bersifat tentatif dan kurang lengkap. Pertama-tama saya melaporkan tentang konsepsi-konsepsi atau ceritera-ceritera tentang asal mula alam semesta dan penduduknya, meliputi peranan *yùli kal*, yaitu adanya kepercayaan bahwa berbagai umat manusia berasal dari dahan-dahan (yang jatuh) dari sebuah pohon yang tumbuh menjulang tinggi di pusat daerah Sela.

Selanjutnya didiskusikan roh-roh halus dan pengaruhnya. Dalam konteks ini perhatian diberikan juga kepada kepercayaan yang berhubungan dengan kesakitan dan kematian.

Di antara komunitas-komunitas Sela terdapat orang-orang tertentu yang mempunyai kemampuan untuk berkomunikasi dengan dunia 'lain' yang berkwalifikasi sebagai dukun penyembuh yang dapat menyembuhkan orang sakit (*healers*) atau berkwalifikasi tukang sihir yang dapat menyusahkan orang lain (*sorcerers*).

Bagian akhir dari bab ini memuat sejumlah keterangan tentang tempat-tempat suci, bangunan-bangunan suci, dan benda-benda suci, khususnya tentang perisai-perisai *kìlabi* dan batu-batu *yogaba*.

Dalam Bab 5 dicatat proses-proses perubahan dalam bidang kehidupan ekonomi sosial dan keagamaan. Oleh karena proses-proses ini, cakrawala dunia seperti yang sudah lama dialami orang Sela sangat melebar, sehingga tidak dapat dibandingkan dengan keadaan sebelumnya. Proses-proses ini tidak selamanya membawa pengaruh positif; jika orang Sela semata-mata menggantungkan dirinya pada bantuan pihak luar untuk mempertahankan pola hidup yang baru, maka kadang-kadang mereka harus terpaksa menyesuaikan diri lagi sesudah keberangkatan 'orang luar'. Akan tetapi hal ini tidak pernah berhasil untuk mengembalikan mereka pada pola hidupnya yang lama secara lengkap.

Perubahan-perubahan baru itu pertama-tama diperkenalkan dari luar, berasal terutama dari para misionaris asing. Namun, sejak permulaan para penginjil dan petugas kesehatan dari tempat-tempat lain di Pegunungan Tengah juga memain

kan peranan penting (atau setidak-tidaknya lebih penting) dalam mendorong perubahan. Pada tahap akhir, proses perubahan itu dibawa juga oleh guru-guru sekolah yang tiba kemudian di Lembah Sela. Peranan yang paling kecil dan secara tidak langsung berasal dari pihak pemerintah.

Namun demikian, orang Sela bukan penerima pasif. Sebaliknya, mereka mengambil ide-ide baru itu dan memperkenalkannya di antara warga kampung sendiri dengan semangat besar.

Atas dasar alasan ini, saya berpendapat bahwa kita tidak dapat berbicara tentang perihal *'agents'* atau agen perubahan dan *'recipients'* atau penerima perubahan. Bersama-sama, kita adalah partisipan dalam proses kehidupan ini – suatu karunia pokok bagi manusia – dan oleh karena itu, adalah menjadi kewajiban untuk melindungi (tradisi) dan mengembangkan (perubahan) kehidupan ini. Hal ini mengandung dua pengertian.

Pertama, jika para agen perubahan itu tidak merubah dirinya sendiri di dalam dan melalui proses ini, maka mereka bukanlah partisipan perubahan dalam arti yang sesungguhnya. Semua pihak yang terlibat dalam proses ini harus berubah, sebab menurut saya tidak ada alternatif.

Kedua, oleh karena mereka adalah makhluk manusia, maka partisipan dalam proses ini mempunyai kedudukan yang sama baik dalam identitas, derajat maupun harga diri. Hal ini berarti, bahwa orang Sela dan juga penduduk Pegunungan Tengah lainnya adalah memenuhi syarat dan berkompetensi untuk berpartisipasi secara aktif, sebagai partner yang dewasa dan mampu, dalam proses perubahan yang sedang berlangsung baik secara lokal maupun nasional. Saya sangat percaya pada mereka, dan mereka patut menerima respek dan loyalitas kita.

This translation has been prepared by Drs. Johsz R. Mansoben.

Wordlist

abùm side of head, cheek
abùmbare thirteen
abùwa heavy fog
ad bùrùb kàl leader (female)
ad bùrùb nì village leader, leader in a large area
ad yana' nang original inhabitants
adnarob necklace (many teeth)
ae house, hut (generic)
a-ak village (West Weip); see also *hak*
aisyang see *asyang*
ak netbag
(-)ak place
ak-ak, agak netbag (large)
akling, aklìn netbag (smaller)
alìkni her husband
alka brother (male EGO), sister (female EGO); affinal term
alka-alka brothers
alkal-alkal sisters
alkaya-alkaya clan sets; see also *alka-alka*
am taro (*Colocasia esculenta*)
ambe, be sago (tree)
amu sùgù underworld
anana rubbing the body with leaves (East Weip); see also *wanana* and *somùna'*
aran painting; see also *sùgù aran*
asei entrance (East Sela); see also *hagin*
asyang, aisyang grandfather
asyang yabù ancestors
atei village (East Weip); see also *hak*
au grandmother
ayang red, yellow (bright hue on colour spectrum); ripe
ayang nang whites (literally 'red people')
ayung father

bagay multi-pronged arrow (East Sela); see also *phay* (1)
baga' snake (yellowish skin)
bale tobacco pipe (Yali loanword?)
balsìng tree fern (*Cyathea pilulifera*)
ban red pandanus (*P. conoideus*)
barae forest hut
barae ak settlement in new garden or near forest (temporary)
-bare/-pare suffix marking numerals 4 to 14; interrogative suffix
be see *ambe*
beba, bepya lightning
bebna triggering stick of a trap
begì k.o. cane, pitpit (*Saccharum edule*)
benale k.o. leafy tree
bepya see *beba*
bik gourd, penis sheath
birak yae k.o. flat ritual stone, used by a medicine man
bisa', bisya' k.o. forest spirit, spirit (generic), spirit of the dead
bisa' hak village of the (spirits of the) dead

bisa' (cont'd)
bisa' hìng dìngkal the 'spirit' sun rises; clear sunset (mountains turn red)
bisa' kìl malevolent spirit (female)
bisa' kwanìng bad food (sweet potatoes)
bisa' mak spirit stream
bisa' mal, bisa' yin piercing pain in the chest
bisa' mì child crying continually
bìb stinging nettle (*Laportea decumana*)
bìd (mùm) decoration attached to the tail of the *mùm*
bìnggong mouth harp
bìrìngì, bei dìngì cuscus(?)
blae reed (*Eleocharis dulcis*), reed skirt
blom deya snow
boga' throat
bon sùb nì/kìl 'sorcerer/sorceress'
boulumdùmonì k.o. *mos* song
bo' leaf
bunguna' hissing sound (may be heard when a body is cremated)
bùbù hot, warm
bùrùlok k.o. wood (used by a healer)

dab- to cook, roast, burn, light fire
dabesùma' case kept in a family hut
dabyùm type of arrow (with a sharp, smooth tip)
dagìb see *ken thaib nang*; East Sela spelling of *thaib*
dama armband (generic)
damnang yaknang wealthy people
dangman, tangman cymbium shell
dara preposition (prefix) marking numerals 15 to 27; either of two
dara dom twenty-four
dara kaklom seventeen
dara lam twenty-three
dara lin twenty
dara nhab twenty-two
dara o sixteen
dara phìnyaba twenty-six
dara sao eighteen
dara sek twenty-one
dara seldeka twenty-seven
dara sùkna nineteen
dara wìnalyaba twenty-five
darabùm fifteen
deb- to pull
deban see *dìban*
deib-, dìb- to put down, place
deiya', deya' lower back, base (of plants), basis, origin, source
deiya' ùk back pain
deiya' yùbù origin stories
dekna k.o. (leafy) tree
den dama armband around lower arm
diba (ak) family house
dìban, deban large type of fish (lowlands)
dìmdi k.o. bird (small)
dìng (nhonok) unit of twenty-seven
dìrìn (deiya') kukna k.o. *mos* song
dob- to take (a wife), steal, blow, learn
dod- to give
dom index finger
dombare four
du k.o. fern
du deiya', dureiya' base of *du* plant
dum section between blade and shaft of *lay* arrow
dù fruit, seed
dùb top, crown
dùb nang/nì Big Man, wealthy man

dùbna spring trap
dùbna yìna' spring lever of a trap (usually a small tree)
dùma 'ridge' of roof
dùma ae house with gabled roof

eidala Ey river bank (source of rock for stone blades)
emìya' moon (Hao, Weip); see also *wal*
erìn (mùm) type of hair appendage

hagin entrance (West Sela)
hagya, hakya fire posts
haing eye
haing dibu debna' pulling at the eyebrows (healing ritual)
haing kun debna' applying black eye shadow (hunting ritual)
haing lararobnì person who stares at a patient (healer)
hak village
hakya see *hagya*
hasigin fireplace
hin breath
hin dakla/dakdùbla (a person's) breath separates, he/she dies
hìng sun
hong hair
hong lìlìkna comb
hong yakkìl older woman
hong yaknì older man
hong tùktùk klina' pulling at a person's hair (healing ritual)
hu tobacco (generic)

ikna' (weight) trap, sign in garden
im sky, heaven
im bia wabla the sky turns red, sunset
imin tail
in mother (West Sela)
ira', iro (ornament) in septum hole, nose plug
isaner spirit woman (East Weip); see also *bisa' kìl*

ìldìs rain cape
ìmalunga umbilical cord, navel
ìmalunga kwatkwarì nang people living in the underworld
ìnìbùga bayangkana kangì incantation to bring the *kangì* back to the body
ìnìng blood

ka see *alka*
kabìnì(-ngì) young adult man (not yet married)
kabìnìkìl young adult woman (not yet married)
kabna see *kou*
kaklom side of neck
kaklombare eleven
kal tree, wood; and see *khal*
kal dùb tree top
kal keibi k.o. softwood tree
kal samùn nùbna' ritual to stave off food shortages
kalu k.o. acanthus (*Rungia klossii*)
kalun (mùm) type of hair appendage
kam dog (generic)
kam kìsa dana' addressing dogs (hunting ritual)
kangì heart, seat of emotion; soul, spirit
kangì ngingang to be happy
kare k.o. bird
karerùba[?] gourd (*Lagenaria siceraria*)
kas hard, sturdy
kawìn nutty pandanus (*P. antaresensis*)
kei k.o. sky spirit

keibi handdrum (West Weip); see also *whau*
kelì sirik really the last one born
kelìngdyo belt resting on the hips
kelìngì/-kìl last born male/female child
ken red pandanus (*P. conoideus*)
ken thaib nang a person who has power to harm people
khal, kal sister (female EGO)
khama' spirit of the dead
khau strong mountain wind
khei (fruit) bat
khìmban west
khìmban kìl k.o. spirit associated with the west
khìmban mos song originating from the west
khwa see *dum*
kinkin k.o. (leafy) tree
kirikna' k.o. raspberry (*Rubus rosifolius*)
kìl female, woman, wife, brother's wife
kìl dob- to marry (abduct) a woman
kìl sirik actual wife, 'true' wife
kìlabi (ceremonial) shield
kìlabù adult (married) female, woman
kìlabù ae women's hut, menstruation hut
kìlmabù girls
kìlmì (baby) girl, daughter
kìra dona' see *kìttona'*
kìrabi see *kìlabi*
kìrik stone, rock
kìrik kabù stone knife
kìrik yae stone adze
kìt, kìra sorcery, curse
kìt debsin nì/kìl sorcerer/sorceress
kìt thoin nì/kìl sorcerer/sorceress
kìttona' sorcery
kobùm k.o. red pandanus (small)
kolamdibu white potato (Dani loanword)
kolongna ak place in a family hut where the *dabesùma'* or *kus* case is kept
koluma k.o. earthworm
kongkona grooved split stick; part of fire making equipment
kou, kabna kou container, made from bark
kouwa k.o. bird
kumya, kumnya penis sheath (Weip)
kus case containing decorative paraphernalia
kuwìl, kubìl non-initiated status
kuwìl nang people who have not been baptized
kuwìl/kubìl si 'tentative' name
kuwìlmabù non-initiated children
kùbare k.o. (leafy) tree
kùbari k.o. tree
kùgu strong, heavy-set
kùlu k.o. wood (used by healer)
kùm no, not
kùra' sunum necklace (lower teeth of mice)
kùrùrù headband
kwabùdùma center pole sticking out through the roof
kwabùdùma ae house with conical roof
kwae k.o. tree
kwalì banana (*Musa x paradisiaca*)
kwaman si arrow barbs
kwanìng sweet potato (*Ipomoea batatas*)
kwanìng hagya ikna' sign in garden to (1) ward off people, (2) promote growth

kwanìng (cont'd)
kwanìng yìna' sweet potato shoots
kwanìng yùb- to cook sweet potatoes
kwarìngbù nassa shell (East Sela)
kweb- to take out
kwei sugarcane (*Saccharum officinarum*)
kwìlìb bird of paradise
kwìn mother (East Sela, East Weip); see also *in*
kyar, kyat hair appendage with two tails

lam thumb
lambare five
lay bamboo blade (used as knife or as arrow tip)
limang thunder
lin elbow
linbare eight
lìla' initiatory stage
lìla' dorobnì young man who has reached the *lìla'* stage
lìsarab k.o. bush (fibre used for making nets)
lon dove
luk shoot (banana, *begì*, *nongì*, sugarcane)
lùb- to stop, refrain
lùli (cassowary) bone dagger

mak water, river
mak yìkna' pouring water over a person's body (healing ritual)
mal arrow (generic), 'conflict'
mal deiya' nì warleader, man responsible for initiating a *mal*
mal lùb- to cease war
mal si arrow barb
mali regular, common, non-sacred
mali ae women's hut
mali ngì coarse type of *yogaba* stone
mali yùwi regular men's house
malyungkìyùk 'it (the *yùli kal*) fell down'
mam mother's brother
mam ayang [meaning uncertain]
man(a) k.o. *mos* song
manìng grass (*Ischaemum polystachyum*)
marum sola' curved pig's tusk
megì, yongon megì digging stick
melik, mìlik cymbium shell
mem forbidden, taboo, sacred
mem ak sacred place
mem yùwi sacred men's house
mem susu framboesia
memnì [meaning uncertain]
menù snake (python)
menù (imange) rainbow
mhalkìl sister (male EGO)
mhalnì brother (female EGO)
mhaya', mhaiya' water container
mhayong bird feathers
mì child, (baby) boy, son
mì deib- to give birth to a child (literally 'to put down a child')
mì mangana' ae birth hut
mì mangka- to give birth to a child
mìk, mìgì top of head
mìkpare fourteen
mìlik see *melik*
mìn dùb mountaintop
mìya' pig
mìya' mùbi mos pig feast
mìya' sùb pig meat
mos, mot song, dance (feast)
mos seb- to sing *mos* songs (part of reconciliation process)
moserega k.o. (small) spirit

mulia kwaning k.o. reddish sweet potato (introduced)
mùb see *phay mùb*
mùbi deiya' nì initiator of a pig feast
mùk rain
mùli red cordyline
mùli yìna' mena' planting cordyline (healing, hunting ritual)
mùm hair appendage (with one tail); stilt roots
mùm sae strings of plaited hair
mùmì decorative carving (on arrow tip); letter
mùmsùt edible mushroom (*Oudemansiella*)
mùru drizzle, heavy fog (during July – August)

nali, neli local variety of bean
(-)nang belonging to, affiliation suffix
na'nayung my father (term of address)
na'nin my mother (term of address)
neik (sisya') same/similar (clan)
ner woman, wife (East Weip); see also *kìl*
nerabù adult (married) female (East Weip)
neri (nìngì) my (husband)
ngang dama necklace (no teeth)
ngingang (kangì ~) to be happy
nha kin term used by men (of the same clan) who have married sisters; affinal term (see also *alka*)
nhab wrist
nhabi one but last one, middle one
nhabingì/-kìl one but last born male/female child
nhaì greeting to one person (West Sela)
nhappare six
nhon, nhonok one (only)
ni nong ni old(er) man
nimi person
nimi mos feast after someone has been killed
nimi ùrùn visitor, guest, friend
nìng male
nìngabù adult male, man (West Sela)
nìngì husband
nìngì sirik actual husband
nìngmabù boys
nìngmì baby boy
nìnìmna' holding a patient in the smoke of pig fat (healing ritual)
nong body (physical), stem, trunk, essence
nong hak main village
nong kal tree trunk, tree stem
nong nang old man
nong nimi old woman
nongì k.o. grass (*Setaria palmifolia*)
nundi kìl brother's wife (literally 'our wife')

o ear
obare twelve
oling see *yùna' oling*
ongkwalinga bamboo earplug
ongob k.o. necklace
ouwa' see *ùwa'*

pabya k.o. ball, made up of *du* plants and grasses; sexual intercourse with proscribed partners, violation of certain marriage rules
pabya phik balamla 'he goes the road of the *pabya*'
pha klebna' beating a person with leaves (healing ritual)
phagìl see *phaykìl*

phay 1. [high tone] multi-pronged arrow (West Sela)
phay lambatya arrow with five prongs
phay mùb arrow with three or four prongs
2. [falling tone] brother-in-law
phaykìl sister-in-law
pherob good, fine
pherob nì smooth type of *yogaba* stone
phik trail, path, road, direction
phì earthworm (generic)
phìnì two
phìnyaba ring finger
phudala Phu river bank (source of rock for stone blades)
phul k.o. tree
phùana' blowing over a patient (healing ritual)

sabu tying string, vine
sabu sang kilikna' tying a string around the abdomen of a pregnant woman during childbirth
sabu lobna' untying this string
sabuga tie to fasten stone into adze; tobacco
sabya, sapya waist, (outer) waistband
sae hand (including fingers), foreleg, branch
sae lena' putting in the hands (of the initiands)
sagun corn (from Indonesian *jagung*)
sal adult male, man (East Sela); see also *nìngabù*
sang curved surface
sanib cassowary
sanid decoration attached to the tail of a *mùm*
sao shoulder
saobare ten
sapya see *sabya*
saregen cold (to the touch)
sarùm male-in-law; forest spirit (?)
sek lower arm
sekpare seven
sek- to tear, break apart, light (fire)
seldeka little finger
si 1. [high tone] name
si sìrik real name
2. [falling tone] tooth
si banya'/bana' teeth set in lower jaw
sisya' clan (name), generic name
sìb fire tongs
sìgìl yangkana' nang immigrant groups
sìkna rattan string (part of fire making equipment)
sìkyal(a) k.o. *mos* song
sìlsìla olamnìl 'I am attacked by a sorcerer'
sìng cuirass, warvest
sìnì kabù metal knife
sìrìm (ritual) state of possession
soli upstream, north (from Sela perspective)
solùlana k.o. bird
soma (kìl) k.o. spirit
somùna' rubbing someone's body with leaves (healing ritual)
sora' boil
sowed kou type of basket
suguma' earthquake
sumik cucumber (*Cucumis sativus*)
sununba' spirit, idol (?)
sura, sutya rope, tether (pig)
susu wound, sore
sùb meat, flesh
sùgù earth

sùgù amu underworld
sùgù amu nang inhabitants of the underworld
sùgù aran red earth, ochre
sùgù lìlìna' k.o. earth ball, used in healing ritual
sùkkob chayote (*Sechium edule*)
sùkna upper arm
sùknabare nine
sùlì k.o. bird
sùlì kwelamla just like a *sùli* bird, he looks indiscriminately for female partners (associated with *pabya*)
(sùmaktùb) nimi songlena' mortuary ceremony at the time that a person's bones are carried back to the village
sùmbùrù see *sùwi*
sùwe cassowary
sùwi k.o. mallow (*Abelmoschus manihot*)

tal adult male (Weip); see also *sal* and *nìngabù*
tangman see *dangman*
thal, thala k.o. wood (used by a healer)
toma k.o. spirit (East Weip); see also *soma*
toma ateba spirit gate (East Weip)
tyar see *kyar*

uk fire
uk dab- to light fire
ulduga' sabu strong rope (used to pull the *pabya* ball)
utu tobacco (East Weip); see also *hu*

ùk pain
ùk nìklamla he/she suffers pain, is sick
ùsya' ùk headache
ùmbo' k.o. wall across a trail, made from branches
ùri tree (*Trema tomentosa*), marker of length of fallow
ùrùga kwanìng white potato
ùrùn (nimi ~) visitor, guest, partner, friend
ùwa', ouwa' local 'salt'

wae garden
wae wen mekya' large digging stick
wal moon
walas k.o. bush (fibre used to make string)
waldìngkù type of grass (*Imperata conferta*), thatch
walìnggì k.o. fish
wanana rubbing the body with leaves (West Weip); see also *somùna'*
wandanì juncture, crossed
wanìm k.o. nutty pandanus
warembù headband, string of beads on forehead
wasalana (indirect) entrance
wed, wet fibre, thread, string
wed mun twined thread
weik necklace, sash (yellow orchid fibre)
weik wandanì sash worn in X-form
weik nang, weik nì Big Man, leader
wenali three
wena' weight trap
whae cowrie shell
whau handdrum
whena' healing treatment, healer
whena' kìl healer (female)
whena' nì healer (male), medicine man
whe' flare, torch
whi mature

wibi k.o. marsupial, cuscus
wid sword grass (*Miscanthus floridulus*), arrow shaft
winang bird (generic)
winang bar bird blind
winang hong bird feathers
winang yo' bird bones; belt resting on the hips
wìbsa younger of two children
wìbsangì/-kìl younger male/female
wìnalyaba middle finger
wìrìmù decoration attached to the tail of a *mùm*
wìt, wìs initiation ritual (of boys), initiated status; baptized
wìs ae initiation hut
**wìs kilabù* initiated woman
wìs sektùb nang baptized adults
wìt nang initiate
wìtmabù initiates

yabna' type of plate, bowl; blade (of a shovel)
yae, ya adze, spleen
yae/ya sabuga tie to fasten stone into adze
yae si cutting edge of adze
yalì east
yali mos song originating from the east
yalma pigeon
yalon k.o. bird
yamal father-in-law
yamalkìl mother-in-law
yamù k.o. tree; barbed arow
yandù firstborn
yandùngì/-kìl firstborn male/female
yasì k.o. tree
yhalì parsley (*Oenanthe javanica*)
yhalì kwanìng carrots
yìn bow (made from black palmwood)
yìn sabu bow string
yìla' see *yìna'* (Hao and Weip)
yìm 1. [high tone] hill
2. [falling tone] male (non-human)
yìna' plant seedling; trap lever; lineage (Sela)
yìs bamboo water container
yob- to have intercourse
yogaba ritual stone
yongon soft, weak; small digging stick
yo' bone
yumna kaldù tobacco pipe
yùb- to cook (with heated stones)
yùbù word, story, language
yùga' kìl k.o. water spirit
yùli kal primordial tree
yùmpìt bone needle, awl
yùna' ak cookhouse
yùna' oling earth oven, steampit
yùwa abaramak place in front of the men's house, dancing place
yùwi (ak) men's house
yùwi mos dance feast when a men's house is dedicated
yùwìn nutty pandanus (*P. brosimos*)

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Appendix A

Table 1 Population in the Sela Valley area specified by sex and age

		1984			1988/89		
		male	female	total	male	female	total
1. Kwarangdua	old	7	7	14	7	7	14
	adult	65	62	127	68	70	138
	young	67	39	106	77	62	139
	total	139	108	247	152	139	291
2. Phoy	old	1	1	2	1	0	1
	adult	27	25	52	25	23	48
	young	21	14	35	25	21	46
	total	49	40	89	51	44	95
3. Mùnamna	old	1	8	9	1	7	8
	adult	62	73	135	61	66	127
	young	60	42	102	69	47	116
	total	123	123	246	131	120	251
4. Oldomon	old	3	4	7	1	3	4
	adult	37	30	67	36	37	73
	young	15	20	35	23	27	50
	total	55	54	109	60	67	127
5. Orisin	old	6	15	21	4	16	20
	adult	44	47	91	48	47	95
	young	47	30	77	59	40	99
	total	97	92	189	111	103	214
6. Surumdamak	old	1	6	7	0	1	1
	adult	48	53	101	44	49	93
	young	32	39	71	41	46	87
	total	81	98	179	85	96	181
7. Mekdou	old	1	7	8	1	5	6
	adult	30	30	60	29	30	59
	young	24	26	50	36	30	66
	total	55	63	118	66	65	131
8. Eyupmìnak/Mundon	old	2	4	6	3	3	6
	adult	44	48	92	42	52	94
	young	40	27	67	51	39	90
	total	86	79	165	96	94	190
WEST SELA	old	22	52	74	18	42	60
	adult	357	368	725	353	374	727
	young	306	237	543	381	312	693
	total	**685**	**657**	**1342**	**752**	**728**	**1480**

Table 1 (continued)

		1984			1988/89		
		male	female	total	male	female	total
11. Megum	old	3	6	9	3	6	9
	adult	43	33	76	42	36	78
	young	27	18	45	35	28	63
	total	73	57	130	80	70	150
12. Bangkwola	old	0	1	1	0	1	1
	adult	13	13	26	12	13	25
	young	12	13	25	13	13	26
	total	25	27	52	25	27	52
13. Kyoas	old	0	6	6	0	4	4
	adult	26	25	51	26	24	50
	young	25	27	52	27	31	58
	total	51	58	109	53	59	112
14. Sikyaga (Hemhak)	old	2	2	4	0	2	2
	adult	17	21	38	21	23	44
	young	21	17	38	27	18	45
	total	40	40	80	48	43	91
15. Uklin/Idyama	old	4	10	14	2	9	11
	adult	52	50	102	48	46	94
	young	31	32	63	33	29	62
	total	87	92	179	83	84	167
16. Bera	old	4	5	9	0	4	4
	adult	22	21	43	22	23	45
	young	21	14	35	29	16	45
	total	47	40	87	51	43	94
17. Haromon	old	3	6	9	1	6	7
	adult	30	30	60	30	31	61
	young	25	26	51	27	35	62
	total	58	62	120	58	72	130
EAST SELA	old	16	36	52	6	32	38
	adult	203	193	396	201	196	397
	young	162	147	309	191	170	361
	total	**381**	**376**	**757**	**398**	**398**	**796**

Table 1 (continued)

		1984			1988/89		
		male	female	total	male	female	total
21. Sinayom	old	1	2	3	1	2	3
	adult	55	43	98	54	45	99
	young	37	20	57	56	28	84
	total	93	65	158	111	75	186
22. Kwelamdua	old	0	2	2	0	3	3
	adult	33	25	58	33	24	57
	young	20	12	32	28	17	45
	total	53	39	92	61	44	105
23. Bolkiriknadua	old	0	1	1	1	1	2
	adult	14	9	23	12	11	23
	young	16	8	24	17	6	23
	total	30	18	48	30	18	48
24. Yalidomon	old	0	5	5	0	5	5
	adult	29	15	44	26	18	44
	young	16	7	23	22	12	34
	total	45	27	72	48	35	83
25. Bidabuk	old	1	6	7	3	8	11
	adult	53	44	97	48	42	90
	young	45	15	60	70	25	95
	total	99	65	164	121	75	196
SOUTHEAST	old	2	16	18	5	19	24
	adult	184	136	320	173	140	313
	young	134	62	196	193	88	281
	total	**320**	**214**	**534**	**371**	**247**	**618**
SELA VALLEY	old	40	104	144	29	93	122
	adult	744	697	1441	727	710	1437
	young	602	446	1048	765	570	1335
	total	**1386**	**1247**	**2633**	**1521**	**1373**	**2894**

Table 2 Sex ratios of the population in the Sela Valley area

	1984				1988/89			
	old	adult	young	total	old	adult	young	total
1. Kwarangdua	100	105	172	129	100	97	124	109
2. Phoy	100	108	150	122	inf	109	119	116
3. Mùnamna	12	85	143	100	14	92	147	109
4. Oldomon	75	123	75	102	33	97	85	90
5. Orisin	40	94	157	105	25	102	147	108
6. Surumdamak	17	91	82	83	0	90	89	89
7. Mekdou	14	100	92	87	20	97	120	102
8. Eyupmlnak/Mundon	50	92	148	109	100	81	131	102
WEST SELA	**42**	**97**	**129**	**104**	**43**	**94**	**122**	**103**
11. Megum	50	130	150	128	50	117	125	114
12. Bangkwola	0	100	92	93	0	92	100	93
13. Kyoas	0	104	93	88	0	108	87	90
14. Sikyaga	100	81	124	100	0	91	150	112
15. Uklin/Idyama	40	104	97	95	22	104	114	99
16. Bera	80	105	150	118	0	96	181	119
17. Haromon	50	100	96	94	17	97	77	81
EAST SELA	**44**	**105**	**110**	**101**	**19**	**103**	**112**	**100**
21. Sinayom	50	128	185	143	50	120	200	148
22. Kwelamdua	*0*	*132*	*167*	*136*	*0*	*137*	*165*	*139*
23. Bolkiriknadua	*0*	*156*	*200*	*167*	*100*	*109*	*283*	*167*
24. Yalidomon	*0*	*193*	*229*	*167*	*0*	*144*	*183*	*137*
*22-24. West Weip	0	155	193	152	11	134	191	143
25. Bidabuk	17	120	300	152	37	114	280	161
SOUTHEAST	**13**	**135**	**216**	**150–**	**26**	**124**	**219**	**150+**
SELA VALLEY	**38**	**107**	**135**	**111+**	**31**	**102**	**134**	**111–**

* This line combines the data from the three individual villages

Table 3 Movement of individuals in the Sela Valley area (1984)

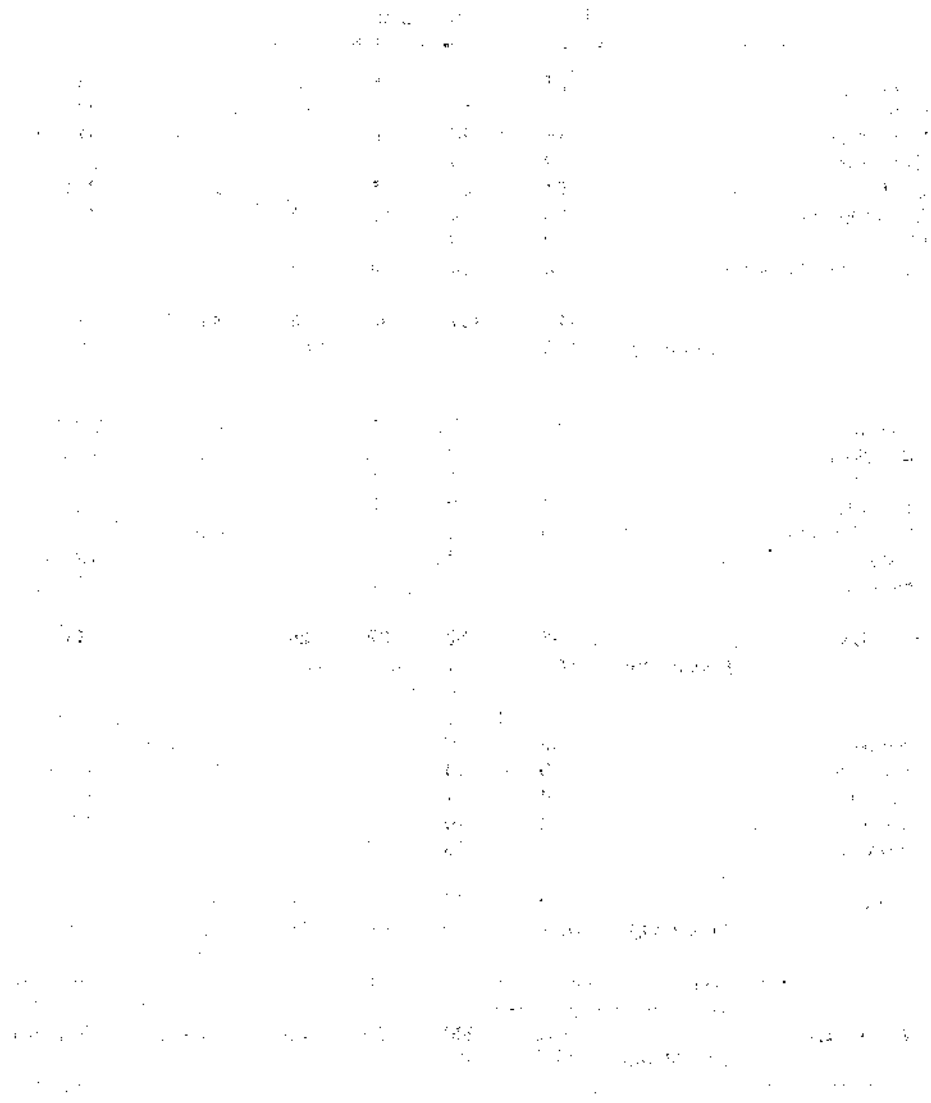
	inhabitants	newcomers	%
1. Kwarangdua	247	41	16.6
2. Phoy	89	42	47.2
3. Mùnamna	246	90	36.6
4. Oldomon	109	25	22.9
5. Orisin	189	32	16.9
6. Surumdamak	179	13	7.3
7. Mekdou	118	22	18.6
8. Eyupmìnak/Mundon	165	67	40.6
WEST SELA	**1342**	**332**	**24.7**
11. Megum	130	20	15.4
12. Bangkwola	52	24	46.2
13. Kyoas	109	43	39.4
14. Sikyaga	80	17	21.2
15. Uklìn/Idyama	179	73	40.8
16. Bera	87	16	18.4
17. Haromon	120	15	12.5
EAST SELA	**757**	**208**	**27.5**
21. Sinayom	158	11	7.0
22. Kwelamdua	92	21	22.8
23. Bolkiriknadua	48	4	8.3
24. Yalidomon	72	14	19.4
25. Bidabuk	164	25	15.2
SOUTHEAST	**534**	**75**	**14.0**
SELA VALLEY	**2633**	**615**	**23.4**

Table 4 Immigration by sex and marital status (1984)

	males				females			
	married	single	child	total	married	single	child	total
1. Kwarangdua	8	3		11	27		3	30
2. Phoy	11	1	6	18	22		2	24
3. Mùnamna	13	5	10	28	48	1	13	62
4. Oldomon	5	1		6	18		1	19
5. Orisin	4		2	6	25		1	26
6. Surumdamak	4	1		5	7		1	8
7. Mekdou	6		2	8	14			14
8. Eyupminak/Mundon	8	5	12	25	35	2	5	42
WEST SELA	**59**	**16**	**32**	**107**	**196**	**3**	**26**	**225**
11. Megum	4	1	1	6	12		2	14
12. Bangkwola	3	5	6	14	6	1	3	10
13. Kyoas	8	2	5	15	26	1	1	28
14. Sikyaga	4	1	1	6	11			11
15. Uklin/Idyama	20	6	6	32	31	1	9	41
16. Bera	2	2		4	11		1	12
17. Haromon	1			1	14			14
EAST SELA	**42**	**17**	**19**	**78**	**111**	**3**	**16**	**130**
21. Sinayom		1	1	2	8		1	9
22. Kwelamdua	4	2	1	7	14			14
23. Bolkirlknadua		1		1	2	1		3
24. Yalidomon		1		1	13			13
25. Bidabuk	1			1	24			24
SOUTHEAST	**5**	**5**	**2**	**12**	**61**	**1**	**1**	**63**
SELA VALLEY	**106**	**38**	**53**	**197**	**368**	**7**	**43**	**418**

Table 5 Marital residence patterns in the Sela Valley area (1984)

	local	viri	uxori	neo	duo	total
1. Kwarangdua	27	22	5	3	1.5+0.5	58.5+0.5
2. Phoy	1	10		10	1	22
3. Mùnamna	16	28	6	9	2.5+0.5	61.5+0.5
4. Oldomon	8	14	1	2	0.5+0.5	25.5+0.5
5. Orisin	21	21	5		0.5	47.5
6. Surumdamak	36	4	5	2		47
7. Mekdou	10	9	6		1	26
8. Eyupmìnak/Mundon	4	24	4	7	1	40
WEST SELA	**123**	**132**	**32**	**33**	**6+1.5**	**328+1.5**
percentage	*37.3*	*40.1*	*9.7*	*10.0*	*2.9*	*100*
11. Megum	16	7	3	1	0.5	27.5
12. Bangkwola	2	3	2	1	1.5	9.5
13. Kyoas		10	3	6	1	20
14. Sikyaga	4	10	3		1.5	18.5
15. Uklìn/Idyama	10	12	9	12	0.5	43.5
16. Bera	11	7	2			20
17. Haromon	15	14				29
EAST SELA	**58**	**63**	**22**	**20**	**5**	**168**
percentage	*34.5*	*37.5*	*13.1*	*11.9*	*3.0*	*100*
21. Sinayom	30	6				36
22. Kwelamdua	6	13	4		1	24
23. Bolkiriknadua	4	1				5
24. Yalidomon	3	10			0.5	13.5
25. Bidabuk	19	15	1		0.5	35.5
SOUTHEAST	**62**	**45**	**5**	**–**	**2**	**114**
percentage	*54.4*	*39.5*	*4.4*	*0.0*	*1.7*	*100*
SELA VALLEY	**243**	**240**	**59**	**53**	**15+1.5**	**610+1.5**
percentage	*39.7*	*39.2*	*9.7*	*8.7*	*2.7*	*100*



Appendix B

Translation of A.C. de Kock (1912)

Kock, A.C. de, 1912. "Eenige ethnologische en anthropologische gegevens omtrent een dwergstam in het bergland van Zuid Nieuw-Guinea" ("Some ethnological and anthropological data about a pygmy tribe in the highlands of South New Guinea"). *TKNAG* 29:154-170.

[*154*] My first acquaintance with the mountain people of South New Guinea was a very short one.

The Military Exploration detachment had arrived in the 7th stage bivouac on 30 January 1911 and would stay there two days to prepare the journey to the peak of the Goliath. As I would not join that expedition and yet wanted to enrich my botanical collection with specimens from above 2000 m, I seized the opportunity to go up the mountain with a small guard the following day. At 2500 m altitude we came across the beacon at the bottom of a slope that the commander of the detachment had placed there earlier [in August 1910, JAG]. At that time there had been solid proof of people living in the highlands; for a small group of Papuans, whose number could not be estimated, indicated with much clamour that the visit was not appreciated at all; they expressed their feelings by throwing large stones and rolling some rocks of considerable size down the slope.

Where did these people come from? Would they have been inhabitants of the village that could be seen from the 6th stage bivouac on the plateau between the [*155*] Goliath and the Pollux and would the trail on the crest of the Goliath turn in a western direction to that village? Or would the trail perhaps continue to the top? In that case there would probably be another village, on the north slope of the Goliath, for the east slope which descends almost perpendicularly offers no place for a settlement. Was it a matter of chance or had we already been detected by the highlanders and did they find the slope near the beacon a useful point to watch our ways? Anyway, just as we too approached that point, we heard people shouting in confusion, noticed a movement in the bushes on the slope and where the growth along the path winding uphill was lower three people who were quickly running away became visible for a fleeting moment. We continued our way and soon found impressions of their feet in places where the humus layer on the limestone rocks made this possible. The trail became hard to follow, even dangerous at one point, where a rock that could not be scaled occupied almost the entire width of the crest and only left little room for a path passing the rock above a steep precipice.

Briefly resting at 2800 m from the fatigues of our climb, we heard the voice of a man talking busily, coming closer and closer. At this altitude forest growth is thin and from a distance of 20 m we could make out a man between the bushes with a woman and child who quickly came our way. The man walked in front, talking loudly and vigorously, and he did not notice us until he turned around a corner of the trail and suddenly stood there, 5 m from us. He was terrified; he screamed, looked at us with wide anxious eyes,

while his mouth closed and opened without being able to make a sound. Apart from a few rattan rings around his waist he was completely naked; he carried a stone adze over his left shoulder, a bow on his back and a bundle of arrows in his right hand. He retreated step by step, while we could just see that the woman quickly picked up the child from the ground and hastily fled away. As soon as he knew they were safe, the man turned around and was gone.

The encounter had lasted no longer than a few seconds and could, therefore, correctly be called a fleeting one. Yet it had not been without value, for higher up we found the footprints of the child and, because of this, it became quite obvious to us later, that this family had followed a path which descended steeply along the west slope and thus apparently led to the village between the Goliath and the Pollux. The other footprints, however, [*156*] continued to stay on the trail on the crest, so that it was clear that our first encounter had been with inhabitants of a village to be found on the north slope. Indeed, this village was later seen from the 9th stage bivouac and marked on the map as a tree village.

By coincidence I had a friendly encounter with the inhabitants of the former village during the following week. The English collector Meek had set up camp in our 6th stage bivouac. He had with him about twelve Papuans from British New Guinea and made trips through the area to hunt birds. These Papuans had already made contact with the highland people and had come to be on rather friendly terms with them. On my way back I was able to stay in the 6th bivouac for one day, and Mr. Meek was so kind as to let one of his boys, called Jersey, accompany me to make it easier to establish contact. From this bivouac, situated at 1800 m, one has a fine view to the west of the Pollux and the plateau which is located about 200 m lower between that mountain and the Goliath. Two huts are clearly visible from here and a few huts can just be made out on the slope of the Pollux.

Together with a European NCO and several Javanese soldiers I went down, but the trail was so bad that we had trouble descending. Not everyone is accustomed to balance over slippery and swaying tree trunks, often above a ravine, and we were happy when we reached the bottom of the slope and the plateau stretched out in front of us. There appeared to be quite a few gardens on this plateau in which some people were working. Jersey called out to them from afar to notify them of our arrival. When they noticed our group, there were certainly shouts on all sides and some women fled away with their crying children, but the men remained standing and seemed to deliberate about what to do. Finally three of them came to us and, already at a great distance, laid down their bow and arrow beside the trail. They greeted Jersey with joy, like an old friend, embraced him laughingly and tapped him on his belly. We were observed with surprise, but without any fear. No conversation was possible, for the few words known from other areas which had already been explored appeared to be unintelligible to them. However, this had no effect at all on the liveliness of the encounter and they had no difficulty in making it clear to us that they liked the cigarettes given to them very much and they inquired without modesty about our supplies.

[*157*] Gradually more people came back from the gardens, also a few small boys came watching us, until ten of our new friends were there together. It struck us immediately that, as far as body length is concerned, they were far behind compared to those living near the Eilanden river and, recalling the robust stature of the Papuans in Merauke, they were to be considered very small compared to them.

After an hour had gone by with smoking the cigarettes which were in great demand, and they had admired and carefully touched the exchange goods we had brought with us, I expressed my intention to visit their village, which was not visible from the edge of the forest but could not be far off. My suggestion was followed by an excited and sometimes heated discussion, of which the result was that this was out of the question. But perseverance pays off and the tobacco promised to them was too strong a temptation to resist the request for long.

A very muddy path led between the gardens to the village. When we arrived there, some of our friends already appeared to be present. Thus they had taken a shorter route to announce our visit. Why this was necessary became soon evident: all the women and children had disappeared and we got to see the male inhabitants only. The village consisted of 11 houses and was surrounded by a decrepit fence, about one meter high, which apparently only served to keep in the pigs which were otherwise running free. There were no more than 20 adult men altogether and on later visits I never encountered more. The total population, therefore, may be estimated at approximately 70 persons.

To satisfy them we gave a few presents which

were gratefully accepted and for which we received in exchange a few dried tobacco leaves of unsmokeable quality.

We were touched and looked at from all sides; their surprise reached a peak when we rolled up our sleeves and showed our arms. Maybe they thought that we just stripped off our skin! However, they were only surprised, and they showed no fear whatsoever. No doubt we were immediately recognized as humans and not as spirits, as seemed to have happened with other tribes. The heterogeneous nature of our group was noticed from the outset, for my arm was compared for a long time with the one from the Javanese fusilier and they talked in hushed tones about the difference in the colour of the skin. They pointed out to each other that there were three kinds: the Europeans, the Javanese and Jersey. That I could not get away from an incomprehensible ceremony, I had expected. One of the oldest men fetched a small bamboo container from his house, filled with brick-red powder which seemed to me to be dried clay. [*158*] He mixed it with a little water from a puddle in his hand and before I understood his intention he began painting my face with this concoction. I meekly underwent this treatment, the bystanders followed it closely and apparently considered it a serious matter. He made a stripe across the entire forehead, circles above and under the eyes, a few whiskers, a tip on the nose and a vertical stripe in the middle of the chin. As they remained very serious, I asked my companions not to laugh. They complied with this, but it seemed to cause a great deal of trouble.

When we said farewell we had to perform another peculiar duty. The same old gentleman came with a piece of roasted sweet potato and indicated to us that all of us had to eat from it. So I wanted to cut off a piece with a knife, but he quickly intervened and pointed out emphatically that this was not allowed to happen at all, no knife should touch it. He bit a piece off the potato for each one and for the sake of goodwill we suppressed our revulsion and 'swallowed' this unappetizing bite, after which he showed himself very satisfied. Several youngsters accompanied us as far as the bivouac; the first encounter apparently had pleased all of us.

Since then I have been in their village another two times and they have come and visited me in the bivouac several times. I never got to see women, however, and I was never allowed to have a look inside the houses, even though we were the best of friends. They were always actively engaged in trading with us; on our part we exchanged tobacco, matches, axes, machetes, mirrors and red cotton for arrows, bows, stone adzes and different ornaments. Although the gardens provide them with plenty of taro and potatoes, the price of those foodstuffs was kept up and for three potatoes they demanded a package of tobacco. On those occasions we also attempted to carry out anthropological measurements and make a number of photographic exposures.

We needed much power of persuasion and endless patience to accomplish something in this area, for they are lively and cheerful people who had to take in so many impressions that their attention was always being drawn to something else than to which we wanted them to concentrate on. Only very rarely did we succeed in having them do the one simple thing we desired from them, namely stand still.

The collection of hair samples alone went smoothly. We owed this to the fact that they do not want to have a moustache or beard and pull out every hair with their fingers.

For that reason they found my razor a great invention, and they hustled and shoved each other to be the first to be shaved. [*159*] At first they were lathered properly, but when their interest became so great they underwent the treatment without this preparation which, with a knife that had turned quite dull, must not have been pleasant at all, but none the less was appreciated very much. First they had to put up with the fact that I cut off some hair from their head, then they were shaved as a reward. It struck me that the areas that were shaved were considerably lighter in colour. We would no doubt get a much less dark impression of the colour of their skin, if the layer of dirt with which the skin is always covered is first removed. Van der Sande could correctly write: "Without previous washing a correct opinion of the colour of the skin can seldom be obtained."

I got nothing but a positive impression of their character. They are cheerful, always ready to laugh and joke, and very helpful. Whenever I returned from their village, they came along to lend a helping hand near a steep rock or a slippery tree; they cut the trail further open, asked to carry the birds that had been shot, caught insects and plucked flowers when they saw that I collected those. I have noticed nothing of them being thievish, although they could easily have spirited away something when the

trade goods went from hand to hand.

The gardens are exclusively worked by men, rarely did we see women there. Thus they may not be accused of laziness, which among other Papuan tribes inflicts almost all labour on the women. Many men have remarkably intelligent facial expressions.

I have never noticed any form of government, there was no specific person who gave orders or was treated with more respect. The produce of the gardens seems to be communal property, at any rate the entire harvest, bound together with pandanus leaves into oblong packages, was stored in one lean-to. After the harvest a nightly feast was held at full moon and the singing could even be heard by us on the mountain. There was a leader who sang a drawn out sentence, after which a large choir of male voices only joined in with a song in which only three tones were heard and of which the last one, also the lowest, was sustained very long. Between the singing rhythmic, short, dull blasts were given, presumably on bamboo containers.

As the photographs show, all men above a certain age wear a penis gourd which stands out by its extraordinary length and often is 40 cm long. For this they use the dried, and then scooped out, ripe fruit of a variety of the gourd (*Lagenaria vulgaris*), [*160*] of which the outer layer is scraped off to obtain a rather yellow colour. Sometimes the long penis gourds, if closed at one end, have a small white fruit attached to the tip for decoration; the short ones are often open at the top; all gourds have two strings attached to the base, a 3 cm wide flat ring, whereby the unit is secured around the waist. To prevent too large and burdensome excursions, some men have attached a second pair of strings that runs from the middle of the penis gourd to the rattan strings around the waist. Others make a loop around the scrotum to attach the gourd more securely. (...) Between the rattan coils around the waist they often wear several strings of Job's tears, the pearly grey fruits of the *Coix lacryma*, which are also worn on the forehead. The adults, without exception, have a band of strings wrapped around their head, which is wider at the forehead than at the back and often drops over their eyes, so they have to tilt their head back in order to be able to see straight ahead.

Once or twice we noticed that a plume of cassowary feathers or a single feather of the white cockatoo was tied to the forehead with a string, and also that the headband was decorated with a vertical row of rat teeth.

The most important head decoration, however, is a kind of tail which hangs from the crown down the back as far as the waist (...) and which seems to be highly valued by them. They did not want to part with any of them; at first they remained insensitive to our strongest efforts to tempt them with goods and finally, after weighing the matter for a long time, they were willing to exchange a somewhat worn specimen for a steel axe, a machete and a pack of tobacco. This tail is 70 cm long and consists of 24 thin rattan strings, which at the upper third part are tied together with a cross piece which also accentuates to some extent the rounding of the skull. The strings converge downwards and at the end are tied together with a tapered rattan point 30 cm long. The strings and the pointed tip are wrapped with thin coils of thread, while the entire unit is coated with a layer of resin from a ficus species, so that the coils cannot be seen in a well maintained specimen. At the upper end of each string a curl of hair is plaited into it, so that the tail is tied to the hair in front of the crown in a convex line. Once we observed that a man had painted the point red with the clay mentioned above; the meaning of this, however, has not become clear to me. Strings of teeth of pigs or tree kangaroos are hung around the neck; [*161*] long strings of kangaroo teeth, worn over the shoulder, are also very common.

All males, including the small boys, have their nasal septum perforated, in which an at most 6 cm long piece of rattan or wood is stuck; bamboo is not worn in the nose. We did not observe perforations of the sides of the nose. Some wear non-decorated sections of bamboo in their earlobes, of which the diameter at times is 4 cm. We did not find tattooing or mutilations; once we saw a man who had painted a large upright cross on his belly with red clay.

When you meet them in the forest, the men always carry the same equipment; it consists of a bow with at least 6 arrows, a stone adze and a string bag which hangs with a band over the shoulders like a game bag and is decorated at the corners with feathers from cockatoos or birds of paradise. Everything needed for an extensive trip is carried along in it, such as a few large chunks of sweet potato, some rattan strings to set traps, one half of the upper jaw of a rat, of which the sharp incisor serves as a knife to work on and sharpen arrow points, and finally the fire making implements.

Because of their small stature (the average

body length appeared to be only 148.9 cm), their bows and arrows are likewise much shorter than those of the lowlanders. The length of their bow string is no more than 125 cm, and their longest arrows are only 120 cm long. The bows are not decorated and are made from areca palm wood, the arrows from reed with a tip formed out of bamboo or a hard type of wood. I obtained an arrow of 70 cm with a bulbous point with which a small boy was practicing shooting. Bony arrow points are not used. The people seem to live in undisturbed peace and friendship with their neighbours, at least they do not possess any other weapon or means of defence. I obtained, it is true, a harmless dagger, only 15 cm long and made from the hind leg of a tree kangaroo, split and sharpened along its length, and decorated with a string of Job's tears to which the black and yellow-white tail plume of that marsupial is attached. In fig. 1 this dagger, stuck between a rattan armband, is visible on the upper arm of the first man from the left; it may serve as decoration just as much as a weapon.

Their way of making fire was demonstrated to me several times. Two sticks of hard and smooth wood 15 cm long are tied with rattan at one end in such a way that the other ends are held open. Inside this wedge-shaped space a piece of tinder, [*162*] from the leaf sheaths of the *Caryota Rumphiana*, is placed which is always carried along dry, carefully wrapped in tree bark. A piece of rattan thinner than a pencil and about 1 m long (rolled up like a coil it is also kept in the string bag) is pulled through underneath the sticks. While they are pushed against the ground with one foot, the rattan ends are forcefully and quickly pulled up and down with the body bent over. As soon as the tinder is smoking well because of the heat caused by the friction, a few dry leaves are placed on it and the smouldering fire is fanned strongly. They are quite adept in this, and after only a few minutes a flame appears.

What do these people live on?

The most important foodstuffs are the taro (*Colocasia antiquorum*) and the sweet potato (*Batata edulis*), planted in long rows with equal intervals in the gardens. Some banana trees grow close to the village; I saw some cucumber plants against the wall of a hut; the other food is found in the forest, such as the *Dioscorea* tubers and the fruits of the *Lagenaria vulgaris* mentioned above. There is no fruit a human stomach can tolerate that is not to their taste; above all the pandanus fruits, otherwise not very meaty, are collected in great quantities. Armed with bow and arrow they go hunting each day, hoping to shoot a bird, if possible a cassowary. I saw four well-fed reddish brown pigs in the village which certainly waited for a festive opportunity to be consumed. They do not despise lizards and snakes at all and these are adroitly caught with the hand. They catch rats and tree kangaroos in ingeniously laid snares. To snare a rat a twig snapped twice is bent in the form of a triangle and tied across a stick which stretches over a path, its ends resting in a bush. A thin and strong rattan string is tied in the middle to a springy branch bent down and one end is fitted with a loop which is extended inside the triangle. The other end, stretched tightly, runs to one of the legs of the triangle and is lightly held by a small stick which lies on the base. When a rat walks over the stick, approaches the snare, wants to continue under the triangle and then touches this small stick, the stretched rope is released, the bent branch springs back with force and pulls the loop around the head of the rat.

The snares for the tree kangaroo are of the same form but are larger and of stronger material and are placed on the ground.

The people live too far from a river to make fishing worthwhile. [*163*] That they know fish became apparent when they immediately recognized our dried fish as such. However, they found the salty taste so horrible that the morsel offered graciously did not go farther than the mouth, and their reproachful look made it sufficiently clear that they would not be taken in a second time.

Consequently, the use of salt is unknown to them, and the vegetable foodstuffs seem to contain sufficient amounts of salt for the body. Our jerked meat (*dendeng*) was in high demand, palm sugar was carefully tasted but apparently not liked; rice, even when cooked without salt, was after a small sample contemptuously refused and the smell alone of the mung bean (*kacang hijau*) soup, which we enjoyed, was enough to make everyone nauseate and to chase them out of my hut. Apart from tobacco, we found no other stimulants; chewing betel nut seems to be unknown to them, although the betel plant grows in their forests. The tobacco is planted around the houses, in a small garden which is about 1 m wide and is marked off by a low fence. There are at the most ten plants per house. They do not grow taller than 150 cm and the longest leaves were 25 cm long. The people smoke the uncut tobacco in a peculiar kind of

pipe, the form of which differs entirely from those used elsewhere in New Guinea and consists of two separate parts. One section is a bamboo tube of 23 to 32 cm length with a diameter of 3 cm, sometimes decorated with a very simple flat design. This tube is cut off at a distance of 1 cm from a node in which a pea-sized hole is bored. The other section is a bamboo tube of 1 cm diameter and over 20 cm long. The tobacco is rolled in any kind of leaf to form a cigarette and inserted in one end of the thin tube, the other end of which is placed at an angle against the hole in the node of the thicker bamboo tube. The connection between the two sections is closed with both hands in some way or other and after forcefully and persistently blowing and drawing in turn at the open end of the thick bamboo tube one manages to draw up some smoke. The taste of tobacco must be a very pleasant stimulant to be able to give pleasure with such deficient means.

The houses, too, have a form which, as far as I know, has not yet been seen in New Guinea. They are round (fig. 3), have a diameter of 3 to 5 m and rest on low poles, so that the floor is raised about 1 m off the ground. The wall is 1.5 to 2 m high and is built from split boards joined together. Where an opening remains in the wall, a piece of tree bark is attached. The roof has a conical shape, extends half a meter over the wall [*164*] and is made from a double layer of pandanus leaves laced together. A 50 cm long rattan point protrudes, like a lightning rod, through its top. Light and air can only enter through a single opening, also serving as a door, which is only 75 cm high and 50 cm wide and is found just under the extended edge of the roof. A notched tree trunk slanting against the house is used as a ladder to reach this opening through which the occupants have to duck in order to enter the house. The space under the house is used for keeping firewood and also serves as a pig sty. I counted eleven of these houses in the village. I found another ethnographic novum in a hand drum, but unfortunately could not obtain one. The drum was an estimated 80 cm long and consisted of an hour-glass shaped, hollowed out piece of wood, as customary elsewhere, but it had no handle, had been roughly cut with an adze and had *not a single* decorative design. A kangaroo skin was stretched across one of the round openings which were about 10 cm in diameter, and glued to it with black resin. Blobs on the membrane, as they are found elsewhere and are supposed to tune the instrument, were not present in this case.

Regarding the stone adzes, they know only the small and light type, the same kind that is also used in the lowlands. The oblong, hard stones are 10-12 cm long and 3.5-4.5 cm wide, convex at one side and tapered at the cutting edge. They are firmly tied with rattan to a hammer-like wooden shaft of which the handle is about 40 cm long. I saw one man cutting down a tree 40 cm in diameter with it in an hour's time. They are very satisfied with it and at first our steel axes had only little attraction for them, whereas our machetes, on the contrary, with which they could quickly cut bushes and small branches, were valued from the outset and, together with the packs of tobacco, were the most desired exchange items.

Their state of health is in every respect satisfactory, they looked healthy. Although the cleanliness of the skin left everything to be desired, real skin diseases were not seen. Traces of syphilis or smallpox were not present; malaria is causing little or no problem.

It was impossible to learn more of their language during the few days that I was among them than the words listed below. Their method of counting showed a peculiar feature. By adding a suffix, the names of parts of the arm and head become numerals. They start counting at the little finger on the left hand, then continue from the left along the fingers, the wrist, [*165*] the lower arm, the elbow, the upper arm, the shoulder, the side of the neck, the ear, the side of the head [parietal bone] and the crown, and from there down the right side along those body parts in reverse order to end with the little finger on the right hand. The numerals which correspond with the body parts on the right side have the prefix "*ton*". In this way, therefore, they count to 27, as recorded in the wordlist.

Finally some anthropological comments. (...)

Only [12] male adult persons have been measured. The data were, of course, too meagre to warrant conclusions from the results. Two facts, however, are so salient that they must be mentioned separately. In the first place, the length of the body. The average was 148.9 cm, the tallest man measured 157.9 cm, the smallest 139.4 cm. The last one is the first man from the left in fig. 1. In the second place, it appeared from calculating the skull indices that, according to the grouping of Prof. Martin, two men were mesocephalous, eight were brachycephalous and two hyperbrachycephalous. This is remarkable, because among both the men of the Humboldt

Bay and those in Merauke dolichocephaly and mesocephaly is predominant.

Chalmers, too, found brachycephaly among his Kiwai group and, to explain this, he assumes that the dolichocephalous Papuans living along the coast have intermingled towards the east with a short-headed race, while this mixing would not yet have taken place on Kiwai island.

Koch then asks correctly, where those short-headed people have come from. Did they originally live there, or have they immigrated from the mountains, or from the East coast or across the sea?

In this regard is it important to note that among these highland people brachycephaly has been demonstrated.

The anthropological data and the hair samples have been submitted to the Anatomical Institute of Prof. A.J.P. van den Broek in Utrecht.

Thus, our trips to the inhospitable Goliath, though tiring, have been worthwhile from an anthropological perspective, too.

When will this small group of people, living peacefully there in the mountains, again come in contact with western civilization?

Perhaps the story of our visit will live on as a legend among their descendants.

Wordlist

it is not allowed *bok-neng*
beautiful, fine *agetep*
here *assi*
warm *mad-ya*
cold *rumi*
son *bi-ye*
stone adze *mal-ye* [VH not bad]
house *a-ye*
footpath *at-ya*
stone *wa-ling*
wood *cam*
rattan *tabu*
bamboo *u-te*
string bag *waling*
forehead band *ba-ti-ya*
necklace of pig teeth *wul-yai*
penis gourd *kumya*
necklace with small bag *min-dok*
eat *kwa-ning* [VH sweet potato]
sleep (verb) *ui-meb*
chop (verb) *u-tai*
smoke tobacco (verb) *nayup*
fire, flame *u-ke*
smoke *sulung*
tobacco pipe *numna*
tobacco *u-su-we*
water *me-ye*
rattan waist rings *ta-bia*
flower *kan-kwanni*
butterfly *ne-kware*
taro *a-mi*
pig *uduk*
rat *kho-da*
tree kangaroo *winya*
its tail plume *winya-otong*
cassowary *da-bu-ning* [VH lowlands?]
bird *mai*
dove *jau-mai*
bird of paradise (apoda) *ku-lip*
black bird of paradise *kub-la*
arrow *mat*
bow *jin*
arrow shaft *ina*
dance (verb) *can-dab*
beard *ban-otong*
hair (head) *kissok otong*
hair (armpit) *ke-otong*
eye *a-tsing*
nose *u-e*
tooth *tsi*
breast (female) *mum*
penis *den*
scrotum *lup*
hand *ate* [VH this here?]
foot *yan*
finger *te*
nail *te-alu*
tongue *si-alun*
lip *bam*
thigh *arakai*
knee *jambri*
belly *mu-ne*
navel *ima-lon-ga*
bone (skeleton) *yam*
spine *yam-yokke*
splint-bone, fibula *yam-budin*
ankle *yam-kwam-yokke*
little toe *yan teltelek*
second toe *yan lum*

The counting system

body part	name	number (left)	number (right)
little finger	*teltelek*	1 *teltelek-nya*	27 *ton teltelek-nya*
ring finger	*beting*	2 *beting-yi*	26 *ton beting-yi*
middle finger	*wenit*	3 *wenit-ya*	25 *ton wenit-ya*
index finger	*lum*	4 *lum-ye*	24 *ton lum-ye*
thumb	*am*	5 *amung-ye*	23 *ton amung-ye*
wrist	*na-ap*	6 *na-ap-ye*	22 *ton na-ap-ye*
lower arm	*ing*	7 *(ner) ing-ge*	21 *ton ing-ge*
elbow	*tup-nang*	8 *tupnang-ge*	20 *ton tupnang-ge*
upper arm	*tang*	9 *tang-ge*	19 *ton tang-ge*
shoulder	*taung*	10 *taung-ge*	18 *ton taung-ge*
(side of) neck	*kok-lom*	11 *kok-lom-ye*	17 *ton kok-lom-ye*
ear	*omola*	12 *omolanye*	16 *ton omolanye*
side of head	*kaup*	13 *kaup-ming-ge*	15 *ton kaup-ming-ge*
(top of) head	*kissok*	14 *kissok-lanye*	

Notes [JAG]

1. For the sake of clarity, I have changed some vowels and consonants, as follows:
aa > *a* *ie* > *i* *oe* > *u* *dj* > *j* *tj* > *c* *j* > *y*

2. Volker Heeschen (1978:44) has noted a few erroneous and doubtful translations, which I have indicated.

3. I have incorporated the corrections of the numerals 7-9 and 19-21 as published in Le Roux (1950:529).

Appendix C

Cargoism in Irian Jaya Today

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It appears that many people in Irian Jaya today not only are protesting against the manner in which they, as they perceive it, are being denied fundamental human rights, guarantees of social interaction based on fairness, and a reasonable share of economic benefits secured through "development", but also are searching for something that goes beyond this: a world and a time of wonder in which they will enjoy health and a life of youthfulness; in which they will live with one another in peace and happiness, and have access to wealth without limit. It has struck us very much that in the past decade the number of "cargo" movements has increased considerably and that growing clouds of cargoism are spreading over the territory. In this essay we present data on activities from four areas in Irian Jaya. In the brief discussion that follows and in which we focus primarily on causal factors, we venture the thesis that in all these cases we have to do with (new) religious movements. The recurring combination of expectations based on traditional religious beliefs with feelings of political and economic discrimination may result in explosive situations and, in this context, there will be little reason to assume that cargoism will decrease significantly.

Introduction

Today cargoism is all-pervasive, even rampant, in Irian Jaya. Throughout the province movements have broken out, and are continuing, on a scale that is without precedent, except perhaps for the World War II period.

A survey of salvation movements in Irian Jaya from the middle of the 19th century until the late 1970s was presented by Godschalk (1983) at a Seminar on Melanesian Movements, held in Pyramid, Irian Jaya in 1980. It incorporated, but also augmented, an earlier overview by Kamma (1972:283-298). The original history of movements in Irian Jaya in Strelan (1977:14-15, 21-22, 28-29) was completely rewritten in Strelan and Godschalk (1989) and updated to 1988; this study, however, is in Indonesian and is, therefore, less accessible. In this paper we present data that are even more contemporary.

We wish to limit ourselves to activities reported from four areas in Irian Jaya; they seem to represent a bewildering variety of responses to outside influences. The four groups are the Me, Western Dani, Hupla, and Dr. Wainggai with his followers.[1]

After a brief descriptive account of the relevant events, we will look into some of the factors that cause the movements to rise to the surface.

Cargo movements among the Me

The idea behind the movements among the Me is the same, but the cargoistic aspirations in the Paniai region have centered around three different terminologies or concepts over the last 25 years. They are: *Pabrik* (from 1964 onwards), *Alam* (from 1983) and *Batu delima* (1989 to the present).

1. *Pabrik*

The word *pabrik* means 'factory' in Indonesian and is derived from the Dutch word *fabriek*. But according to the Me the idea of *pabrik* is related to a spirit being who is believed to hold or to be the source of all Western goods. With the help of this supernatural being the Me people can have access to Western goods without working for them or being involved in the manufacturing process.

The first Me leader who came up with this idea was Paulus Tebay, born in the village of Okaitadi on the west shore of Lake Paniai. Paulus was a man highly respected throughout the Paniai region, because he was one of only about ten Me students who had graduated from the Teachers Training School in Serui (Yapen Island). After his return to the highlands he eventually became a school teacher in Emaibo. Early in 1964, he claimed that he had discovered the key to unlock the gate of the *pabrik* that would give access to the Western goods stored inside the Kiuto hill on the west shore of Paniai lake. How had he found this key?

A few days before his death, his father Yimouyawi Tebay, while in a state of ecstasy, had told his son that he would receive seven keys. He had said to him, "I will give you further information later, after I die. Be strong, even if you are suffering and starving now. One day you will be free from all this misery and bitterness of life."

A week after his father had died, Paulus found a seven-tailed python; he killed it and kept its tails in a wooden box. The following night a beautiful white lady, called *Nabai*[2] by Paulus, appeared to him in a dream; she was tall and had long hair. She instructed Paulus to go to his father's grave. He did this and found the key under a *tawaya* tree. He inserted it into his father's hip which was already rotting. Suddenly, there was an earthquake and the door to the underworld opened. Paulus entered the gate and there he met his father who had become a young abundant food supplies, clothing, cars, airplanes, hotels, restaurants, huge stores, paved streets, etc.. He walked around and also saw some of his relatives who had died long ago, but now had become young men and women. Then he was directed to return to the land of the living. But before Paulus left this place, Nabai instructed him to slaughter a number of pigs and sacrifice them to her; certain parts should be presented to her. She in turn would then release the goods.

Paulus returned to his village and told the people that he had discovered the *pabrik* under the Kiuto hill. He said that if they sacrificed their pigs and presented the heads to Nabai, she would release the riches, and the Me people (and Irian Jaya people as a whole) would be flooded with western made goods which until now had been enjoyed only by the Australians, Europeans and Americans: "We will be like the Westerners."

The people responded by bringing to Paulus pigs and chickens to be sacrificed to Nabai; those who did not have pigs brought money so he could buy pigs. At first the contributions came primarily from his immediate relatives. The expectation behind the response was that, if Nabai released the goods and Irian Jaya became an independent state, they would receive a share of the goods or a position in the new government.

Paulus and his followers held pig feasts every month to meet the demands of Nabai and cause her to release the goods; but Nabai was not moved, in spite of her promises to Paulus. On the contrary, she now demanded of Paulus to kill seven *tonowi bagee* (well-respected and rich leaders), cut off their heads and bring them to her. This scared Paulus to death. During the week that he thought the matter over, sixty people, young and old alike, died suddenly. Paulus insisted on pursuing the idea, and he organized a final pig feast in Emaibo in August 1964, to which he also invited the Head of the Paniai District. This official promised to attend the feast and later donated rice, sugar and salt. Many men and women from far and wide came to Emaibo to see the goods to be brought out of the Kiuto hill by Nabai. But she was not satisfied with the countless number of pigs sacrificed to her and insisted on human heads being presented to her, before she would deliver the goods.

Despite the failure of Nabai to help Paulus deliver the people from poverty, he continued to spread his claims about the *pabrik* and

occasionally organized pig feasts. He died in 1979, without realizing his cargo expectations.

In 1966, a man from the village of Kemogepa in the Tigi District claimed to have received a *kunci* (key) of a *pabrik*. The spirit being sponsoring him was said to supply the Me people with tinned food, in the production of which this *pabrik* specialized. This man went on claiming this until June 1967; after that his fame dwindled. Another short-lived *pabrik* movement took place in the village of Madi, near Enarotali, in that same year.

Then another leader arose, from Gakokebo in the Tigi District. He made similar claims. He had been educated at a Teachers Training School in Merauke and – in 1966 – was my [BG] school teacher. In 1968 he went to Jayapura for further training, and got sick with (presumably cerebral) malaria. After he ran away from his dorm, some Me students had him sent back to the highlands. He got well some time later, but then began revealing his dreams and visions. A spirit being was visiting him. She had given him the key which was a small round stone. He told the people that he had some difficulty in using it to bring the goods out of the ground. This spirit being also demanded some sacrifices to be made to her. The leader organized a number of pig feasts, but she asked for more and more even though she failed to realize her promises. Later the leader blamed the village people for the failure, for they had built their sweet potato gardens around her dwelling. He is still teaching in a village school. He has not given up his ideas about the *pabrik* and knows where the goods are. According to one of his close relatives (studying at the Cenderawasih State University in 1986), he is trying to find the right method to placate the spirit being who is just waiting for the right time to deliver the Me people from their poverty and backwardness.

Early in 1983, another leader, a member of the Pigome clan and also from Okaitadi,[3] told the people that he had found a sparkling stone on the bottom of Lake Paniai, where he had been fishing. He brought the stone to a Canadian missionary working in the Paniai area and showed it to him.[4] The missionary asked the cult leader to bring the stone over to his house in Enarotali. There he said a prayer to confirm whether the stone was from God. After he had finished praying, "miraculously the stone had its two eyes wide open and was looking at both of them." This convinced them that it was God who had sent the stone to help the backward people of Irian Jaya.

The missionary took the stone with him to Canada where he was going for a short furlough *untuk disuntik*,[5] lest the spirit demand human sacrifices and fail to realize her promises made to the Me *pabrik* leaders. After his return from Canada the missionary told the cult leader not to remain in Enarotali, for the Me people would be jealous of him and he would be killed through sorcery. He left straightaway for Wamena and entered high school. But after two years he left school to assemble a "cabinet"; in June 1986 he told the people that with the help of the stone Irian Jaya would become an independent state (West Papua) by 1988. Occasionally he would visit the Paniai area. When he returned there at the end of 1986, he was involved in some evangelistic trips around Lake Paniai, visiting many local churches and ordering the people to burn their traditional religious objects. He said that "we have to clean up (*membersihkan*) this region from our sins before we inaugurate political freedom. Before we launch the Christian holy state of West Papua (*negara Kristen Papua Barat yang suci*), we have to keep ourselves away from old traditional practices." But he failed to realize his claims, because "the spirit had rejected him." At the end of 1987 he went to Nabire, a coastal town, and became a person endowed with power to heal the sick and to reveal the sorcerers suspected of killing many people in Nabire. His influence waned, however, when he decided to take another woman as his second wife.

In June 1985, a man from the village of Onago in the Tigi district claimed that he had discovered the key of the *pabrik*. He was the son of one of the richest men in the Tigi district who was believed to be sensitive to the world of the supernatural and to have obtained his wealth with the support of Manita, a *madou* (water spirit). He told the people that he had had an encounter with a white person, who charged him to bring him sacrifices of pigs and chickens, after which he would receive the key of the *pabrik* where guns and airplanes were produced. The animals were contributed by mostly young people and several feasts were held. Two fenced-in houses were built on a small hill to store the goods. But they were not delivered. In June 1986, his wife claimed to have received a revelation from a spirit who manifested itself through seven white people, two men and five women. They were given new names. The two

houses had to be relocated and improved, and another three had to be built in addition. Feasts were held to encourage the spirits to fill the houses with guns and other goods, but the houses remained empty. Another man was invited to plead with the spirit beings. However, there were too many obstacles, so that the *pabrik* which was there right under the houses could not appear. The movement floundered, although the cult leader and his wife continued to believe firmly that the promises made by the "white people" would come true.

2. *Alam*

Since 1983 until now cargoistic activities have become known in the Mapia district, to the west of the Wissel lakes. Here the ideas are known as *alam* ('nature' in Indonesian). The idea is that there is a spirit being behind these expectations who is responsible for taking care of *alam*. The first and most influential leader of this movement was told during an encounter with the spirit being to build a house in the forest and offer sacrifices there. Access to the house was strictly limited to him alone. He left his job as a public servant in Moanemani (Kamu district). Before he did so, he collected funds, raised through monthly donations, from Me policemen and others working in government offices. After that he instructed the people not to draw drinking water from rivers or creeks, for that water "is *alam ka pipi* (nature's urine). If you drink it, the spirit will not deliver the goods and help us gain our political freedom." The Indonesian army considered the activities to be related to those of the OPM (*Organisasi Papua Merdeka* "Free Papua Organization") and suppressed the movement by taking the leader and his followers into custody. Those who were not arrested but remained supportive of the program were heavily fined in November 1989; in some cases pigs from local people were demanded to be handed over. The leader of the movement was released shortly afterwards.

3. *Batu delima*

The leader of the *Batu delima* movement is a young man. A few years ago he discovered a valuable stone (*batu delima*) in a small creek near the west shore of Lake Paniai. He presented the stone to a Roman Catholic priest in Enarotali who told him to keep it. After finishing junior high school he left for Merauke to enter senior high school. There he met two Australians and showed the stone to them. They were surprised, because "they too had come to search for it." They asked him to go with them to Australia, where experts who inspected the stone said to him: "You are the 154th richest man in the world." With this assurance he came back to Irian Jaya and went straight to Jayapura in April 1989.

With two other people (one of them his mother's brother who was a university student) he made preparations to set up a legal organization called "Freeport Indonesia Yawudi Nota".[6] During a meeting in Jayapura in May 1989, he told the Me leaders present that the governments of Australia, the United States, Canada, France and Holland had seen the *batu delima* and had donated 900 billion rupiah (approximately 450 million US dollar) to the organization. After they heard this, those who were present prepared plans for the office facilities and housing projects of Freeport Yawudi Nota. A supporter working in the governor's office in Jayapura offered to sell a piece of land in Obano in the Paniai area to Freeport, but church leaders present at the meeting objected, because it had already been sold to the church by his father. This supporter, however, was able to convince the other people to accept his point of view.

In November 1989, the university student left for Paniai to make preparations for the launching of the program. On the way he told the Me people in Nabire that the funds that had already been donated would be used for exploring gold mining in the Paniai area; he also collected donations from the Me community. With this money he went to Paniai and was received with traditional dances in some of the villages. Later he organized a feast, where he explained his plans; those participating in it were asked to pay 2000 rupiah per person. In December 1989, the cult leader left for Obano and held similar propaganda meetings, saying that Freeport Yawudi Nota was about to start working so as to meet the socio-economic needs of the people and that it was going to supply the guns to drive out the Indonesians. In February 1990, the Indonesian army learned of his activities and his programs and arrested him. He was beaten up and almost died.

Aspirations among the Western Dani

Douglas Hayward (1985, 1992) has documented a consistent pattern in the history of cargoistic

beliefs and activities among the Western Dani and confirmed the concept of *nabelan-kabelan* as the basic motive underlying the flow of events. We will briefly summarize the three themes (or phases, 1985) that Hayward has identified, then report on some contemporary events.

The first one is the religious theme. The phrase *nabelan-kabelan* which literally means 'my skin – your skin' in Western Dani, reflects a concept, woven into the Dani culture, of rejuvenation or eternal life enjoyed by humans long ago but since lost. According to a widely-known myth, a snake and a bird engaged in a race (or an argument). The snake, able to shed its skin, knew the secret of immortality, but it lost to the bird (*pirikoobit*); since that time mankind is destined to die. The story reflects the attempt to explicate the mysterious reality of human death as well as expresses the longing for the return of *nabelan-kabelan*, life without death or misery.

The first white missionaries (although they were not the first whites in each and every place) arrived in Dani land in the 1950s. They built small airstrips, constructed simple houses and moved their families in. They began learning the local language and had a message to share. They also brought an inconceivably great amount of wealth in by plane. At first, the Dani adopted a wait-and-see approach, and in fact their western neighbours, the Me and Damal, initiated the chain of movements in the highlands. But soon they responded with great enthusiasm, burning traditional objects (both sacred and utilitarian), thought to be incompatible with the conditions of the new age. They embraced the teachings of the missionaries, who were obviously pleased with their great zeal, although some of them expressed concern as to whether the Dani understood the essence of the Christian faith. The Dani did, but within the framework of their own worldview. To this day the Dani believe that at that time *nabelan-kabelan* had arrived or was within reach.

In 1962 the Dutch left the territory. The Indonesian administration moved in soon after that and extended control over the highlands. In the course of time, however, the Dani became thoroughly disillusioned with the Indonesians. Many promises, usually made prior to elections, were never fulfilled. Inflation went out of control, and prices went up while wages stayed level. Development programmes introduced did not meet the Dani needs. They resented being treated as inferiors and manipulated by outsiders. When the 1977 elections were due to be held, the Dani believed that they could vote the Indonesians out of power and the Dutch back in. This, of course, did not happen, and they rose up in revolt, particularly in the eastern sector of the Western Dani territory. The uprising was quelled by the armed forces. Moreover, in some places Dani rebels turned on their own people with a vengeance. In the end the situation returned to normal, more or less. Although the concept of *nabelan-kabelan* was not apparent, and today the link is not clearly acknowledged by the Dani themselves, Hayward (correctly in our opinion) puts this concept forward as the underlying force moving the Dani along on their way to seek a satisfying way of life. According to him, the uprising reflects the political theme of Dani cargoistic aspirations.

In the late 1970s, community development projects, introduced by the Protestant mission organizations and underwritten by World Vision International, an American-based relief organization, got under way, beginning in the Mulia-Ilu area. By 1982 there were five-year projects in progress throughout Dani land, focusing on health care, agriculture, training and creating new sources of income. From the point of view of the outside agents these programs were quite successful, for the Dani embraced them with great enthusiasm; in contrast to these, the various government projects (schools, roads and bridges mainly) did not nearly fare as well. But today the Dani are not entirely happy with the end results of these development schemes which, from their perspective, have not fulfilled their real expectations. Once again, the underlying current moving the Dani to this conclusion appears to be caused by the concept of *nabelan-kabelan*, but this time operating in the economic sphere.

In July 1987, the American Ambassador to Indonesia visited Mulia to inspect some projects. A crowd of some 3000 to 4000 people was awaiting him. Most of them had been dancing the previous night, and many were dressed and decorated in traditional fashion. Their spokesmen, two church district leaders and a traditional leader, explained that as interior people they had special needs, but that they were also committed to peace and progress. They wanted more missionaries to come or return to Irian Jaya. The ambassador responded to the statements and requests with discretion. Hayward (1987), who was present at the

meeting, reported that soon after the ambassador had left rumours circulated that he would return, together with the President of Indonesia, to announce that the U.S.A. would take over the administration of the province. Moreover, word spread that 150 mission workers would be coming. Church leaders in the Swart area also emphasized the need for missionaries a year later.

In November 1987, the tribal leader mentioned above (who claims to represent the entire Western Dani tribe, although this claim was certainly not acknowledged beyond his immediate sphere of influence) sent a letter to a missionary pilot, asking him to pick him up with three other men on that same day at the strip built near his village, so they could travel to America to discuss the development of the highlands with two missionaries who had previously lived among the Dani people.

In June 1988, he sent a letter to five missionaries. He requested that all *pabrik* found in Australia and America be sent to the people living in the interior of Irian Jaya. At the head of the letter he had listed the kinds of factories he felt were needed – thirteen altogether. The goods included rice, sugar, beef and canned fish, cooking oil, plates and spoons, batik cloth, clothing, watches, zinc/aluminum (roofing sheets), nails, cement, kerosene and finally money.

Early in 1989, some Western Dani in the Mulia-Ilu area were reported to have had dreams during which they received money; some of them had also gone off into the forest. Our informant, a Dani himself, commented: "*Kami cari sesuatu*" ("We are searching for something").

A different stream of events developed in the Ilaga valley, which is inhabited by members of two tribes, the Western Dani and the Damal. In the course of 1988, a healing movement broke out under the leadership of a Damal evangelist (Larson 1989). In the early 1980s he had been deeply influenced by a charismatic Western Dani evangelist while attending a Bible school. He was not able to finish his training, left the school in 1985 and went back to Bela across the range, south of Ilaga. Inspired by his mentor's life and ministry, he built himself a shelter, called a house of prayer, in the forest to pray and fast. There he had a vision of angels hovering over waterfalls. He heard the Holy Spirit say to him (in the form of a song) to put on the "armour of God" (a reference to Ephesians 6), then go and preach. He went and travelled from valley to valley among the Damal, preaching and healing with phenomenal results.

In October 1988 he crossed the range again and arrived in the Ilaga valley. A sort of wind storm, blowing off roofs and destroying gardens and trees, had preceded him. People first thought that the storm was caused by certain evil forest spirits, but then said that it was evidence of God's power emanating before the evangelist's arrival, to authenticate his messages and acts of healing. Many were healed of serious illnesses, delivered of lesser troubles, and some who had "died" were raised up. Meetings were held in the eastern half of the main valley and downstream on both sides of the Ila river, among both Damal and Western Dani. The usual pattern was first to have prayer sessions in the forest for one or two days. This was followed by several days of teaching and confessing sin. Some people destroyed magical objects belonging to them. The meetings concluded with acts of healing, many of which were accompanied by the appearance of an animal, such as a bird, snake or frog, said to be coming out of the sick person and considered as evidence of healing. The local church responded very positively, and so did the local government, apparently after one of its workers had been healed. At the time that Larson wrote his report (July 1989), the movement was still in progress.

Cargo talk at Soba

Early in December 1988, Ms. Sue Trenier, a missionary nurse at Soba, received a radiogram from the deputy chairman of the Assembly of Representatives (DPRD) of the Jayawijaya Regency in Wamena (although it later became clear that he had acted privately). The message was addressed to another missionary who had worked in Soba before but had since moved to the coast for a new assignment. He was requested to provide information at the earliest opportunity as to whether gold was found in the Soba area. Ms. Trenier duly passed this message on to her colleague at the coast. The gist of the radio message, however, was overheard by a few people who knew Indonesian, and so word spread around.

Over the next few weeks Ms. Trenier learned little by little of what was going on. Apparently the Soba people "knew" that her colleague knew the secret and had the key to the gold. Why else

would he have been asked by the government to provide the information? A *pabrik* would be found in Soba. The occurrence of a strong mountain wind (*siyelu*) twice in the previous year was an indication that the *pabrik* was about to appear. The people had accepted the Gospel all along, all the church buildings had been completed; so now the time had come for the secret to be revealed. Some claimed already to have found money and medicines at the source of a nearby river.

Word spread quickly to other valleys as well, and excitement rose. In the meantime, the missionary in question arrived in Soba to spend his Christmas vacation there. He was immediately met by many Hupla people, including church and tribal leaders, and was questioned about what he was supposed to know. He denied having the key or knowing whether there was gold or not, but he was not believed.

On December 30, a new church building was dedicated in a village in the Kwik valley. Hundreds of people arrived from far and wide. The atmosphere was filled with an acute sense of expectancy, that now the secret would be revealed. The visiting missionary preached a sermon, but he did not reveal anything. People left very disappointed, and "many tears were shed." A few days after this he met with a large number of people again and long discussions ensued. He was almost prevented from leaving Soba.

By then it had become apparent that several *kepala suku* (tribal leaders) had taken charge of the movement. Some of them came to Ms. Trenier to talk to her. They recounted some *amulik wene* 'origin stories' handed down by the ancestors. The essence was that in the past the ancestors of both the whites and the blacks lived together in harmony and peace; there was abundance of everything and it was a golden time. But somehow or other this changed for the worse because of wrongs committed. So when the time came for the people to appear out of the hole near Seinma in the lower Grand Valley, the whites and the blacks separated; the whites came out first and disappeared, or they were pushed back to stay underground. But now at last they had returned to restore the golden age. They were well received by the Hupla people. The time, however, had come for them to reveal the secret of wealth that was about to arrive, wealth which had belonged to the Hupla all along. Another factor mentioned was that tourists had come to the valley time and again to look for gold; why else were they there?

Ms. Trenier had the impression that the Hupla had expected, and were expecting, the missionaries to share the secret, but that they felt being let down at this critical juncture. She herself was not suspected of hiding the key, for she had only passed on the message (Trenier 1989).

The excitement died down just as quickly as it had started, but the people continued to talk about the affair. Except for the local church district leader (and a few others) who was promptly blamed for the fact that nothing had happened, almost all people, including church members and their leaders, appeared to go along with the flow of events. Their expectations did not seem, in their perspective, to be in conflict with the Gospel.

In March 1989 Godschalk went to Soba for a brief visit. There were no obvious cult activities, but the expectations had not died down. The situation was overshadowed by (a threat of) imminent warfare, triggered by a connubial conflict between the people of Lilibal near Soba and those from Pasema (and the Wet valley), representing the Kaio and Pasema confederacies respectively. This local conflict, however, was "tacked on" to a much more intense state of war between two traditional enemies, the Husage and the Siep confederacies of the lower Grand Valley.

In the early morning of August 1, 1989, the Soba area was struck by a devastating earthquake. It caused extensive damage to villages and gardens, and resulted in the death of about seventy people in the Woso valley (and more elsewhere) and the immediate dislocation of the population of the entire valley. During the first two days the survivors were evacuated to safer ground by MAF helicopters. These efforts were soon followed by government rescue and assistance operations.

It was not long before the government decided that the Hupla people were to be relocated to a presumably uninhabited area across the range, far to the north and at a much lower altitude. The majority of them refused to leave at all. They simply wanted to make a living in their homeland with the help of relatives and friends. A small group, however, volunteered to go and assist with opening up the site selected for them, being attracted by the promises, made by government officials, of good life, health and wealth they would soon enjoy. The same *kepala*

suku who earlier in the year had actively promoted the millenarian ideas in Soba now strongly urged the government to proceed with this development project. Their spokesman apparently exhibited the features of a prophet; for example, he dyed his hair black (trying to induce youthful vitality) and began to marry off young people (an act necessary to ensure the arrival of the new age). In some villages gardens and valuable trees were destroyed (Wilson 1990).

Given the prevailing cargoistic expectations, the people heard a message entirely different from what the government representatives intended to convey. On the other hand, without apparently being aware of the implications of their promises, these officials succeeded in absorbing and channeling such expectations in their attempt to realize the objectives of the government. The result: a form of cooperation which, while cordial, was nonetheless marked by total mutual misunderstanding.

The expectations are not being realized. Many people became sick in the new location, mostly from a combination of malaria and hookworm. Several of them died, relatively more at this time than as a result of the earthquake itself. This heavy toll on life and health has been rationalized by some of the cult leaders as a price one should be prepared to pay. Wealth has failed to arrive; middlemen are now being suspected of withholding it. Feelings of disappointment with and distrust of the government are surfacing. The question is raised why the promises made by its representatives do not become reality.

The West Melanesia movement

On December 14, 1988, a group of about 60 people, most of them from the small island of Ambai off Yapen Island in the Cenderawasih (Geelvink) Bay, assembled at the Mandala sports stadium in Jayapura. They were led by Dr. Thomas Wainggai. At the meeting a manifesto was read out proclaiming the independence of the state of West Melanesia. This was followed by the raising of the flag of the new nation. The ceremony came to an abrupt end when the authorities moved in and took about 35 participants into custody, including Dr. Wainggai and his (Japanese-born) wife Teruko. They were tried on charges of subversion and related crimes. Dr. Wainggai was sentenced to twenty years imprisonment; his wife received a sentence of six years, allegedly for her part in making the flag; and the others received terms ranging from two to eight years.

Dr. Wainggai was born in Ambai on December 5, 1937. He had been a civil servant since July 1959, working first under the Dutch government, then under the Indonesian; his most recent post was on the staff of the Planning Board of the Province of Irian Jaya. He earned a degree in Law at the Okayama State University in Japan in 1969, and a degree in Public Administration at the New York State University in 1981, and received his Ph.D. degree in Public Administration from Florida State University in December 1985.

Dr. Wainggai was highly critical of the development programmes of the Indonesian government in Irian Jaya. This is reflected in his comments on the assistance by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and the Dutch government, prepared at the request of the UNDP consultant and representative for Irian Jaya in 1986. Dr. Wainggai expected his report to be used by the present government as a meaningful guide to design a better development programme. He was convinced that the development in the area of public administration, such as organization, law, administration, politics, justice, finance, security and defense has shown many good results although it is still far away from what is desired. But in the societal field, such as education, culture, social welfare, religion, health, manpower or human resources, the development programmes have brought about very few changes. He observed that, in respect to economic development, the government has made some progress, particularly in the areas of agriculture, fishery, forestry, gardening, animal husbandry, commerce and energy, but the majority of the indigenous population still does not have a permanent income, as it is the case elsewhere outside Irian Jaya. The indigenous people of Irian Jaya still maintain their traditional systems of earning a living by utilizing traditional methods and tools handed down by their forefathers. Physical development, such as housing units, resettlements, utilities (drinking water, electricity and gas) and roads, has been improved from time to time, but the output is far below the desirable level. To give one illustration, there is no highway from coast to coast or connecting one city with another.

After exposing these developmental problems Dr. Wainggai raised two critical questions. First,

how much longer should the indigenous people of Irian Jaya whose province is so rich in natural resources (i.e. petroleum, copper, nickel, timber, shrimp, crocodile skins, cocoa, coconut oil, etc.) have to undergo this traumatic tragedy of underdevelopment? Second, who should plan and develop this province with its indigenous people? By raising these questions Dr. Wainggai expected that the government of Irian Jaya would wake up and introduce more "local people's oriented" development programmes. But his cry for the struggle of the local people went unnoticed. When he saw that the socio-economic gap between the indigenous people of Irian Jaya and the outsiders widened more and more, he and others concluded that the only solution would be political independence, which was expressed by raising the flag of West Melanesia on December 14, 1988.

The only way to help raise the standard of living of the local people was to be free from Indonesian political domination. To achieve this goal, Dr. Wainggai and several other Irianese formed the Committee for the Independence of West Melanesia (*Panitia Kemerdekaan Melanesia Barat*), of which he became the chairman; most of its members were pastors of Pentecostal churches in and around Jayapura and all of them were from Ambai, the home village of Dr. Wainggai. The main objective of the committee was to prepare for the independence of the new state by designing a flag, setting a date for the proclamation of independence, and forming a prayer fellowship.

One characteristic feature of this movement was the emphasis on prayer and fasting, and on relying on God for strength and courage to face the army. Many hours were given to sharing, praising God and confessing one's sins to Him.

It was during one of these sessions that a lady living in Jayapura had a vision, in which she was told that the proper date for the proclamation of the independence of West Melanesia should be December 14, because "according to the Holy Bible it was on the 14th of the month of Adar that the Lord God delivered the Jews as a nation from the calamity brought upon them by Ham" (see Esther, chapters 7-9). This vision confirmed the conviction of Dr. Wainggai that December 14, 1988 was to be the day that the government of Indonesia would transfer the administration of Irian Jaya to the government of West Melanesia. According to him one of the points of the agreement between the Republic of Indonesia and the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1962 was that "after 25 years of Indonesian rule representatives of the United Nations would visit Irian Jaya and evaluate what the Republic had achieved with its development programmes during these 25 years." These officials had visited Irian Jaya, according to Dr. Wainggai, and had evaluated the development programmes and concluded that "the government of Indonesia had made no improvements in terms of the socio-economic welfare of the local people." Due to this failure, these officials were willing to arrange the transfer of the seat of government to the West Melanesian leaders, and this was to be completed on the day referred to, December 14. Dr. Wainggai also consulted more than 350 Christians, among them three well-known American Pentecostal church leaders, whether the political independence of West Melanesia was against God's will or not. All of them agreed that it was God's will that Irian Jaya should be separated from Indonesia.

Another objective of the *Panitia* was to design the West Melanesian flag. For several reasons, it had to differ from the one of the OPM. First, the OPM flag was made many years ago and, therefore, it did not necessarily reflect the current socio-cultural and political sentiments or represent the struggle for freedom by the Irianese today. Second, the OPM did not have its roots in the Bible or in Christianity, and its flag was made by non-Christians. The colours of the flag of West Melanesia were received through a vision and related to some Bible verses. One of the participants in the prayer fellowship had a vision in which an angel came and told him to read verses from Revelation 6 (which refers to horses coloured white, red and black). He shared this with the other participants when the *Panitia* met again. The flag had three horizontal bars on the right hand side and a field covering the left third. The upper horizontal bar was coloured black, symbolizing blackness (of the Melanesians); the middle bar was white, which represents holiness or purity; the lower bar was red, which stands for bravery. The field was green-coloured, symbolizing fertility; there were also fourteen stars in this field, to represent the districts into which West Melanesia was going to be divided.

Finally, the question is why Dr. Wainggai initiated and led this movement. He knew that with this program he would be sent to jail, or he could even be shot to death. He had, however, a firm conviction that the Lord God of the Bible would be on his side. He would guide him and,

as he cited again and again in a letter written from jail, "*Tuhan adalah Gembala kami*" ("The Lord is our Shepherd"; Psalm 23:1), a Bible verse upon which Dr. Wainggai stood throughout his trial. He is very much a Melanesian. If religion has any role to play in the life of a Melanesian (or for that matter an Irianese), it should be now, not in the future in the world to come.

A few observations

We realize that several of the movements described above are still going on in some form or another and are, therefore, "open-ended". This holds all the more for what we may term the ambience of cargoism, which like a heavy fog is enveloping the human landscape of Irian Jaya, yet is constantly moving and "in flux". The fluid situation in Irian Jaya, coupled with the fact that most of the events we refer to have not (yet) been reported in the anthropological literature, also calls for theoretical "restraint". We are at this point more concerned about presenting as fairly as possible a reasonably representative overview of what is going on in Irian Jaya today. With these limitations in mind, we offer a few preliminary observations.

It appears that the (chains of) movements have had long and consistent histories, marked by recurring waves of cargoistic expectations and activities. This has been well documented by Hayward (1985, 1992) in the case of the Western Dani. Among the Me, too, we perceive this trend. In the 1950s *Wegee-bage* movements held sway in the Paniai area, but they seem to have ebbed away. A similar movement, the *Utoumana* movement (*Aliran Utoumana*), broke out in the Kamu valley in 1963 and it spread to other areas in the following years. Almost at the same time the *Pabrik* movements began to occupy the minds of many Me. From the point of view of the local missionaries, the response of the Hupla people to a seemingly innocuous radio message appeared out of the blue. From the perspective of the Hupla themselves it was the culmination of a process that had started long before, when the first white people arrived on the scene, or even prior to that.

What are the factors that trigger such responses? The range of such causes is wide. It may be rumours swirling through the villages that healings and exorcisms of evil powers have taken place across the range. It may be a radiogram about gold, coupled with talks that a *pabrik* has already appeared in another valley. The dominant triggering point in our opinion, however, appears to be a widespread sense of unhappiness and dissatisfaction experienced day in day out in the social, economic and political areas of life. A recurring theme in the interviews and reports is that many development programmes have not brought the anticipated benefits, because services and materials lack quality or simply because of persistent corruption that drains away allocated funds. Often projects are introduced, perhaps enforced, which do not seem to be appropriate to the local circumstances or meet the people's needs. There is also the fact that their land and its resources are encroached upon or simply taken away, or conversely, that they are "persuaded" to leave the land of their ancestors for reasons that make no sense to them. And beyond this, many people, in the interior as well as along the coast, are grieved and hurt, because they are not respected by the "other" Indonesians as mature adults – real people – but treated as "backward" people[7] not worthy to be (effectively) consulted on matters that have a vital impact on their lives and future. Almost without exception the Indonesian administration is being blamed for this state of affairs. The conclusion people reach is that the Indonesians should be tolerated as long as governments from other countries (e.g. the U.S.A., the Netherlands, Australia or Papua New Guinea) are invited to assist them in the development efforts, or they should leave Irian Jaya. The banner of independence as the only viable alternative is sometimes raised, symbolically and – with tragic results – literally.

This leads us to a consideration of the basic motives that underlie the movements and cause them to break out, keep going, and even re-emerge in yet other forms. It is our thesis that such motives are to be found within the religious dimension of traditional or "acculturating" culture, and are reflected in motifs threading through mythical stories. The classic example from Irian Jaya is that of *koreri* as exemplified through the myth of Manarmakeri/Manseren Manggundi in Biak-Numfor culture (Kamma 1972). A similar concept is found among the Me in the Western Highlands, where it is called *ayii*. Among their eastern neighbours, the Damal or Amungme, the word that represents and embodies the longings and expectations is that of *hai*; among the Moni it is the similar term *hazi*. The context in which it is illuminated is

similar to the one encountered among the Western Dani, the Grand Valley Dani and the Yali: a race between a bird and a skin-changing snake (Elienberger 1983); the phrase used in these latter societies is *nabelan-kabelan* or a cognate term. The Hupla at Soba confided to the resident – female – missionary, who had gained their trust, some of their origin stories, perhaps for the first time, to "explain" what they hoped would take place.

What are we to think of the West Melanesia movement? On the surface it appears to resemble a political movement, with aims not unlike those of the OPM: independence and freedom. The fact that Dr. Wainggai was tried on charges of subversion indicates that the Indonesian authorities take a similar line and consider him and his followers a threat to the security of the state. Nevertheless, we venture the claim that the West Melanesia movement is in essence a religious movement, because it is driven by a religious dynamic, which also provides its blueprint. The choice of the date on which the movement came out into the open, and its rich religious symbolism and significance, namely to thereby appropriate and re-present the meaning and purpose of the Purim feast, is a clear indication of this. It is not surprising, therefore, that another protest was organized a year later, on the very same date. We do not know, though, whether the participants in the West Melanesia movement, most of whom are from Ambai, root their movement in themes found in traditional Ambai worldview.

Thus, we recognize in all these movements the presence of a deep-seated imperative, the knowledge and certainty that a time of wonder is at hand, when people will be able to regain what has been lost in the past, a quality of life that incorporates health, longevity, wealth, happiness, self-esteem, or freedom, in short all the things they miss today. In order to bridge this gap between the ideal and reality, many Irianese turn to religious movements based on traditional expectations. This is, with few exceptions, not thought to be in conflict with the Gospel message or with Christian articles of faith. Hence, a "jump" from one worldview to another does not seem to be required.

These few observations may warrant the conclusion that cargoism, the Melanesian version of the universal quest for salvation (cf. Strelan 1977), is very much in evidence in Irian Jaya today. More could be said about the (ritualized) means used to attempt to realize the expectations; about the leadership of the movements; about the attitude towards non-participants and the outsiders; and about the responses to the movements, their leaders and followers. We have focused primarily on the causal factors. What is going on today is not likely to disappear overnight, on the contrary. Neither can it be "wished away" or ignored. It is deplorable that within certain sectors of the Indonesian administration there seems to be a lack of knowledge and understanding of such movements and their basic motives in Irian Jaya. This may explain why frequently the attempts to deal with them are misdirected and create yet more feelings of frustration and disappointment. This in turn causes further friction, leading to the opposite of what is intended, not the cessation but the continuation of cargoism as a coherent and fundamental perception of life and the proliferation of movements that result from this.

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Notes

1. Our findings are based on our own observations, or on interviews with, and reports by persons who were either participants in, or close observers of, the various events. Our data were for the most part, gathered in the late 1980s.

The Me people (formerly known as Kapauku or Ekagi) live in the Western Highlands, around three lakes (Paniai, Tage and Tigi) previously known as the Wissel Lakes, and also further to the west. Population numbers reported vary between 70.000 and over 100.000. The principal ethnographer of Me culture is Pospisil who did fieldwork in the Kamu valley.

The Western Dani number approximately 150.000 people and constitute the largest society indigenous to Irian Jaya. They inhabit the Central and Western Highlands, from the northern tip of the Grand Valley to the Ilaga valley, situated halfway between Wamena and Enarotali at Lake Paniai. There are several ethnographies available of the various groups of Dani; fieldwork was (or is) carried out by O'Brien in the Konda valley near Karubaga, by Ploeg among the Wanggulam close to Bokondini, by Hayward in the Mulia-Ilu area of the Nogolo river system, and by Larson in the upper Ilaga valley. There is no ethnographic account of the North Balim Dani (Tiom, Pit River, Makki or Danime).

The Hupla people are a small society of about 1500 people, living in the Kaio and Woso (where Koba is located) valleys and on the west flank of the Kwik valley, just north of the Balim gorge. Their language is closely related to Lower Grand Valley Dani (Hetigima). They form the last confederacy on the (south) east side of the Balim river of the series of confederacies found in the Grand Valley.

Most of the participants in the West Melanesia movement are originally from Ambai, a small island off Yapen island in the Cenderawasih (Geelvink) Bay.

Nabai means 'my older sister' or 'my grandmother' in the Me language. The word also refers to any older woman and is then used to show respect. But here it is used as a proper name for the spirit being who promises to deliver western goods to Paulus.

Paulus Tebay came from the same village. In 1987, the two clans were at odds with each other; the relatives of Paulus accused this person of stealing their *kunci pabrik* (key to unlock the *pabrik*).

This missionary in turn told us that this person had indeed shown him a stone once, but that he had handed it back to him. After that the elit leader told the people that this missionary had stolen the real stone and given him another one.

5. *Suntik* (*menyuntik*) means 'to inject, inoculate' in Indonesian. The idea is that the whites possess goods, because they know how to deal with the spirit being; they know the right method, so she does not demand human sacrifices but keeps on delivering the goods to them.

6. "Freeport Indonesia" refers to the company operating the copper mine at Tembagapura in Damal territory and is used here with the intention of preventing the loss of socio-economic benefits experienced by the Damal. The leaders of this movement do not want the Me to suffer the same fate as the Damal who were driven out by the whites and the Indonesians, whose land was taken over and whose mineral resources were taken away. *Yawudi* means 'to distribute (food or something else) free of charge' in Me. *Nota* means 'sweet potato', but refers here to food and wealth. Thus the name of the organization reflects the nature of its mission, i.e. to distribute wealth that will be acquired through the use of the *batu delima* free of charge. Nobody has to buy; everyone is entitled to have access to wealth.

7. The terminology one comes across reflects this attitude; "code" words commonly used are *suku* (*bangsa*) *terasing* or *terkebelakang* 'isolated/unacculturated or backward tribal groups'.

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Appendix D

Deregulation of Population Control in the Sela Valley Area

1. Introduction

When Van Baal (1989:214-215; 1984:25; cf. 1939) was stationed at Merauke in former Dutch New Guinea during the 1930s, he noted a disequilibrium of the sex ratio, starting with the younger age groups, among the Marind-anim. There were many more boys than girls, and this lack of females inevitably led to a decline of the population. He also noted the clear coincidence of this masculinization process and the occurrence of cultural and social disorientation, especially where this had been the result of acculturative interaction with representatives of Western culture. This phenomenon, of course, had been observed throughout Melanesia before (cf. especially Rivers 1922, and also Pitt-Rivers 1927). The common explanation was (and is) that in the wake of this onslaught on the traditional culture and belief systems, people one way or the other ended up in a cultural void, became demoralized and lost interest in life, which resulted in sometimes massive depopulation. Van Baal suggests the possibility that this state of psychological depression somehow or other results in more boys than girls being born, and this in turn leads to a population decline sooner or later. He considers the explanation of female infanticide as a causal factor to be improbable. In other words, although the end result is the same, the sex ratio is already out of balance **at the time of birth**.

Oosterwal (1959) came across a similar situation among tribal people living in the Upper Tor valley in the hinterland of Sarmi situated on the north coast of Irian Jaya. He found a great shortage of women and, therefore, a large number of bachelors. From genealogies he concluded that this was a fairly recent phenomenon that had evolved over the last 20 years. During that time both the birthrate had dropped and more boys than girls were born, resulting in the masculinization of the population. His informants complained to him: "Our women no longer give birth to girls, only to a few boys" (1959:831). Once again it appears that the sex ratio was already distorted at the time of birth. Oosterwal does not indicate whether in fact the population was decreasing as well; the tribal groups he studied numbered a little over 400 to begin with.

Schiefenhövel (1984; 1986; 1988:67-85; 1989) discusses in great detail the situation he encountered among people living in six hamlets in the Eipomek valley in the Eastern Highlands of Irian Jaya, who numbered 440 in August 1975. There he recorded – and observed – the practice of preferential female infanticide (through abandonment rather than outright killing), and its effect on the size of the population. He argues that this form of 'delayed abortion' is one of the cultural 'mechanisms' of which the Eipo people avail themselves, through which not only the sex ratio is manipulated, but also population size and growth are 'regulated'. This situation differs, therefore, from those encountered by Van Baal and Oosterwal. While the sex ratio of those born is fairly balanced, it is then influenced by human intervention, in most cases by the mothers. As a result, the population growth is affected and will often be negative or zero (Schiefenhövel assumes the latter for the Eipo).

The one factor common to all three case studies is that there are many more males than females and that the sex ratio, therefore, is quite out of balance. Given this fact, the question arises what the underlying causes are of this phenomenon and whether those referred to above ('mental depression' and 'female infanticide' in shorthand) are adequate to explain what is being observed. Furthermore, what alternative perspectives, if any, may the information that I gathered in the Sela Valley area add to the subject matter? In this paper I will present and discuss some of the data collected in the course of a census taken in a society which, like the Eipo, forms part of the Mek culture group. The original census was taken in 1984. In 1988/89 the same data were reviewed, where necessary corrected, and updated. I noted some significant changes.

2. Background

The people amongst whom I worked live in the Eastern Highlands of Irian Jaya in an area between approximately 139.44° and 139.50° eastern longitude, and between 04.29° and 04.40° southern latitude. They inhabit the Upper Brazza (locally called the Thay) river catchment area, including the Hao river valley, and the Weip river valley immediately to the east which descends directly into the southern lowlands. There they live in small villages or hamlets located on ridges or exposed mountain slopes at altitudes ranging from 1300 to 2100 m, not far from their garden areas where mostly sweet potatoes are grown. The language spoken in most of this area belongs to the Western group of the Mek family of languages; the people in Bidabuk (East Weip valley), however, speak a language related to the Una language which is a member of the Eastern group. A dialect boundary runs between the Hao and West Weip valleys on the one hand, and the area around Sela Valley mission station on the other (West and East Sela); another boundary marks off the Dagi and Erok valleys to the west.

Apart from a brief contact between members of a Dutch military exploration team and people living in the Yay river valley just east of Bidabuk, and from survey flights in 1937 and 1945 (during the latter trimetrogon aerial photographs were taken of the terrain which are now significant for historical and cultural reasons), the first outsiders entering the Sela Valley area were missionaries from the RBMU (Regions Beyond Missionary Union). They opened Korupun station in the Erok valley in 1963 and Sela Valley station in 1980. I lived at Sela Valley from its opening in May 1980 until May 1985, and made periodic visits from September 1987 until July 1989.

Before the census data are presented and discussed, a few comments on the area and its division into three sub-areas as well as on the villages are in order. The area of study coincides with that under responsibility of the mission station at Sela Valley at that time. For that reason Bidabuk is included, but Debula, located on a hill southwest of Sinayom, is not. The sub-area of West Sela covers territory (north)west of the Thay river; that of East Sela a small valley across from the West Sela to the southeast, and it includes a village in the Upper Hao valley; the Southeast sub-area comprises villages in the Lower Hao and Weip valleys.

In general, a village is made up of one or more wards, with small (garden) hamlets or individual huts found nearby.

Kwarangdua is the village nearest to the mission station and the airstrip. Mùnamna is a composite village. As a result of heavy fighting with the people of Orisin in the late 1970s, people from Kwalboron and Sùlda fled to Mùnamna; by 1984 some refugees had returned to Kwalboron and by 1987 Sùlda had been rebuilt; I have on record who moved back, but have not split the data. Mekdou used to be situated some distance from Surumdamak, but already before 1984 it had been relocated next to it, it seems at the urging of the evangelist from Korupun. Eyupmìnak is located on the same ridge; a garden village across the Oli river became permanently inhabited several years ago and this village of Mundon has since outgrown its mother village; it is here that the most influential leader in the Sela, Wanyasirik Sùl, is living with his three wives and many children.

Megum was located on a sharp ridge overlooking the Thay river, and it is clearly visible on the aerial photographs taken in 1945. In 1987, however, following a series of 'unexplainable' deaths, all the remaining inhabitants without exception moved to a site half a kilometre away, called Weriduahak; the only structure left standing was a dilapidated church building where services continued to be held. Bangkwola, in spite of being near to Megum and nearer to

Weridua, is a distinct community. At the upper end of the valley, near the forest, is the village of Uklin; a small garden hamlet, Diplam, is located four hours away, along the trail leading to the Ey valley and near the Phu valley, formerly a source for stone from which stone adzes were made. Idyama is an offshoot of Uklin, located on a small plateau near Kyoas. Haromon (or Atodomon) is situated in the Upper Hao valley; from there a trail leads to the Saynme valley (Bommela). For several reasons I include Haromon within the East Sela sub-area.

Sinayom comprises a number of small settlements, all of which are found in the Lower Hao valley. In the West Weip substantial relocation efforts resulted from expectations triggered by the construction of an airstrip near Kwelamdua; most of the people on that side of the valley have moved closely around the strip site. In some of my tables I have lumped the data together, so as to make them manageable. The Bidabuk people live far and wide on the east side of the valley and even in some locations in the Yay valley.

3. The 1984 census

The number of people living in each village in the Sela Valley area as per August/September 1984 is tabulated in table 1 [see Table 1 in Appendix A]; the sex ratios (SR) are listed in table 2 [see Table 2 in Appendix A]. The population is specified by sex and age. Schiefenhövel differentiates six age groups, and age was partly determined on the basis of dental development. I could not be as specific. However, my taxonomy reflects local notions of youth, adulthood and old age.

The SR for the entire population in the area is 111.1, which is perhaps slightly above average.

When the young age group is singled out, however, the SR is much higher, i.e. 135.0. In the East Sela it is at a 'normal' level of 110.2, ranging from 92 to 150. In the West Sela the SR is, with 129.1, much higher, while also the range is wider, and more weighted towards the upper scale.

In the Southeast, however, one encounters an overall SR of 149.5, and an astonishing 216.1 for the young age group, with Bidabuk peaking at 300. Two thirds of the almost 200 children in the Lower Hao and Weip valleys are boys. This trend is continued in the generation of the younger adults. This is also reflected in the number of adult (including old) single males in proportion to the number of adult males; similar to what Oosterwal found in the Upper Tor territory, it reaches almost 50 percent in the Southeast area. And this is the impression I encountered again and again, when I trekked through the area and visited or overnighted in the villages. Scores of young boys and young bachelors, gathering and sleeping in overcrowded men's huts.

This means that there is either a surplus of males or a shortage of females. Now the ratio of the young age group to the total population, which for the entire Sela Valley area is almost 40 percent (a normal percentage in a pre-contact situation according to Van Baal), is more than three percent lower in the Southeast; and this may indicate a shortage of girls. The inference then is that they have been 'removed' by means of preferential infanticide.

Infanticide, predominantly of girls, has been recorded by me in the Sela Valley area. Although it is usually the mother who makes the decision, at least once I noted that the father insisted that his wife abandon the newborn child. In spite of the fact that infanticide is discouraged (and condemned) by the Christian expatriate missionaries and local evangelists, it takes place occasionally within the Christian ambience and has sometimes been carried out by baptized Christians. In other words, the custom is still followed today.

4. The 1988/89 update of the census

During my visits to Sela Valley in the period between 1987 and 1989, the 1984 census data were rechecked, adjusted and updated. These new figures are also tabulated in table 1 [see Table 1 in Appendix A]; the cutoff dates are November 1988 for the West and East Sela, and June 1989 for the Southeast. Table 2 [see Table 2 in Appendix A] lists the sex ratios. In tables 3 and 4 [see below] the changes of population and sex ratio are given in percentage points; table 3 covers the entire population, table 4 concerns the young age group.

What are the more significant changes? Given the fact that the SR in the Southeast (at least) is quite out of balance, we may reasonably assume

that this is the result of female infanticide, and conclude that the population is either decreasing or experiencing zero growth. Also, when the population is increasing, the SR will normally be more balanced, which in our case study means a lower SR in each of the areas. Is this what happened?

Over an averaged period of 4 years and 4 months the overall population grew by just under 10 percent, or over 2.2 percent annually. The increase in the East Sela was the lowest, 5.2 percent; in the West Sela it was 10.3 percent, but in the Southeast a very high 15.7 percent, with Bidabuk having the highest percentage (19.5) increase of the villages in the entire area.

Looking at the SR, that of the population in the entire area dropped slightly, to 110.8. Similarly, small decreases were found in the West Sela (−1.0) and East Sela (−1.3). In the Southeast, however, the SR increased from an already high 149.5 to 150.2, contrary to the hypothesis stated above. The increase occurred in both Bidabuk and Sinayom.

The increase is solely due to the net increase of the young age group. This group grew by 27.4 percent in the region, increasing the ratio between the young and the entire population to over 46 percent. In the Southeast the increase was 43.4 percent, and the proportion of the young to all (below average in 1984) pulled up to the level of the entire area.

The SR throughout the area dropped slightly, to 134.2 from 135. In the West Sela it moved down significantly, due to the fact that many more girls than boys were born in Kwarangdua. In the East Sela it moved up slightly, to 111.8. In the Southeast, once more, the SR moved up from 216.1 to 219.3, contrary to any prediction.

I noted a high number of 'new' marital unions in the Southeast; and indeed the ratio of bachelors to adult males had dropped by 15 percent. This was not unexpected, for in 1984 I had been told that quite a few young men had already been 'promised' to their future spouses. In spite of this, of the 101 children born in the Southeast between 1984 and 1989, about 20 percent were born to those new couples (and some of the mothers already had children from previous unions, dissolved through death or divorce). Another 20 percent were 'first' children of couples who were (just) married by 1984; the remainder became (younger) siblings. Thus existing families expanded, quite a few families were established, and in all of them a lot more boys than girls were born (see table 5; the SR is 159).

In other words, within a population that is rapidly increasing in number, the masculinization is increasing as well. I cannot explain this phenomenon. While female infanticide may have been a significant factor in the past, I doubt very much that it has been so in the last few years, when the influence of the Christian missionary efforts steadily expanded.

It is also unlikely that the 'mental depression' factor has been significant. Among the Nalum people, one of the Mountain Ok groups living east of the Mek societies, a mother longs for her son to live close to her when he is grown up, while her daughter hopefully marries faraway to another valley (Hylkema 1974:202-203). I have never heard such sentiments in the Sela Valley area. Whereas men tend to stay in their natal village after marrying (the residence of 40 percent of the marital units is local, of another 40 percent it is virilocal), the women, if they move away, usually live in villages in the same valley, not far from their own relatives. Today it is not so much women who move away, but rather boys and young men many of whom have taken the initiative, much more so than in the other areas, and left the Weip valley, at least for a number of years, to attend elementary school, most of them in Bommela. Despite this determination to 'emigrate' and advance, there are none the less many, mostly young, bachelors around unable to find mates (in spite of a high number of 'roll-overs'), and many young boys growing up.

Thus, the sex ratio may be rising even among an expanding population. It remains to be seen whether this phenomenon encountered in the Lower Hao valley and above all in the Weip valley is a temporary deviation of the normal pattern found elsewhere in the Sela Valley area as well as in the Eipomek valley.

5. The increase in the birth rate

Another 'acculturative' phenomenon appears to be deve loping in the Sela Valley area, one that may have an even greater impact on the population growth. In table 5 the number of births during this period is tabulated, a total of 377 children. Fifteen of them died in the same

period, together with 24 other children; these 39 children represent over one third of the total number of deaths. The interval between the original census and its update coincides more or less with the average period that the children's births are spaced, and I recorded, therefore, one birth per mother in approximately 5 out of 6 cases. The remainder, however, are interesting. Twelve times I recorded a woman having had two children during this period, spaced at least three years apart; this could be expected. Twice twins were born, of which one pair died soon after birth. Two women had three children; one three girls, the other first a girl, then two boys. Finally, fourteen times a woman gave birth to a child within three years after the birth of her last child. The closest interval I noted is 19 months.

This indicates a departure from what is commonly observed in the highlands, that births of surviving children are spaced at least three to four years. The reply given to our question why this is so is intriguing. The local people have noticed that the Dani families (the men are mostly evangelists, but also medical workers) usually live together as nuclear families, rather than follow the traditional pattern, with which the Dani are, of course, familiar. Since they are all Christians, it seems that the Sela people have taken notice of this and, particularly when they become Christians themselves and are chosen for some kind of ministry (e.g. that of elder or teacher), tend to imitate this new pattern of behavior. But they do not have what the Dani couples have: access to anti-conception drugs as a means to prevent pregnancy and, therefore, regulate the reproductive process. The result appears to be a higher frequency in pregnancies and births. It remains to be seen whether this alternative way of life will affect only the (new) Christians or a certain segment of them, or will be adopted by the population in the Sela Valley area in general. The implications, though, will be far-reaching.

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Table 3 Population changes in the Sela Valley area from 1984 to 1988/89

	population			sex ratio		
	1984	1988/89	+/- %	1984	1988/89	+/-
1. Kwarangdua	247	291	+17.8	129	109	-20
2. Phoy	89	95	+ 6.7	122	116	- 6
3. Mùnamna	246	251	+ 2.0	100	109	+ 9
4. Oldomon	109	127	+16.5	102	90	-12
5. Orisin	189	214	+13.2	105	108	+ 3
6. Surumdamak	179	181	+ 1.1	83	89	+ 6
7. Mekdou	118	131	+11.0	87	102	+15
8. Eyupmlnak/Mundon	165	190	+15.2	109	102	- 7
WEST SELA	**1342**	**1480**	**+10.3**	**104.3**	**103.3**	**-1.0**
11. Megum	130	150	+15.4	128	114	-14
12. Bangkwola	52	52	0.0	93	93	N/C
13. Kyoas	109	112	+ 2.8	88	90	+ 2
14. Sikyaga	80	91	+13.8	100	112	+12
15. Uklin/Idyama	179	167	- 6.7	95	99	+ 4
16. Bera	87	94	+ 8.0	118	119	+ 1
17. Haromon	120	130	+ 8.3	94	81	-13
EAST SELA	**757**	**796**	**+ 5.2**	**101.3**	**100.0**	**-1.3**
21. Sinayom	158	186	+17.7	143	148	+ 5
22-24. West Welp	212	236	+11.3	152	143	- 9
25. Bidabuk	164	196	+19.5	152	161	+ 9
SOUTHEAST	**534**	**618**	**+15.7**	**149.5**	**150.2**	**+0.7**
SELA VALLEY	**2633**	**2894**	**+9.9**	**111.1**	**110.8**	**-0.3**

Table 4 Population changes (young) in the Sela Valley area from 1984 to 1988/89

	young			sex ratio		
	1984	1988/89	+/- %	1984	1988/89	+/-
1. Kwarangdua	106	139	+31.1	172	124	-48
2. Phoy	35	46	+31.4	150	119	-31
3. Mùnamna	102	116	+13.7	143	147	+ 4
4. Oldomon	35	50	+42.9	75	85	+10
5. Orisin	77	99	+28.6	157	147	-10
6. Surumdamak	71	87	+22.6	82	89	+ 7
7. Mekdou	50	66	+32.0	92	120	+28
8. Eyupminak/Mundon	67	90	+34.3	148	131	-17
WEST SELA	**543**	**693**	**+27.6**	**129.1**	**122.1**	**-7.0**
11. Megum	45	63	+40.0	150	125	-25
12. Bangkwola	25	26	+ 4.0	92	100	+ 8
13. Kyoas	52	58	+11.5	93	87	- 6
14. Sikyaga	38	45	+18.4	124	150	+26
15. Uklìn/Ìdyama	63	62	- 1.6	97	114	+17
16. Bera	35	45	+28.6	150	181	+31
17. Haromon	51	62	+21.6	96	77	-19
EAST SELA	**309**	**361**	**+16.8**	**110.2**	**111.8**	**+1.6**
21. Sinayom	57	84	+47.4	185	200	+15
22-24. West Welp	79	102	+29.1	193	191	- 2
25. Bidabuk	60	95	+58.3	300	280	-20
SOUTHEAST	**196**	**281**	**+43.4**	**216.1**	**219.3**	**+3.2**
SELA VALLEY	**1048**	**1335**	**+27.4**	**135.0**	**134.2**	**-0.8**

Table 5 Births in the Sela Valley area from 1984 to 1988/89

	boys	girls	sex ratio
1. Kwarangdua	10	26	38
2. Phoy	6	7	86
3. Mùnamna	14	12	117
4. Oldomon	10	7	143
5. Orisin	15	13	115
6. Surumdamak	13	13	100
7. Mekdou	14	7	200
8. Eyupmìnak/Mundon	12	16	75
WEST SELA	**94**	**101**	**93.1**
11. Megum	10	10	100
12. Bangkwola	2	3	67
13. Kyoas	5	6	83
14. Sikyaga	6	2	300
15. Uklìn/Idyama*	5	5	100
16. Bera	8	2	400
17. Haromon	5	12	42
EAST SELA	**41**	**40**	**102.5**
21. Sinayom	18	13	138
22-24. West Weip	18	13	138
25. Bidabuk	26	13	200
SOUTHEAST	**62**	**39**	**159.0**
SELA VALLEY	**197**	**180**	**109.4**

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