

The Sandalu Bachelor Ritual among the Laiapu Enga (Papua New Guinea)

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Edited by Philip Gibbs

Abstract. – This article is concerned with the description and interpretation of the Sandalu Bachelor Ritual among the Laiapu Enga of the highlands of Papua New Guinea. It presents data collected between 1953 and 1962 during participation in this ritual with three different clans of the Laiapu Enga. The Sandalu ritual has religious and social significance in its purificatory and prognostic aspects. [*Papua New Guinea, Highlands, Enga, socioreligious ritual*]

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Editor's note. – John Schwab (1908–1990) died before completing this work. While preparing the article for publication, I have tried to retain as much as possible of Fr. Schwab's own manuscript. I have changed the spelling of many of the Enga words to follow the current rules for Enga orthography. The article has considerable historical value because it is one of the earliest studies of the Sandalu Bachelor Ritual, and it is based on participation in the ritual when the Enga people were in their first years of contact with the modern world. Though the Sandalu ritual as such ceased to be practiced, there is now some interest in the revival of some facets of it. The main body of the article is in two parts. In the first part, Fr. Schwab provides an overview of the ceremony and refers to others who have studied the ritual. In the second part, he gives a description of the successive stages of the ritual based on his observation as a participant. I want to thank those who have helped me, including Pastor Kamen Tanga, Joseph Lakani, and Ms. P. Wiessner.

Introduction

The following description of the Sandalu Bachelor Ritual is an account of the three ceremonies

I participated in with three different clans of the Laiapu Enga.

The first were the subclans Maitepa, Pisepa, and Kepe of the Waiminaukini clan. They had a population of 828. The ceremony occurred in 1953 at the Gyowa spring on the Kipanimanda hill. The participants were Yaka, Katapu, Patepakali, Liangao, Minjuku, Langapu, Leombo, Lyakimao, another Katapu, Pawa, and Kyangali. The leaders of the ceremony were Injo, Tumu, and Kyoakali.

The second were the subclans Nenaini, Lanjetakini, and Lundopu of the Itokoni clan. The population of Itokoni was 879. The ceremony was in 1958 at the Pepakali spring. The leaders were Palane, Aloï, and Nea. The participants were Pene, Muli, Alopiao, Kuti, Kone, Kulimbao, Lunduta, Kakua, Lombo, Kakale, Lae, and Yangambao.

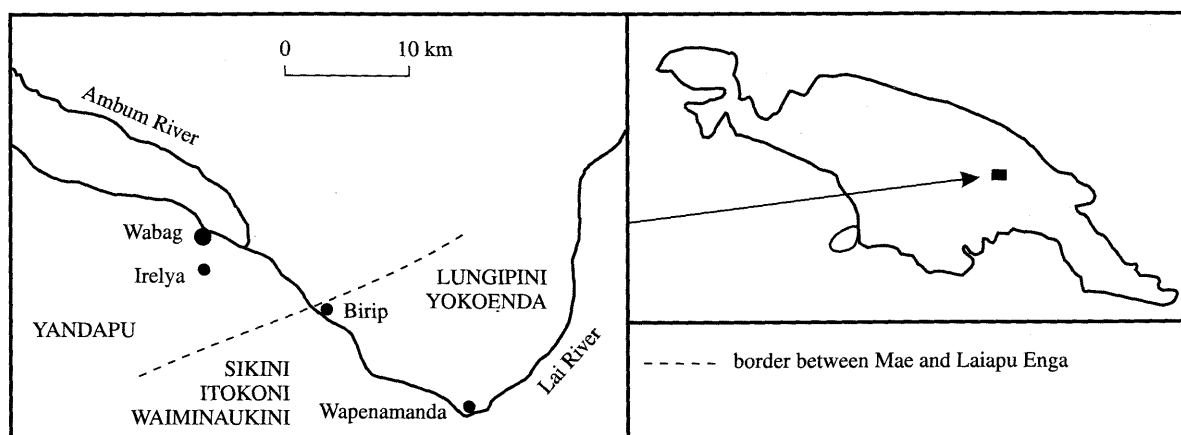
The third were the subclans Koepa, Kalipa, Wapo, and Mangalya of the Londeli group of the Siki clan with a population of 466. The ceremony was in 1962 at the Kepala spring. The leaders were Kalo and Koleale. The participants were Namayo, Kambao, Yalipu, Yanda, Itai, Andita, Peyale, Lamauti, Yomo, Kiangaliambo, and Mailyo.

As a celibate priest I had no difficulty in getting permission to participate in this ceremony which was strictly taboo to married men.

There are many songs, recitals, and spells, and most of them follow a certain pattern, so that little more than the names of persons and places have to be substituted. Therefore, in this article, only a few typical ones are given.

Especially in the songs, a symbolical language difficult to understand is often used, therefore, at times, only a paraphrase will be given. Brennan writes: "It is this feature [the heavily symbolical nature of this vocabulary level] which, among others, makes comprehension of Enga singing, and the like, so difficult for Europeans" (1970: 28). Many young people have considerable difficulty understanding what the deeper meanings of many symbols might be.

Since I had not previously had the opportunity



to become fluent in the language, I had to rely on interpreters. Due mostly to the Lutheran anthropologist P. Brennan (and, since 1988, with the New Testament: Enga Nutesamene Baipelo), there is now a uniform way of writing the Enga language.

Since there were no previous reports of the stages of this ritual by an eyewitness, I could easily have missed some items. Wirz wrote, "Kein Weißer, auch kein Missionar, hat bis dahin dem Ritual beigewohnt oder auch bloß etwas davon zu sehen bekommen" (1952: 42).

I very much realize that I have only touched the main points of this Sandalu bachelor ritual. To penetrate into its "inner being" is now almost impossible and, with the disappearance of the "old Big Men," it will be just impossible. May the following "guidelines" help some as long as there is a chance to go deeper and find the missing points.¹

Background Information

Although Enga is the biggest language unit in New Guinea, it never had a name of its own. Meggitt writes: "The term Enga was apparently first used by natives of the Mount Hagen-Tomba area to designate all those people west of the Hagen Range who speak variants of the one 'Enga' language" (1958: 256f.). Among themselves, they refer to each other according to the different subgroups within the area: Mae, Laiapu, Yandapu, etc. In the literature, they appear first under the name Tsaga (Tschaga, Caga) (Wirz 1952: 8).

¹ I would like to note gratefully at least the names of some people who helped me in this description: Leklek and Pastor Kamen Tanga of Waiminaukini, Yanali, Ayele, Ameane: all of Sikini; as well as Pyaso and Langapu of Itokoni; Iki, Lai, and Wapu of Tsaka; also Sr. M. Eamon Brennan RSM and Fr. B. Fisher SVD [J. Schwab].

The Enga Province is located in the Central Cordillera, a system of high ranges and valleys, generally running west to east. Enga has a total area of 198,000km², it varies in altitude from 200m (Yuat) to 3,800m (Mt. Hagen). Although Enga lies close to the equator, its mountainous location means a temperate climate. Above 2,500m occasional frosts occur. The harshness of the terrain is one of the important factors in the development of the Enga way of life.

The people of Enga number some 165,000, not counting 20,000 Enga speakers within the Western Highlands Province. There are cultural differences among the Enga speaking groups: Central Enga (Mae/Laiapu), Kandepe, Sau'i, Malamuni, Taro, Tarua, Wali, etc., and each group or region has generally a distinctive name to mark it off from the others. People distinguish features such as wig styles, details of dress and ornament, house styles, dialects, and minor variations in bachelors' rituals and in marriage and funerary customs.

R. J. Lacey writes: "I believe that Enga history may well have begun with people from the Kola region and that many Enga groups have spread in an east to west movement through the Lai valley and its tributaries" (1975: 261). Reports vary about the first Westerners coming into Enga. Kirschbaum, a Catholic missionary and anthropologist, must have contacted some Enga in the late 1920s (up the Korowori River), since he reported the Enga manner of counting (1938: 278). In the 1930s, several gold prospectors entered the area. In 1934, the Leahy brothers walked from Mt. Hagen to about 20 miles from Wabag. Also the Fox brothers reached the Enga area on their prospecting trips from the Sepik and Strickland Rivers.

In 1975, Enga was declared a province of Papua New Guinea with Wabag as the provincial capital.

1. General Description of the Sandalu Ceremony

a) Terminology

There are two names (with spelling variations) used for this bachelor ritual: Sandalu (Tentaru, Sadaru) among the Laiapu Enga; Sangai (Sag-gai, Sanggai, Changai, Chainggai) among the Mae Enga. This difference coincides with the geographical difference (Laiapu/Mae) with the borderline near Birip. Though there are accidental differences, the essentials are the same in both.

There are two expressions for taking part in the Sandalu, both indicating the two main activities: *sandalu palenge* "sleep in the Sandalu" (although there is no time for sleeping), indicating the all important dreams, and *sandalu pokala pelyo* "I go to plant the Sandalu," referring to the dream-inducing *kiangai* plant, the bog iris, and the Sandalu bamboo, both replanted at the Sandalu.

b) The Origin

The origin of the Sandalu ceremony is somewhere in the unknown past. Individual clans trace their Sandalu back a few "steps," but then there is nothing further.

Men of Waiminaukini told me that originally they went to sleep in the bush along with Nambuli, a man of small stature without hair, yet they never actually saw him. However, he was the source of the Sandalu dreaming. They also refer in the reburial spell of the bamboos to Wetea, bringer of the Sandalu.

Leklek of Waiminaukini told me of a song of praise to the Sandalu:

Lakuya kale yako lenge nyakao epea lakuyanya Weteaka epe.
I rejoice in the Sandalu Wetea has brought (to me).

But who was Wetea? Leklek remembers his father, Kumbakali, telling him that a woman brought the Sandalu from Mendi or from Kombiama. (These are opposite directions!)

Iki, a Big Man of the Yambatani in the Tsaka valley told me about the origin of the Sandalu. (As a young man, not yet married, he had guided the first white man from Mt. Hagen via Yambatani to Wabag.) In 1987, he gave me the following story: Some men from the Milyopo-Kandepe-Wandi carried a woman, unnamed, on a "bed." Getting tired they put her down. She told them: I have legs, I can walk. Suddenly they did not see or hear her anymore. Looking

around they saw some blood on the ground. They cut a special bamboo (*taro*), gathered the blood in it, and called out: "*Oke, oke*: I don't know where she went." This is the beginning of the Sandalu.

In 1989, Ameane and Ayele of the Sikini, out of all context, hesitatingly spoke of blood in the Sandalu bamboos, but could not or would not further elucidate. Itokoni and Lungipini also claim that they call on a woman who brought the Sandalu.

Others offered different explanations. Lyupa of the Yokoenda said: "A 'god' (name unknown) showed mysterious marbles: the Sandalu, to a remote ancestor. He put them into bamboos."

People seem unconcerned that this important ceremony should have no clear origin.

c) The Purpose of the Sandalu Ritual

The purpose of the Sandalu could be seen as threefold: personal, sociological, and tribal.

1) The personal aim, affecting the individual participant, is principally in the purification of the eyes from any pollution caused by looking at a woman's private parts. This could easily happen when the scanty "working grass skirts" are worn in the garden, or when an act of intercourse in the garden is observed. Purification sought from this pollution is clearly expressed in the spell during the eye washing at the spring.

Included in this personal aim is a "fertility item": to make the young men strong. An external sign of this is the luxuriant hair growth, especially of the beard. A wish for this is clearly expressed within the ceremonies of the refilling of the bamboos, the tugging on the branches of the *kumba* tree, and the rubbing of the soil on the cheek when the bog iris is replanted.

Wirz says: "Es ist dies eine Art Jugendweihe oder Reifezeremonie, die den Zweck hat, den heranwachsenden Knaben zum Manne zu machen. Bei dieser spielt vor allem ein Haarzauber eine bedeutende Rolle Um das Wachstum des Schnurrbartes und der Barthaare zu fördern, werden die heranreifenden Knaben eines Gaus für fünf oder sechs Tage in den Busch gebracht" (1952: 39f.).

2) The sociological aim would be the almost public betrothal of some senior participants. After having pronounced the love spells during the "fire night," the man will hand over a fire stick to his chosen girl friend. Should he have given the fire to two girls or if there is another girl more anxious than himself to marry, then a semi-serious mock

attack on the ceremonial ground will force the decision.

3) The tribal purpose may be seen in the close connection between the Sandalu and the *tee* (pig exchange festival). The Big Men often time the Sandalu ritual to happen when the *tee* is imminent.

During the Sandalu season, one can see groups of about ten girls on elevated sites, if possible, adjoining a frequented track in clan territory, singing and dancing in a long line, their arms entwined and their grass skirts thrown up in a long "wave" as they bend their knees in a steady rhythm. Some of their songs refer to the *tee* in symbolic, picturesque language.

Lacey writes: "The final stage in the purification rites is the emergence festival which marks the end of the participants' seclusion in the bush ... in areas where clans participate in the *tee* exchange, this emergence festival is an occasion on which a number of *kamongo* and their followers gather on the *kamapi* of the host clan to negotiate and hold public discussions on *tee* transactions" (1975: 211).

A little incident during the Sandalu with the Waiminaukini also indicates the close relationship between the Sandalu and the *tee*. A heavy rain-storm moved over our camp late in the afternoon before the dream night. Heavy hail, the size of small peas, fell. After some amazement over this uncommon phenomenon, they settled down again and sang:

Poketawana ipanamu woko lao Punate pete sapuilyamo kanda.
We Pokati have nothing (the soil is dry) now the Punati call
out for pigs (*tee*).

d) Location and House

The Sandalu seclusion is at a traditionally fixed place, off the beaten track, near a little spring and a creek; usually near a mountain spot with a good view. So it is possible to signal with a bright object that the Sandalu has begun and where it is. This is an invitation for the girl friends and monitoring people in general to view the forthcoming public appearance on the ceremonial ground.

The Sandalu houses prepared for this occasion are grass huts, about 2.5m high in the middle and some 4m wide and long, according to the number of the participants. The fire in the middle is bordered by two long pieces of timber (*lakumbe*, normally *panda tepe*). Sitting on each side, we were not allowed to stretch our legs over this barrier, otherwise we would not have good dreams.

e) Dreams

The symbols in dreams of the participants during the presence of the sacred Sandalu may foretell a fight between subclans, a land settlement (by the government), a pay back killing, and messages about the *tee*.

One could almost call these dreams the core of the Sandalu. Purification rites serve to make the participants capable of "seeing" dreams. Dreams are expected to help the leaders in their deliberations about the *tee*, or might guide the clan in foretelling the result of a fight or some killing.

A successful or imminent *tee* is usually forecast in dreams about swollen rivers or creeks or a great amount of cut sugar cane.

Pyuku, a renowned fighter of the Sikini, lent me the *kambi* feather (stuck in the wig, it is the sign of having gone through the second stage of the Sandalu), but I had to promise to reveal to him any dream I might have during the dream night, especially regarding the Wambulemanda hill, a disputed land between Sikini and Kumba.

A little incident may give an indication how important such dreams are. In 1986, almost thirty years after my participation, I was talking to some old men of the Waiminaukini. Immediately, one reminded me that I had revealed to them my "successful dream." I had been chasing and killing a centipede near the seclusion house. Seeing something in a dream or something unusual in the camp, is about the same. Now the centipede is the totem of their old enemies, the Aluni. Since the centipede has many legs, my killing it told them that they would kill many Aluni in the forthcoming fight. And so it happened soon after.

This, my centipede dream, had yet another aspect as I found out later. In November 1952, I had visited the scene of a fight between the Waiminaukini and Aluni when four of the first were killed and a woman fell over a cliff and died. Kandaputi, my interpreter, unrelated to any of these people, told me on that occasion that the Waiminaukini would soon call for a Sandalu to find out from dreams which party would be the loser in a forthcoming fight. In the March 1953 Sandalu, during my participation with the Waiminaukini, my centipede dream was therefore most welcome to the Waiminaukini and is still happily remembered by them.

There are, besides the dreams, other symbolic death signals within the enclosure similar to my seeing a centipede. If someone sees a feather from a hawk or eagle at the gate of the enclosure, he knows that one of the group will soon die. I was

also told of another such death signal: If one of the participants could not see the Sandalu at the refilling of the bamboos, he would soon die. They sang about this on one occasion:

Dakenya mende Sanda anda kainu lapianya sina lao yakinama epo.

I did not want the Sandalu house to be vacant so I left one of us behind. I let it be so.

(One of this group will die soon.)

f) Participation

The Sandalu is open only to bachelors, and this in the strictest sense of the word. This means that only young men who have never had any sexual association (intercourse) with a woman are entitled to or allowed to take any part in the ritual. Before the Sandalu begins, the behaviour of all the participants is closely observed and scrutinized.

While the moral behaviour of all the participants is scrutinized, this applies even more to the ritual leader and the young man chosen to rebury the sacred bamboos. The old influential men of the clan watch carefully the senior bachelor's behaviour. A prospective ritual leader may not take food from a young girl, only from a mother with children or an old woman who has had her menopause. The leader has to be above all suspicion. It is he who will have the best dreams. The guardian of the Sandalu has also to follow some food regulations: of the sugarcane he may not eat the lowest part (near the ground); of the pitpit (wild sugarcane) he should not eat the *mandakapo* type (red); of a pig that died he may not eat the fat or pieces near the bone. (Normally, any such meat could be eaten.) Whenever he is given some sweet potato cooked in the hot ashes, he is supposed to drop one near the fireplace and take the other one to eat.

But judging from the songs of the girls, especially when singing in a line on the road, one has to admit some liberty in the behaviour of the young men.

Makapu kindia lyokatinya luu palyo singi aipipyamo kale yake lepe?

You slept with the Makapu girl. Tell me, how can you go to the Sandalu?

Knowledge of an occasional breaking of the sex taboo may have prompted girls to make insulting songs like this:

Lenge pingi ipa kendo angi dokonya puu tanya palyetala epo imbanya lenge doko andokonya pyalepe?

I urinated further up this creek. Where did you purify your eyes?

Such an unqualified man could not be present at the refilling of the sacred bamboos, nor would he be able to see dreams. Pyaso, a Big Man of the Itokoni, told me: "Participants suspected of having had sex may be given a separate place within the Sandalu house. If they confess their transgression they may undergo the eye purification, but they will not be able to see dreams." Should an unqualified man sneak into the Sandalu and look at it, this would result in spoiling the sacred Sandalu fluid; it would appear to be murky or dried up.

Wirz says: "Würde ein Bursche dieses Versprechen nicht einhalten, so würden die von ihm gepflanzten *sagay*-Stauden verdorren und absterben, und jedermann würde erfahren, daß der Junge sich mit einem Mädchen abgegeben hat" (1952: 40). Also Goodenough has noted: "Should a woman or any man who has consorted with a woman look at the sacred *chyanggai*, it will wither and die" (1953: 41).

During the Sandalu with the Itokoni, in 1958, the sacred Sandalu appeared to be spoiled. They said they would have to buy a new one from the Lungipini clan. After this Sandalu Tipitap, a Big Man of the Itokoni (who usually supported six or more wives) said to me: "In the time of my youth, young men knew how to behave properly; now they consort with women, thus the Sandalu has been defiled (lost)."

Whenever the spoiling has occurred, a new Sandalu has to be bought from a traditionally designated clan. The principal element in this payment is a "red" pig. Yanali, an old man of the Sikini, told me that he originally paid for the Sandalu with a red pig, a stone axe, and a spear with a white feather. In 1986, a man of the Itokoni told me: "If the Sandalu is lost, they have no longer to buy a new one, but just take part of the contents of a good bamboo."

Later, as secularization began to affect the sacred Sandalu, some sophisticated men found a way around the sex taboo. They joined the group after the Sandalu had been removed and reburied. Thus they could enjoy the social aspect of the Sandalu, especially the great, public appearance on the ceremonial ground. Thus Pori remarks: "The effects are not the same as those in the old times. Civilization has dramatically transformed cultural ceremonies and particularly the *Sangui* is not so popular today" (1978: 76).²

² During my participation with the Sikini in 1962, I realized that the "profaning effect" of materialism was encroaching on the life and culture of the Enga. While everybody was at work on the road to the rehearsal place, I was alone in the



Fig. 1: On rehearsal place

g) Grades of Participants

There are two grades of participants; seniors and juniors. The age difference may be only some five years, but the essential difference lies in whether they are taking part for the first time or not. At the public appearance on the ceremonial ground, the difference becomes quite apparent. The seniors wear a wig with the *kambi* (hawk or eagle) feather on it. The juniors, at least within the Laiapu, have their heads covered with a kind of hood (*kotale*) over a moss cap, hanging down over their eyes. They also carry different weapons. Juniors have a spear on their shoulders, seniors a bow and arrow. Seniors for the last time (as they intend to marry) hold a solid stick about a metre long and a small netbag over their shoulder.

Juniors are sent off to work on the road to the rehearsal place during the refilling of the Sandalu bamboos as they may not see the sacred Sandalu. During the fire night, when the girls come to be given the fire sticks by their boy friends, juniors have to bend down to the ground and cover their heads with a *tuli* (raincape).

camp with the man attending the earth oven. It was a very hot day and he was perspiring. Hesitatingly he showed me a bamboo water bottle with a movement indicating that he would like to drink. When I nodded he smilingly quenched his thirst, forgetting the strict taboo on drinking water.

h) Taboos on Food and Drink

There is one strict taboo for all during the seclusion: no drinking of water. Sugarcane serves as a substitute. Laima of Yokoenda told me: "If somebody drinks water, he will not grow and will not marry."³

During the Sandalu with the Waiminaukini, I was having a cup of coffee. A fellow participant saw this and reminded me of the taboo on water. I replied: "I am drinking only coffee." With a twinkle in his eye, he agreed to this. After all they were "drinking" sugarcane.

All the food has to be harvested beforehand by the participants themselves, not by women. Sweet potatoes are wrapped in grass, not in a netbag which would have been touched by a woman.

The sweet potatoes that juniors ate had to be cool, otherwise it was believed that the young men would never grow strong. Juniors were not to eat underdone sweet potatoes nor those which had been near the stones in the ovens since the peelings would be too dry. Juniors always received the choicest bits of food. Of sugarcane they were given the better middle part. Of an opossum once killed near our camp the juniors ate the meat while the seniors could only pick the bones.

A ceremonial meal of sweet potatoes is taken in the afternoon. When the stones and leaves from

³ Kungu, an old man of the Yangaokini-Laiapu, told me in 1986: "In the old time the Sandalu men drank hot water 'to wash out the blood of the mother'."

the earth oven have been removed, the leader calls out, and everyone stands ready to receive his share. The leader then calls each individual by his name. In some clans, he is given a new name in a special ceremony; usually the name of his mother's clan with the prefix "Sanda."

i) What is the Sacred Sandalu?

There are actually two items within the Sandalu ritual: bamboo tubes (*Sandalu / Sangai penge*) containing fluid, and a plant (*lepe* or *ita yoko*: bog iris: *Acorus calamus*). Both have the same task: to bring about good dreams. According to some informants, only the Laiapu have both items, although I got contradicting answers to this. Lacey says that the middle zone of Enga from Wapenamanda along the Lai Valley and into part of the Ambum River have the *penge* and *lepe wai*. West and south of the mid-Ambum and around Irelya, they may also have the *penge*, but it plays a minor role compared with that of the *lepe wai* (1975: 213). Wherever they have both items, bamboo and plant, they have two corresponding ceremonies: the digging out, refilling, and burying of the bamboo and the visit to the Sandalu garden with the digging out and replanting of the sacred plant.

The sacred plant can easily be described in its external appearance, yet its history remains mysterious. How did this special type of *calamus* develop into a sacred and potent plant? How did it originally come to the respective clan? In the songs, a bringer may be mentioned, but no further explanation is or can be given. Pori writes: "The distinguishing feature between a *Sangai Lepe* and an ordinary swamp *calamus* is the colourful stripes of the leaf. There may be colourful stripes in an ordinary cumulus leaf but a special feature in the *Sangai Lepe* is the special attractiveness of a yellow colour which may force you to blink your eyes and makes them foggy when you see it directly" (1978: 79).⁴

The other item, the sacred bamboo, or really what is in it, is even more mysterious. I was with the Sandalu men when they refilled the sacred fluid. But no previous report had drawn my attention to this ceremony, thus "I did not see it when I

saw it." According to my notes, I saw a greyish liquid with some pieces of decaying leaves. Witnessing the behaviour of the men, I realized that this was a very special, mysterious fluid. It is like little marbles in a liquid, but of a soft consistency.

Pyaso told me later on: "A good Sandalu multiplies inside the bamboo." This agrees with the "Holzwürmchen" Wirz writes about: "Wenn sie sehen, daß in der oberen Hälfte der Rohre, wo kein Wasser enthalten war, sich Holzwürmer angesiedelt haben, so ist dies ein gutes Zeichen für die Abhaltung des *tentaru*" (1952: 40). Pyaso also says: "This Sandalu is like marbles, but of a soft nature, yet when they fall down into the new bamboos, this can be heard." He even demonstrated this for me with paper balls falling into a bottle. Leao of the Lungipini told me that leaves of the sacred *malata* tree are in the liquid of the bamboo. Bulmer describes it as "a black liquid" (1965: 152). Lacey reports that the sacred fluid kept in special bamboo containers and the source of male purity, strength, and vision in the Sandalu bachelor rite is said to be the blood of a beautiful woman from the mountain Giluwe in the Southern Highlands (1975: 214).

2. Successive Stages within the Sandalu Ceremony

a) Night of Introduction

There are two traditions about this night. Some have it in the Sandalu house proper, some in a mens' house outside the enclosure. This could be the older form as Yanali, the oldest man of the Sikiini, told me: "originally the introduction was given in the mens' house. But whenever Sandalu men occupy this, no outsider may use that house." In 1958, we Sandalu men of Itokoni were assembled in such a house, when, late in the night, a visitor came intending to stay overnight, as is customary. The singsing recital was interrupted to tell him of the Sandalu so he left. With the Waiminaukini clan, the introduction took place in the Sandalu house proper within the enclosure.

For the official entry into the Sandalu house proper, the participants have to wash and purify their bodies with the help of a spell. Near the creek, the men take off their clothes, the contaminated cordyline rump leaves, and the pubic string net covering. Then they put on bush leaves with a belt string and, standing in a line in the water, they throw off the ad hoc clothing. During a quick body washing, they say their spell and rush out to put on their proper clothing. The spell is:

⁴ Goodenough says: "The Mae people attach supernatural significance to a plant which they call *chyanggai*. ... In root and leaf the *chyanggai* resembles large iris. It is a common plant, growing along the river and creek banks. While the ginger plant is used as a food, the *chyanggai* is not, except to ward off the ghost of someone one has killed" (1953: 41).

Walya duu puu, lyambi duu puu, pungu duu puu.

Sweat, *lyambi* leaves, all bad smells; go away.

(Sweat refers to babies sweat in the mother's net bag. *Lyambi* leaves are used as napkins.)

Waiminaukini have a similar spell:

Kumbu ipapu lao puu, lyambi ipapu lao puu,

endanginya kumbu ipapu siamo singi puu lao, nembelono puu,

endanginya lyambi ipapu siamo singi puu lao, nembelono puu.

Whatever clings to me of mother's *kumba*, *lyambi* leaves, take off, go.

(The baby sleeps on *kumba* leaves. When it dies, they are spread out on the grave. *Lyambi* leaves are also used to wash the babies, all the pollution through contact with the mother is to be got rid off.)

With this entrance purification, the strict taboo on water begins. We were also not to be seen by outsiders, especially women. I had arranged for bread to be brought from the nearby Pompabus Mission Station. The bringer had to put it down somewhere on the hill and call out. When he had left I could go to collect it.⁵

During this first night, one or two senior experts (*isingi akali*: guardians) instruct the participants in the historical wanderings of the Sandalu in old traditional verses. There are also songs in praise of the Sandalu, songs asking for a good dream (mostly regarding a fight, an enemy they would like to kill or about the *tee*).⁶

Some of these songs and recitals are done in a hurried, monotonous way, some in a slow melancholy melody, at times prefaced by a drawn out "Weee" sound. The verses about the wanderings of the Sandalu were again and again repeated by the participants, so they could not be forgotten. The long recital of the Sikini was repeated during the sweet potato ceremony and during the dream verses.

The singing went on till about three a.m. Then we had a short sleep. Just before sunrise, we started off for the Sandalu house. We had to take care not to be seen by anybody, especially women. During this hurried walk, they spoke repeatedly about the "big work" to be done on that day.

5 Others report activities similar to what I experienced. Pori says: "Upon completion, *Koma* moss, a soft type of *Calophyllum*, usually growing in the damp places, is used as soap to clean the rest of their bodies" (1978: 88). Meggitt writes: "Not only must they avoid women but also they may not use anything already polluted by women's viewing. Each man removes and hides his everyday apparel, then rubs his body with red earth before donning a voluminous skirt of cordyline leaves and a tapa cap" (1964: 213).

6 Pori writes: "This movement of devotion, the Enga describe as *sangai nemango ti pingi*" (1978: 91).

b) The Sweet Potato Ceremony

Early in the morning, after each one had picked up a little sweet potato, we walked to a nearby cleared place and assembled for the ceremony. The leader drew with a piece of charcoal a black line from eye to eye saying:

Kepala sumu doko kombiala puu.

Kepala (the name of the Sandalu place) charcoal be attached to the face.

Then we began ceremoniously to peel or scrape the little sweet potato while saying:

Lipa yai wamba lilyo lao lilyamo otena ita siimu tapu lama epalami.

Seed of the wild pandanus tree falls down, a new one comes up. When I get old my children will take my place in the Sandalu.

This scraping and peeling of the sweet potato went on for some time whilst they repeated again and again the verses about the coming and wandering of the Sandalu.

At this ceremony (with the Sikini clan), we were given new names of the mother's clan: e.g., Namaya was called "Sanda Lyata." (His mother came from the Lyata.) Not knowing my clan, they addressed me as "Sanda Pater." The reason for this change, I was told, was to hide one's identity, lest one be seen in a dream, which could mean death.

Recital texts are:

Ipa Timinapa Laepa sati dokonya yaka lae lenge mende lyala leami wamba lao lilyamo otena itaimi pando lama epalami.

Ene lao lilyamo otena kunguma nalitamba lama epalami.

At the junction of the Timina and Lae Rivers the *lae* bird used to sing. It sang again and dust rose up where it sang.

Waka kamapi silyo lao dupa yangi lao seteamo kamaki lami aiombu lao sateamo kamaki lami, lepa lao lyateamo kamaki lami.

On and around the ceremonial ground, *waka* grass was growing (wild) and insects flying. Bush trees grew around the *singsing* place.

Then the names of different ceremonial places on the road from the Lower Lai to Pina (Sikini) were named in the same deprecating way:

Tilyaposa kamapi ...

Landamana kamapi ...

Mayokamanda kamapi ...

Lilyaposa kamapi ...

Mapemanda kamapi ...

Ae Pina kamapi ongo noma lao yambi kamaki lami. Lundu lyokapae lamua yakinatala pami lami, ua apini, mamaku lama, yakinatala pami lami.

Here at Pina, there is good grass and greens near the ceremonial ground. The bringer of the Sandalu left a stone axe and leg of pork and a pearl shell.

During this peeling, scraping, they spit repeat-

edly to get rid of the effects of the bad language uttered, but they should not swallow the spittal or else they will not grow well.

Then they throw the little sticks used for the peeling into the fire. If a clear flame comes up, they will be successful in the forthcoming fight. Should smoke develop, they will not be able to kill enemies. Throwing the sticks, they call the name of an enemy, preferably a Big Man, with the spell:

Pato (or any name of an enemy) *itateme nambame pyatona mapu lyoo lenge dake tao molyepe.*

As this burns I'll kill Pato (and set fire to his house).

The sweet potato peelings are put on *pepa* leaves spread out on the ground while, at the same time, they call the names of some enemies whose faces they would like to see in a dream (which means to kill them).

Walelyo mapu imbanya setelyo tanga nala ipu.

Walelyo, here is a sweet potato, come and eat it.

(If you appear in my dream, I'll kill you. Walelyo is the name of an enemy Big Man.)

Now, at last, they eat the sweet potato ceremoniously with a spell:

Sepa moko pyangalapu nalo ongoma nelyo.

As I gulped down the leg of a pig, so I eat this (all of it.)

c) Eye Purification

After the sweet potato ceremony, we moved back to the Sandalu house for the purification of the eyes at the decorated spring. There a pandanus leaf or a *malata* leaf is used. This is white on the

underside symbolizing purity from dirt. It is put into position to collect the water. Each participant moved to the spring for the *sandalu lenge pingi* (hitting the eyes). With their fingers they kept the eyelid up to let the water from the leaf spigot run into each eye for about a minute. While cleaning the eyes and rubbing them with a red *yumbi* leaf, they say some spells:

Endanya (akalinya) elya-pingi kandeo, kandeo, ongo lenge kapa dake toe lala puu. Koo mendatupa kandeo, kandeo, dupa toe lala ipa tengenaka paepu.

I have seen the private parts of women, of men. Take this off my eyes, let it go down to the river.

Endanya kambaki, endanya yoo, koo mendatupa kandeo, kandeo, dupa toe lala puu ipa tangenaka paepu.

I have seen a vagina; I have seen a woman's menstrual blood. Take it off my eyes and let it go down to the river . . .

Ingi sana mende kandeo, kandeo toe lala puu ipa tangenaka paepu.

I saw a little groove (made by rain on the ground, a symbol for vagina), take it . . .

Ii aumbalo lengeme kandeo, kandeo toe lala puu ipa tengenaka paepu.

I saw a big heap of faeces, take . . .

Immediately after the eye washing, the leader moved a flattened shell ring (conous shell) over the eyes of the participants with accompanying spells or petitions:

Kana petenganya nita dake nyinya pisopilyo.

This eye is like the moon. Make it like the sun.

Yakane ipu lenge tao katao pilyo lu lalumu.

This eye is small; make it big, clear.



Fig. 2: Eye purification



Fig. 3: Shell ring after eye purification

Api yaka kioi lenge doko tao katao pilyu lu lalumu.
Make the eye white (clean) as the *api* bird's.

Kake lenge lao myinya piso pilyo yupi lenge lao nyinya piso pilyo.

I would like to have the (white, clean) eye of the *kake* and *yupi* (birds).

Kutipya kalyamo lenge tao katao pilyalu lalumu.

The eye is red as the tanget (leaf) on the Kutipya creek (after the washing).

Kulimbanya pemanga lenge tao katao pulu pembana olosa li-panya kandao.

The eye shall be white (clean) as that of the *kulimban* and the *pemban* (hawk).

d) *Lii* Ceremony

After all had gone through the eye washing ceremony, we lined up again for the *lii pingi nemongo*: the *lii* spell. According to informants, the *lii* spell is really a "sexually oriented" spell boys or girls use against each other.

Ameane and Ayele of the Sikini told me of such spells against girls: the boy will shoot a small arrow against the roof of the girl's house. It will make the girl skinny; she won't be able to marry. He will bury a stone near the fireplace; she will remain a "stone"; not marry and not have children.

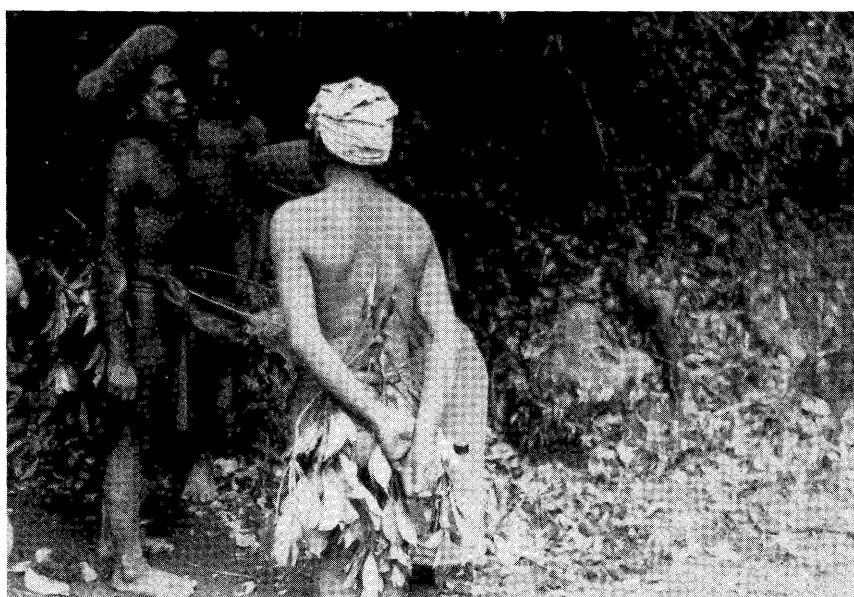


Fig. 4: *Lii* ceremony

With the bone of a flying fox or a cassowary quill, the leader drew a line beginning at the right side from the temple down the cheek, the nipple, down to between the first and second toe, from there making an outward movement with his arm, symbolizing the taking off of the spell.

Lii maname yuku pyaku-taa mane mendeme pyapita yuku pyaku.
I take off the *lii*-taa spell someone has fastened on you.

(*Pyapita*: an expression from garden work. As soil is pressed on a newly planted seedling thus someone has "fixed" a spell on you.)

Lii pisino upa yuka pyaka.

I take off all the *lii* spell (all that is bad).

(*Lii pisino*: all bad language, etc., during the singsing nights with girls.)

Now that they have been purified, they may move on to the next two big events of the day. These are the last preparation for seeing the dreams: the walk to the Sandalu garden (wherever this is done in a clan)⁷ and the preparing of the new bamboo containers, i.e., digging out the old ones, cutting the new, and filling them.

e) The Sacred Sandalu Garden

Its site is known to many. People may perform any kind of work near it, but they may not go into it. The guardian is expected to visit the spot occasionally, to clean it. Should he marry, he takes (before this) another man to show him the garden, to hand it over to him.

On arrival (once I was with them), the guardian cleaned the garden (approximately 3 × 5 m) and repaired the low fence (against pigs). He then took out one tuber of the *kiangai* (bog iris – sweet flag – *Acorus calamus*) and offered it to the individual junior who stood a few metres away holding a reed spear shoulder high. Then the junior rushed up to the leader, jumped down with both feet before him and exclaimed: "*yaka pilino*: Well done." (Now this expression is used for "Thank you.") (This jumping down with both feet is done the same way when the bride jumps upon receiving the bride price items, pigs, shells, etc.)

The junior did not touch the tuber (in other clans, he does). The leader then planted the tuber with a spell.

Pipya, kole, yapa ipa yaka ipa patakisa wene soo kulinya.

Hail, rain, come down quickly lest it dry up.

(Make it grow, symbolically, also for the participant.)

⁷ Goodenough notes: "When the washing rite is finished . . . , the young men go as a group to inspect their *chyanggai* growing in the sacred enclosure" (1953: 42).

The juniors eagerly take any bit of soil of the root or drops of water from the plant and rub their cheeks with it to make hair (beard) grow.

The leader (secretely?) takes some leaves of the bog iris to the house. Put within the walls, they help the participants to have dreams. After the dream nights, the leaves are thrown away where nobody will find them.

f) Digging out the Sandalu Bamboos

During the Sandalu ceremony with the Itokoni, I went with the group assigned to bring the Sandalu bamboo containers from their hiding place. A senior, one of the three who had buried the bamboos during the last ceremony, was sent out with some juniors to bring the Sandalu bamboos. This entailed quite some work and time. While the Sandalu place is somewhere higher up on a mountain, the burying spot is in lower, swampy ground. Bent low, with a raincape (*tuli*) over their heads (I had to hide myself under a khaki shirt), we hurried away from the Sandalu house. It took an hour's walk to get to the swamp. On this track, they should not meet anybody. If a person comes in sight, they are to give a warning whistle, to keep them off. If somebody would disregard this whistle, they may beat them up.

Since it is usually a few years since the last ceremony, the place is overgrown and the exact spot not easy to find. Many reeds and young trees have grown there since the burying. The *yai-alua* bird, custodian of the Sandalu, is supposed to guide the men to the hiding place, fluttering over it. When, at last, they found the site, they dug out the bamboos, cleaned them, and wrapped them in fern leaves as a camouflage and brought them home.

Kombe, an old man of the Lungipini, told me later on that, searching in the swampy ground for the burying spot, they blow on a bamboo tube. This brings the *alua* bird fluttering over the spot.

Tipitap, the Big Man of the Itokoni, had forbidden the Sandalu for some seven years, so it took hours to find the spot. The *alua* had not come to our help.

Within some clans, I was told, the elected participants will, beforehand, dig out the old sacred bamboos and stroke their feet with a special stick (*popo*) while saying:

Takataka yame dokonya kipitanya doko yukua pyakua aoe tani doko yukua pyakua.

Take from our hearts all bad things seen, done.

(This spell is full of symbolism.)

Within other clans, the men stand around the spot in a circle; one, standing apart, whistles, and all rush in to grab the bamboos.

g) Preparing the New Bamboos

Another small party was sent out to cut bamboos from which to make the containers.

Among the Laiapu Enga, there seems to be no distinction between male and female bamboo forms. Only once I got a muddled reference when I asked Ameane of the Sikini, Mangalya, about this.

Cutting the sometimes entangled long lengths of bamboo, they use spells such as:

Aki mendeme minilyape? Alu kumbalo lenge mendeme minilyape? Ipu! yakae, yakae.

What is holding it? Is it a pig looking and stopping it? Come! (*Yakae* is an exclamation expressing strain, pain.)

Once the long shoots are out, they swing, clean, and smooth them saying:

Kindupa meneme wape, wape – papa meneme wape, wape.
Alua-yae bird, clean the shoots with claws and wings.

Lae of Taskini (Tsaka valley) later gave me the reason for this cleaning of the bamboo rods: somebody unclean or unworthy might have seen these bamboos. They have to be cleaned before receiving the sacred Sandalu liquid.

Another spell is:

Mae pepo loo lao puu – takae pepo loo lao puu – toya pepo loo lao puu.

We scrape the hair off this bamboo as we clean red sugarcane. (*Toya* and *takae* are other kinds of cane.)

One informant of Pumakos (Tsaka valley) gave another explanation: the “hair” of the bamboo symbolizes hair of the “baby.” The boy now at the Sandalu will become a man.

While cutting the rods into pieces for containers, they talk directly to the bamboo but symbolically to the man they would like to kill. The words are:

Nambame N ... anya kambu doko konsilyo. Kambu makande lae kaketyo, moko makande kaketyo.

As I cut this bamboo, I would like to cut your mouth, your leg.

Lai of the Taskini (Tsaka valley) told me of an unusual spell that he found difficult to explain:

Wate lae lipino wate lae ongoma

kambu lapino kambu lapo peatekelyo lyaa lapino peatekelyo kio enda tate yama enda lipini wate lae ongoma.

Not this knife but the one from “heaven” is cutting (the bamboo), you spotless, powerful woman (above the clouds) told me to cut it evenly as mouth and lips and nose say it now: I cut it.

h) Filling the New Bamboos

Before this refilling, the juniors are sent off to prepare the rehearsal place just outside the fence and the road to it.

Near the Sandalu house, the contents of the old bamboos are poured into the new ones. Before this happens, special leaves (*mata*, with a white underside) are spread out on the ground. Eagerly and reverently, the participants pick up any drop spilled, especially any of the “marbles”: the “excreta” of the Sandalu. They rub these on their



Fig. 5: Refilling of the bamboos

cheeks to make the beard grow, to make them strong. (I was told by some that only those taking part for the last time do this.)

If anyone present at this refilling had previously broken the sexual taboo, he would cause the Sandalu to be lost or spoiled. It could not be seen anymore, or the liquid would appear to be cloudy.

After the ceremonial meal, late in the afternoon, we took our places in the Sandalu house, in a mood full of reverence and expectations. The bamboos and *kyangai* leaves had been hidden away ready to bring the dreams we awaited.

i) Dream Nights

Enga know two types of dreams and two words for them, one in real sleep and the other when half awake.

Slowly the singing began, recounting the coming, wandering of the Sandalu, a longing for a good dream; something about a fight, a killing, the *tee*. One participant opened with a solo which was repeated by all in a solemn, melancholy recital cadence, prefixed at times with a drawn out "Weee." Also some hurriedly recited verses. If someone had a dream then, he revealed it. Then they talked about it, and eventually one would form it into a verse which would be repeatedly sung in this solo/chorus fashion. At times, all this was interrupted by a prolonged silence, but there was no time for sleep during this night.

During this dream night, the juniors have to keep their teeth clenched when talking. If they talked with an open mouth, they would waste too much of their breath and, consequently, not become strong. They also had to sit upright so as not to become weak minded.

During the Itokoni Sandalu, the men rushed out of the house early in the morning, shouting: "Huu, huu" which let everybody know of a dream that somebody would be killed. During this night, Kuti (Itokoni) saw a man go to the Lamdamanda hill, take a cicada out of the bamboo cluster, and kill it. After some discussion, Lombo put this into a song for the public:

Lamdamanda kote lee mende lao kalyamo, lee doko lao lyokena lalo.

A cicada was at Lamdamanda hill. The singing will be cut (stopped).

A few weeks later, Tundu of Lamdamanda-Mupowale was killed while having a smoke in the house of Tipitap, the Big Man of the Itokoni-Nei, his enemies.

If someone is seen in a dream, it is a sure sign that he will be killed or die. But I was told: "If the dreamer is a good friend of the one seen in the dream, he might tell him about it and thus save him from the consequences (dying or being killed)."

Pyaso (Itokoni) told me: The dreams told are sung in such a cryptic verse that the identity of the person concerned will not be revealed. Should a Sandalu man give the secret away to his friend, he will call a sorcerer who gives the man concerned a pandanus seed over which he has pronounced a spell. The man has to plant it "behind his back" (without looking at it) and thus will not suffer from the consequences of the dream.

Yanali (Sikini) told me: Should such a dream leak out, the man concerned in it has to kill a pig. The exact half of it, exact to half a snout and one ear, has to be given to the sorcerer to undo the dream. After having eaten the pig, the sorcerer mixes some of the blood with red clay and pours the mixture over the head of the man.

Seeing the face of a man in a dream is a certain indication that he will die (be killed). How this seeing of an enemy in such a dream worked was explained to me by Pyaso (Itokoni): E.g., the Waiminaukini had killed an Itokoni. The "spirit" of the dead man goes to the Waiminaukini and takes the "spirit" of a Waiminaukini and shows this "spirit" to the dreamer. Seeing the "spirit face" means, Itokoni will kill him. (Some say: the face of this "ghost man" is blackened and wears festival decorations.)

Yanali (Sikini) saw in such dreams the following men he later killed: Pokale, Laoae, Lakandale of the Kandawale, Endikio, Palya (Ambulyini), Aopupuni (Ambulyini). He found this last cooking a pig and killed him.

Kambao (Sikini) saw in a dream Loo (Mangalya) who soon fell ill and died, Petambone (Wapu) who was killed over an argument about a woman, and Yokopyao (Mangalya), a strong Big Man who became suddenly ill and died.

Lakalyo (Kumba) was "seen" killing his daughter; later on he killed his wife. When I questioned them about the mistake, they explained simply that the dreamer had not seen clearly whether it was the wife or daughter.

Such "seeing" in a dream is often not too clear, it may need some guessing. Thus, Alet (Mangalya) saw in his Sandalu dream the back and legs of a man of the Liunai (enemies). It could have been Pilyo or Kilyo. In the following fight, Kilyo was caught and killed. (I saw the blood on the road.)

j) Recital of the Journey of the Sandalu

During the dream nights, the Waiminaukini frequently used a recital with an ever recurring ending (*ae lalumu*: so they say) in an unusual cadence. This recital is also remarkable for naming in it objects belonging to a woman (*kendae*: wedding staff; *tuli tali pyoo*: a bride putting her rainshield and other items into the netbag).

Kipalawana sanda yati lao seteo ae lalumu
lyiki yati lao seteo ae lalumu
yuu toko pyoo epeo ... tambu toko pyoo epeo ...
tauli lao tali pyoo epeo ... nuu lao mandyo epeo ...
kendae laa minao epeo ...
moko pyale epeo ... kindupa pyale epeo ...
 (always ending: *ae lalumu ... epeo ae lalumu* or *seteo ae lalumu*: it or he says so.)
 Kipalan brought the Sandalu;
 he put the little sticks;
 he built an earth bridge – bamboo bridge when coming;
 he put the rainshield into the net bag – he carried a netbag;
 he carried a wedding staff;
 he hurt his foot – his toenail when coming.

Leklek had heard from his father, Kumbakali, that a woman “gave” the ancestors the Sandalu; but he could give no further explanation of this.

Since Leklek had been on the Sepik for a few years, I offered him the Sepik tradition: that at first the women had the bamboo flutes until the men, by a trick, took possession of the sacred flute. Leklek thought this to be a plausible comparison.

The recital is obviously incomplete. Kamen Tanga of the Waiminaukini told me so, but nobody so far could complete it.

k) *Kumba*, a Special Tree Ceremony

With the Waiminaukini, we lined up at about 5 a.m. near the gate and sang:

Wee Kipanyi kale maitakaita tole tenge Kiapopa tole katao pyalo.
 The *kiap* is with us when we make the Sandalu.
 (*Kiapo* means the government officer, or any white man. They were happy about my participation.)

Just before dawn, after the dream night, the participants (we) went to a nearby *kumba* tree. They tugged, pulled, and stroked branches and leaves of this tree. They rubbed their cheeks on the low hanging leaves; all this to help them grow and get strong. Following this, they rubbed their hands over the dew fresh grass and rubbed the moisture onto their cheeks – to be able to grow a strong beard. During all this activity they recited spells such as these:

Kumba ita minao lao pyalyo pyalyo ...
Lioko ita minao ...
Kumba tree branch, I move up ...
Lioko tree branch ...

Kumba ita minao lao pyandao, pyandao ...
Lioko ita ...
Kumba tree branch, I move down ...
Lioko tree branch, ...

Kumba ita minao lao kayo, kayo
Lioko ita ...
Kumba tree branch, I let go.
Lioko tree branch ...

l) Reburying the Sandalu Bamboos

Early in the morning after the dream nights, some participants had taken the bamboos from their hiding places within the walls and prepared them for burying by putting them ready near the house. Immediately after the *kumba* ceremony, two or three juniors left the camp with the bamboos for the burying place. *Mata* leaves were used as a plug for the bamboos, one for each participant. I could not get a uniform answer about the number of bundles: five containers to each bundle. One bundle for each mens' house. I was also told that some clans “mark” those bundles with strings according to the sib; thus, if the Sandalu is spoiled, they could easily find the guilty one. *Mata* leaves are again wrapped around the bundles, and these are tied together with the very strong *poto* and *amapi* vines. The bundles are buried in the swampy hiding place deep enough to be invisible, and a house is built over them with *kaita* tree branches.

While doing this, they say some spells to make the spot invisible to outsiders:

Balo soo lokalyi laa, Amu soo lokalyi laa.
Balo and amu grasses, come cover the spot!

Lyindi pii lao lanona, kusiti pii lao lanona, takonde ae lanona, lepende ae lanona.
 Song of the *lyindi* and *kusiti* birds, come down, close the eye balls, the eye lids, so nobody can find the spot.

Lyindi wanenganya lenge tamuta (kusiti ... kuiwana ...).
Lyindi, kusiti, kuiwana birds, block the eyes: blind all who come here.
 (*Tamuta* is the falling down of a land slide, symbolic.)

Enda koonya, wanenge mendeme elyoko lakao epatamo dokome doko imba nakandena laape sanga pyaape, kaingo pyaape, imba yalo pipitanga namba tange epato ongopa imba panape.

When the daughter of a poor lady comes to get shrubs, make her not see this place, cover it, hide it, keep it hidden. When I come again, show it to me.

Leklek of Waiminaukini told me later that those chosen for the “burial” have to be of good charac-



Fig. 6: Sent to rebury the bamboos

ter, especially regarding women, and, for about a week after the ceremony, they may not drink water nor take food from a young woman (who has not yet had her menopause). For a week, they should observe special rules for cooking and eating sweet potatoes.

m) Making of Wigs and Hoods

After the removal and reburying of the Sandalu bamboos, the rules of the enclosure is not so strict anymore; the participants may move outside for

short distances. Most of the time, from now on, is spent in making the new head coverings: wigs and hoods (caps). The men had, in preparation for this, collected human hair (from men only). The new wig is built onto their own hair. I admired their lengthy, painstaking, careful work on this operation. The hair is carded, then, with a thin stick (a cassowary quill or a bamboo needle), slowly worked into the original hair, and gradually formed into a wig.

While working on forming the wig, the “hair-dresser” was chewing sugarcane and the *nema* berries of a bush plant, *womungali*, resulting in



Fig. 7: Making of wigs

a mouthful of a sticky, purple juice mixture which he then spray-spat into the wig to give it a purple black appearance. This had to be repeated again and again until finally a perfect wig was made with no single hair out of place. Pieces of pork fat were heated over a fire and then allowed to drip onto the wig. This, with the sugarcane juice, makes the wig firm.

The juniors taking part for the first time are not allowed to wear the wig: instead they prepare a kind of hood cap, *kotale*. They beat and chew the bark tapa of the *kotale* tree (*Ficus dammaropsis*). *Kotale* is also the name of the finished product. This beaten-chewed "skin" is then stretched to make the form desired. (Once when I was stretching the dough for an apple strudel, my cook remarked: "You do it as with our *kotale*.")

This *kotale* is to be saturated with oil; a special oil from Lake Kutubu. Before the public appearance, this hood is drawn over a cap of moss on the head; the front hangs down over the eyes. If he wants to see properly, he has to lift his head right up.

During these preparations, they also assemble on the rehearsal place just outside the fence to practise the dream verses for the public appearance on the ceremonial ground.

n) The Fire Night

The night after the removal of the sacred bamboos is quite an exciting one. It could be called the "Fire Night" or the "Betrothal Night." During this night, some seniors perform love spells: *enda ita lelya miningi*. They poke and rake the fire in the middle of the house and think and whisper the names of their girl friends. Since the girls are not present, the boys may use their names. Some throw *take* leaves into the fire, or *palya* sticks. (*Take* leaves are very strong; people make mats of them.)

Some fire spells are the following:

Lakuyongo wayenge doko kandiamé lanyá nambao pilyongo ipu.

N... I have confused my thoughts. Now come.

N... waienge doko pyao longelyo.

N... I break her heart.

*Wambote kote tambungi ononya wanaku elyambu mende pilyamo lami,
dupanya waienge epe dupa lungulungu, mona epe dupa lungulungu yati minapya mina dondo lao kumapya.*

On the road at the foot of the Wambote hill some girls are gathered.

Confuse the heart and the soul of one that she will be holding the digging stick up in the air (lost in thought).

N... waetane doko yuku pyaku kipita doko yuku pyaku taita epato lelyamo duma epato lelyamo.

Pitpit flower I break, make her say: tomorrow I will come, the day after tomorrow I will come.

(*Pitpit* is wild sugarcane. Breaking the flower refers to blowing on it in her direction.)

Endanginya iuti yangao maimu olapo mena maili, yana maili, pete yako male yaka lao kaewape, lelyamo, mena anjakalo, dakemeaka anja kaewape? lelyamo. Wane lanyá kayo dakemeaka lanyá kaewape? Ipa kamua kayo, dakemeaka kamuwape? Lyikitanya piti, maku itanya piti.

Mother has cooked food and gives: you give it to the pig, dog, or leave it near the fireplace, under the wall. Did I look after the baby or not? Did I fill the water bottles (bamboos) or not? I am like one sitting on a thorncreeper, on a thorn tree branch.⁸

During the night, small groups of girls came singing and dancing from all directions to our camp. For some it took about two hours, arriving at two or three a.m., with entwined arms, often jumping in place with both feet to be heard at a distance. Their melodies were simple, but rather joyous and playful. Each of the prospective brides had a group of about five girls with her. As they came nearer, the men sang alternately with the girls' songs, but in a sedate, solemn melody, mostly their "veiled" dream verses.

Before the girls finally came to the camp, the juniors had to lie down and cover their heads with the *tuli* (rain shield): they were not to look at the girls and could speak only with clenched teeth lest they be recognized. On their arrival, the girls grabbed the special bunch of leaves (*kitambo*) from under the right bracelet of their friend and put it under their left one. Some told me later: if she is truly the only girlfriend, she will take the leaf bundles from both of his arms. If he has several girl friends, his favourite will do it or just "first come, first served."

After a few bantering remarks, he gives her, not directly, which would be immodest, a piece of glowing timber. This amounts almost to a public espousal. After lighting their cigarettes, the girls begin to move off singing and dancing as they came. Some time during the return they throw away the fire stick.

o) Laka Morning

This is the last event before their public appearance (*laka*: tear, break down).

⁸ Pori reports: "While stirring up the fire they call to their lovers, 'Enda ita lelya miningi.' ... The stirring up of the fire is to make the girl sexually frustrated and stimulated" (1978: 90).

A mock attack is made on the camp by a group of girls. One man, or some, are appointed to stop the girls from coming through the fence. With the Waiminaukini I was appointed for that duty. I put up a strong defence, but eventually they broke through the fence.

I did not understand this attack then, but later on it was explained to me. Girls who have received the fire and jilted girls, accompanied by a small group of girl friends, come early in the morning to the camp. Some are anxious to sing to their friends who gave them the fire; some are disappointed because they did not get it as they had expected. This latter group try, in revenge, to break down the gate and fence, even to ruin the Sandalu house (not used anymore). Hence this simulated defence of the camp. All this is accompanied by corresponding songs:

Kipani kale yati ongoma lakiamaka yapa ipu lao lanyeta laape.
Kipani man, come let me in, open the gate quickly.

Kipani kale pyati ongonya api epata lao sipyamo? Limbakai kopo minao pyakalyalo.

In the Kipani Sangai who was to come? I am coming, holding the "bride" like a fighting shield.

(*Limbakai*: child, by a special mother relationship term. Symbolically it means bride.)⁹

Other groups of girls bring the decorations needed for the solemn public appearance:

bandala or *kepokali*: sticks from cassowary thigh bones worn over the ears;

saetenge: forehead band made of cowrie shells;

tame: a big shell worn on the chest;

kupi, *lyandipae*, *yakati*: belts;

yambale: the net apron, put in numerous folds. (I counted 12 over the belt.)¹⁰

A good net apron (*yambale*) is a very expensive item. It is made in a long process from the tender branches of the *kanamae* shrub spun by rolling the bark like strings over their (women's) thighs rubbed with ashes to make the strong twine. The slow knitting process is carried out by an endless turning of the hand. Wirz says of this net apron: "Die Schnur, aus denen ein solches Netz [= *yambale*] gefertigt wird, ist aus Gnetum-Bast hergestellt, und nicht selten wird Cuscuswolle mit eingedreht" (1952: 27).

⁹ My enquiries have failed to find this connection between *limbakai* and bride [ed.].

¹⁰ Westermann writes: "Men's clothing consisted basically of a net apron which was draped sporran fashion over a cane belt. . . . The apron, which was usually 10 to 12 feet long and about 2 feet in width was made from hand braided string" (1968: 157).

p) Public Appearance on the Ceremonial Ground

After the girls have left, the men dress up for the final rehearsal on the prepared place near the house outside the camp. It takes quite some time before the critical eye of the ritual leader is satisfied with their whole appearance, especially the *yambale*. Cordyline leaves, *akaipu*, are used to cover their buttocks.

The front coverings have to be in perfect condition. I once counted 24 of these layers of *yambale*, doubled over the belt, reaching from hip to the feet. To prevent the oil put on the body later from spoiling the string net apron, special leaves, *kikale*, are tucked in over the belts.¹¹

During the final rehearsal, a serious mood prevailed; no chatting or laughing.

When everything had been done to the satisfaction of the ritual leader, the men, all their faces blackened, prepared for the descent to the *kamapu*, the ceremonial ground. At about 2 p.m., the ritual leader went to the front, then came the juniors holding their spears shoulder high, the seniors with bow and arrow, and the graduating seniors (for their last participation) with a big walking stick. About half way down the mountain, a halt was made for another check and oil was rubbed all over the body. Then the final descent followed. Meanwhile, the Sandalu men were celebrated by small groups of girls at different spots, singing, jumping on both feet, making their grass skirts sway.

In single file (I was given the place immediately after the leader), the participants walked on to the ceremonial ground, watched by vast crowds of people; mere onlookers, people with interest in the *tee*, people interested in the imminent fight, people somehow connected with a future marriage of one of the seniors.

Having arrived at the ceremonial ground, they lined up, the seniors in the middle, flanked by the juniors. (After the arrival, I took my place among the onlookers.) Now they began their dream songs to an attentive audience. The appointed man gave a solo, and the rest then repeated the dream verse again and again. These are tense moments. Even during one of the rehearsals, one excited soloist had got stuck. The participants know the content of

¹¹ Wirz says: "Dieses sehr kostbare Öl erhält man durch Tausch von den Eingeborenen der Landschaft Kandip . . . Die *Kandip*-Leute verschaffen sich dieses Öl von den *Mandi*-Leuten, die noch weiter südlich, wohl nahe der Grenze von Papua und dem Territory of New Guinea ansässig sind" (1952: 31).

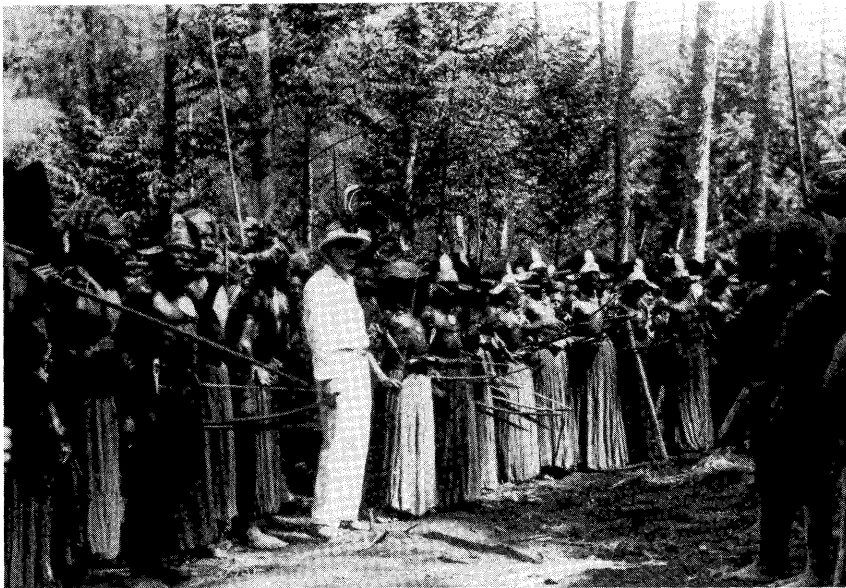


Fig. 8: Final parade

such dreams while the public can only guess what the verses, veiled in symbolism, might contain.

I was told about one occasion when the men lined up for singing pushed away a man who had only socially participated with a song:

Wane yango katapu angenya katandili imba yaingyo sipya laape kanda.

You wish to join us here. There is no room for you.

After this has gone on for some time, a small group of girls may rush up to the line of the Sandalu men, pull a man out, tear off the special armlet leaves (*kate*), rub soil or mud over his face and arms, and even drag him to the ground as he is hindered in his movements by the layers of his net loin cloth and the concern that his new wig might suffer damage.¹²

I was given two contradictory explanations for this mock attack. The man had given fire also to another girl friend during the Fire Night. So the one girl friend who wanted him more desperately or was quicker, tried to disfigure him, to make him less acceptable to her rival. Or a jilted girl friend who has not been given fire tried thus, assisted by her friends, to take revenge on her former friend. But she herself will not touch him.

The dancing and singing goes on till nearly

dusk, the Sandalu men in their line on the ceremonial ground and circles of men and girls (women), *alaputi*, on the fringe. These circles at times sing obscene songs:

Dakena mende liakapuli yaka lao pyakalenge dama kalyamo kanda.

Look at that girl with the shabby grass skirt; she is anxious to find a man to have intercourse with.

Gradually the Sandalu part of this festival changes over into a *tee* discussion among the Big Men. Distribution of yam or taro, a highly appreciated food among the Enga, to people called up by name symbolizes this new section of the festival.

For many days after this public appearance, some senior participants go, after being invited, to the house of their girl friends to whom they had given the fire, for courting songs: *enda lakungi*. In the house of the girl's mother, they, with other invited boys and girls, sit near the fire. Love songs go on, mostly in veiled language, till about 4 a.m. On such occasions, a girl who had attacked her friend, may make compensation to her disgraced boy friend by offering him a good meal, the core of which is a leg of pork or at least a sizeable piece.

q) Songs of the Girls during the Sandalu

These fall into three categories: when they pick up the fire from their boy friends, especially if he participates for the first or last time; when they sing on the roads; when they drag a participant out of the line on the ceremonial ground.

¹² Westermann writes: "When the young men return from the seclusion hut and stand before the people in their bachelor finery, young girls who feel they have a special interest in a young man try to pull him to their clan group to claim him as a prospective husband. Often three or four girls, each of whom has been told she is the only girl in the world, will begin to fight over the young man" (1968: 177).

For most of the songs, only a paraphrase is given here as explaining all the symbolism would be too lengthy (see Appendix).

In these songs, as in all love songs, the girls refer to their friends, with the name of the respective Sandalu place or the father's or mother's name. Within a certain relationship, they may only call his name with the prefix "Limbakai." The following song (Itokoni) may serve as an example.

Limbakai Lombo doko luvingi kalane balu dakenya koo nyoo pilyamo, endangi dake ita liakao pyakalyalo.

My "child" Lombo, getting on in age, is stubborn about giving me the fire. I, the "mother," will go up the tree (seduce him).

(Lombo's mother of the Yangaukini clan married an Itokoni man. This makes Lombo a brother for Yangaukini children. Lombo's girl friend came with Yangaukini girls to the Sandalu and called him *limbakai*: "brother" or "child.")

Appendix

1. Songs of Boys in the Sandalu Ritual

a) Songs in the Sandalu House in Praise of the Sandalu

Pete poko pyate dupa pyao katape kale yako lalo lamo kanda.
You may move over to the girls' side I am thinking of going to the Sandalu.

(A Song during the "love songs" at night with their girl friends, showing the influence of the Sandalu on their every day lives. Normally the boys eventually move over to their friends. He will stay away.)

A "duet" between senior and junior on the way to the Sandalu:

J. *Wane yango maite ulipiaka kaita yati koo mendeme pyalumu.*

Is the house high up on the mountain? It is hard to go on the difficult track.

S. *Wane yango lalu sulu pyoo katenge pyalya lanyo Kepala tipanya setalo.*

You were a child. Now I bring you to the Kepala Sandalu.

S. *Wane yango endanginya kendemane pyoo katenge pyalya lanyo Kepala tipanya setalo.*

As a child you had to obey your mother. Now I bring you to the Kepala Sandalu.

Nilikende epelyamo tolao kale kaetepe laia doko pitipyamo pii salo.

The government forbids the Sandalu, yet I'll go.

(*Nilikende*: wire rope: handcuff: Government. Everybody had to work for the Government one day a week on the road. This made participating in the Sandalu impossible.)

Kipani kale wambaleaka kamesio nili kende walisame pii salo.
For a long time I forgot about you, Sandalu, now I'll go.
(Here *nilikende*: wire rope: radio-telephone: I'll send word.)

Kipani mumi tepilinu lelyamo malala anda pyoo lakyo lelyamo.
All my thoughts go to the Sandalu. I'm quite excited about it.

Kipani tokani ulusaka lee nyingi ita pokao epao amanya ipu.

Bring the Sandalu leaf. Put it near the sleeping place, so we'll have dreams.

Kepala paki koo mendeme sio laleno tae pundao epo lyamo aepa.

Sandalu, don't stay hidden. I came to see you.

Kipani tokane dulusaka lee nyingi api tungi kalyamo lao pilipi?
Kipani Sandalu you're far away. With whom will I stay?

Kepala tokani yako lao epao kalyo, langa yati elyambu minao pyalipi.

I am happy with the Kepala Sandalu. Give me a good dream.
(*Langa yati*: timber that splits easily: a good dream.)

Kepala tokani yaka lao katao epo, apikisa soo lungu petato?
I am happy with the Kepala Sandalu. Who else will see a good dream?

Kipani kale yako lelyo likitanya kisa katenge, kombe angi mende langipu.

I am happy with the Kepala Sandalu, but restless. Give me a good dream.

(*Likitanya kisa katenge*: sitting on a thornbush: restless.)

Kipani mapya topolingi angi mende lao nakande kukumapi dee pambae pisingi.

I cannot see a dream now. I'll come tomorrow night to ask for it.

Mupaliaka epenganya naepatenno kale ita mende pyakate aipa?
We put the bamboo, but no dream comes: has somebody had sex?

(*Ita pyakata*: go up a tree: have sex.)

b) Songs in the Sandalu House Referring to the tee

Poketa myoko kee lao maka pilyamo kaelyongo lelyamo lao puu.
We are tired of asking for the tee. We won't ask again.

Mae myoko kee lao nyekelyo yawateno dokonyaka laa.
Mae have tied up their pigs. You can plan how to cook them.

Nongopilipili lao mape kale pyato, nongo pingi api mana lepe?
You wish to advise me when to make the tee; it's up to me.

Mae myoko kungu upanya kiakao katena sae nyilino akali apimi nyilipi?

I am calling for the Pig tee. Who'll call for the Shell tee?
(Reference to the "pig showing" and "shell procession" of the tee.)

Kupaliwana ipananu wako lao kanda Paitape pete sapulyamo kanda.

(A man of Koepa saw in a dream kupaliwana [Sikini Mangalya] asking Koepa and Kalipa [subclans of Sikini] for live pigs for the tee. They answered: Paitape is dry: no pigs.)

Mae myoko kumatale ipu lao lipu dake petae kalyamo kanda.
Let the Mae pigs come, stay here.

(The tee may pass over some clans.)

Poketa mumi sakata lyaa sakata, mee mende lelyokana saa.
Poketa don't frown. I only say it as a joke. I can make the tee when I will.

Kaita ipa kome koko lyoo ipiamo kale pyato kaeapi lama epo.
The current of the river tried to prevent me. Yet I went to the Sandalu.

(Seeing a swollen river means that the tee is coming near.)

c) Songs in the Sandalu House Referring to Death, Killing, and Fighting

Kuimala kale akali pingi minapae kutapyamo kandatala pyato.
I, Kuimala, am a man who hurts. I looked for someone to kill.
(An Itokoni saw in a dream their fight with the Waiminaukini.)

Maetange doko pundala patamo kandao kale ita doko deaka sati lato.

When the old sugarcane is broken; I'll ask again in the Sandalu.
(Old sugarcane with many shoots: a big man to be killed.)

Yangi anda kilya wapu lao pupyamo minapu mende pama lya-kambu pyalo.

The shaking purlin of the house I hold firm: the grubs I'll kill.
(It refers to grubs on *loko*i trees near the Sikini/Gaikin border: Gaikins will kill many Sikinis, but the Sikinis will kill a Gaikin leader.)

Kopona yaka waka mende Kepala kote alo pyao aipala kepe lenge pyoo.

I saw an outsider come to the Sandalu: hiding, I watched him closely.

(He saw who he was; he will kill him in the next fight.)

Lilyapu wana lake doko yukua yukua, yako lenge lukunaka pyandato.

Lilyapu came to shake the gate: I'll chase him into the house (kill him).

Akalimi angia tipa lao nyipyamo tanga ipu pyoo tambu kame pyoo.

He saw men coming to fight; he won, surrounded them, and took their place.

Lilyapu wana elyambu pilyo late lamina lyambua dake pyukua pyukua lalipu.

Lilyapu, you say you are many; come, show yourselves (i.e., we'll kill you).

Kipani Mapya luingimi pyakala pakata kambu olapo talipyaka pyoo.

The *kipani* bird is obstinate: I sent men to the two doors lest it escape.

Leokund kaiti doko lake ongonya lee nyili yako lenge lukunaka pyandato.

Seeing Leokund at the corner of the door, I pushed him inside.
(A few weeks later, Leokund died of extreme diarrhoea.)

Kaele kate Kepala dingi gusa lama pamo.

A Kaele man came to the Kepala, drank water, and went.
(He died soon after.)

Elyambu dake katao yaku pyoo mendepe sanda anda lelya mi-nao salamo.

We are growing old together but one of us will die.
(*Lelya*: a spark of fire flaring up.)

d) On the Ceremonial Ground

Lined up on the ceremonial ground in all their splendour the senior participants repeatedly slap their thighs, singing in a teasing, boasting manner towards the girls (they are no longer mere boys):

*Peangi matapu peangi lao pando lapoko,
peangi yambale peangi lao pando lapoko.*
My net apron, my belt is in a perfect condition.

(If there were the least imperfection, this would indicate an early death for the wearer.)

Kanda mano dapuama mepi aki miaka pyala epato – balu nita yale tapyalo.

Kanda mano dapuama mepi aki miaka pyala epato – konjamea-ka matapu konjiamo pyalanya.

Kanda mano dapuama mepi aki miaka pyala epato – konjamia-ka yambale konjiamo pyalanya.

Look! My wig is shining like the sun.

Look! I put on a cane belt.

Look! I wear a man's loin covering.

2. Songs of Girls during Sandalu Time

Wane yango kale pilyamo pyaoanyaka pyalamini, mapu lombo kutu minao salepe.

Young men are at the Sandalu, you just think of getting sweet potatoes.

(On the way to the Sandalu, she found her friend at his father's house.)

Kambi doko lakupapu lakunaka setao palenge kale yako lao sipyanya pyalyalo.

We sang love songs, now he wants to go to the Sandalu; I let him go.

Kepala pote tumu taka nao katenge, tumu tange moko minao epo.

You ate (all) my sweet potatoes; I followed the sweet potatoes. I came.

(*Tumu*: string around small bundle of sweet potatoes.)

Imala kale yapa pala puu lyandi doko epatongo puu.

You go ahead quickly to the Sandalu; I'll follow you.

Sambaka kale pilyamo lamini. Makapu pote saka mandio epo, yangawapi nalamo lao leepe.

He is said to be at the Sambaka Sandalu. Does he want the sweet potatoes raw or cooked?

Kipani kale aipaleny pyao palyape, kandalanya bui, kana talo.

Where do you sleep, by moon and starlight I am coming to see you.

Sambaka kale kungusaka pyao palenge, wanepipa dana lao pyakalyalo.

The road to the Sambaka is steep. I have no baby; I can manage.

Pakali kale napingi pyalamona yamataka lakatenga yako.

You have not yet gone to the Sandalu. It may be hard for you.

Kambi doko waka liaka tuu pataki. Wee lapu pungi dake kambe-lya.

He has another friend. I try to sing but my heart breaks.

Pakali yako lenge yaka palene pyati ongonya kambo doko yao.

Now you can go to the Sandalu, come back, cook the pig (marry me).

Kepala kale mange latu pyoo, liakalanya kepo kolao pyoo.

Now you are at the Sandalu. After this, I'm going to seduce you.

Pakali kale taita lapo napyatena lita ongonya katapala ipu.

You won't go to the Sandalu again, stay there, and come.

Kipani kale yomo doko indupa lita lao pilino makapu kinda tundu katao epelyo.

You are old, finished with the Sandalu. I let my grass skirt fly.
I come.

(*Tundu katao*: with the string of the grass skirt only.)

Kepewana Pindame wane lapotanga leepiana lapotapi liakatale kata.

Pindam, son of Kepe, you made promises to two girls, you can marry both (so he did).

Pakali kale dulusaka pyao palenge watao pitato kepea kinda tambata.

You faraway Puaka boy, I'll follow you. My grass skirt will "break."

Nao paenge anja kale pyala mendepe ipa male mange latu pyoo.
You who roam around too much and don't know where the Sandalu is. I'll show you the spring.

Kambi doko soo pato ita yale kenda pitamo koe lao makatapu panya.

When I carry my friend he will be heavy like timber. Out of breath, I'll rest and go on again.

(*Ita yale*: heavy timber, symbolic for good friend.)

Imale tato lumbu lumbu yanga kakilyema epelyongo yanga.

You put a long timber into the fire. When I come, put the other half in.

Imala kale pyati ongonya imaita lumbu lumbu dyemo, pyapali-ma (puu lao) dyemo.

Imala boy, you gave me a big fire.

(A rather symbolic, cryptic song in connection with giving the "fire." *Imaita*: ridge pole of the house. The clans of the boy and girl had been fighting in the past. Many *imaita* (houses) have been burnt, people killed. Now she tells her friend: go, think of the *imaita*, i.e., there'll soon be a fight again.)

Lepa ita lumbu lumbu dyemo, yako lenge dokomiaka dyemo.

You gave me the whole piece of wood (fire), thank you, I wanted it.

The following two songs are from the last *laka* morning:

Sambaka kale pyati ongonya lakyamaka pyala pato yapa ipu lao langeta laape.

I come to the Sambaka Sandalu, let me in, open the door quickly.

Kipani kale pyati ongonya api epata lao sipyamo limbakai kopo minalao epo.

Kipani Sandalu asks: who is coming? I come carrying your "child" (like a shield).

(*Limbakai*: child sister in a special relationship; here: bride).

The following three songs were on the ceremonial ground – dragging out a boy:

Kambi doko tundumaka pyalo nanyatopi yaka lao pyalo.

I rubbed soil over him. If he doesn't want to marry me, it's all right.

Kambi doko soo nyala epelyongo kaita doko beto pyanya seta.
I come to drag him out of the line; give me room.

Kambi doko pindi piamo apinya pindi piape mendepe doko minao pindalanya kalyo.

No other girl has chosen him. I myself will drag him out.

The following three songs are from when they insult each other on the ceremonial ground:

Kuimala kame dake wamba nyilyamo limakae mandita mendeme pyapo?

Poor girl, you want my old friend, could you have children?

Enda mende lakuilyo lao lapyo kandapu pyakalenge ama kalyamo kanda.

Look, is that the vile girl my friend told me he had befriended?

Pealiwana panali yangao mandelyo lamo tependa mandakapa laape?

I from nearby bring him food. Is he from so far away that he told you to bring him food?

The following two songs are sung in circles (*alakuli*) near the Sandalu line:

Dakenya mande liakapuli yaka lao pyakalenge dama kalyamo kanda.

Look at her with the shabby grass skirt, she wants someone to sleep with her.

Kambi doko kakakinya palya nakande makapu kinda lakakyaka pyoo.

He shouldn't hide in the folds of the rain cape. I'll get that Sandalu man. I'll "fold" (shorten) my grass skirt.

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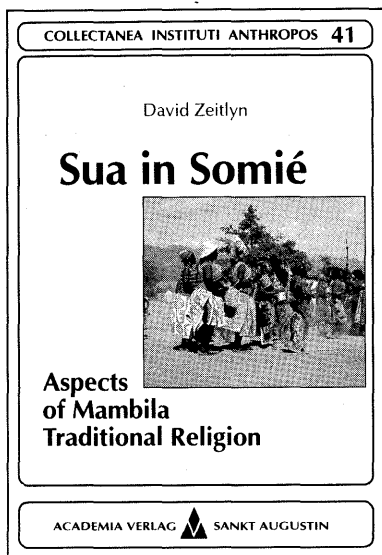
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David Zeitlyn

Sua in Somié

Aspects of Mambila Traditional Religion
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1994

This work is an analysis of Mambila religion based on fieldwork in Somié village, Cameroon. An ethnographic and historical introduction to the Mambila is followed by an account of their religious concepts. It is argued that, despite their adherence to Christianity (and to Islam), traditional practices continue to be of great importance in everyday life. In order to examine traditional practice descriptions are given of the masquerades and the different oath-taking rites. Translated transcripts of the different forms of the *sua*-oath form the empirical core of the book. The transcripts illustrate the way that Mambila experience and understand the meaning of *sua*. Finally, problems are examined inherent in the analysis of non-literate societies lacking a reflective tradition, and in particular, societies lacking precise, structured religious concepts. These problems have important implications which are discussed in the final discussion of the relationships between religion, politics, and "symbolic power".

David Zeitlyn is a British Academy Fellow at the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Oxford and a Research Fellow at Wolfson College, Oxford, U.K. He has been researching the Mambila since 1985 and has undertaken several periods of fieldwork mainly in Cameroon but also in Nigeria. He is working on a book on divination developing some of the arguments of "Professor Garfinkel Visits the Soothsayers: Ethnomethodology and Mambila Divination" (*Man* 25. 1990: 654-666). His research among the Mambila is currently examining the use of naturally occurring language as evidence for the anthropological analysis of kinship structures, as outlined in "Reconstructing Kinship or the Pragmatics of Kin Talk" (*Man* 28. 1993: 199-224).

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