

Chapter IV

The Founding Myths of Yéi-nan Ritual

1. Editor's introduction

Verschuieren's accounts of Yéi-nan myth and ritual abound with references to his dispute with Wirz and Nevermann about the presence of totemism among the Yéi, and about their identification of the *yevale* with ancestors. In this dispute he went to the extent of denying the presence of any form of totemism among the Yéi, except where this had been borrowed from the Marind. In this he was decidedly wrong; his own data prove that totemism constituted part of their tradition. However - and here he was right - it was a form of totemism which differed widely from the cult totemism of the Marind which, combined as it is with multiple totemism and an elaborate ancestor cult, is of the Australian type. The totemism of the Yéi is more like that of the Keraki as described by Williams, and that of the Kiwai as we know it from the works of Landtman. It is a kind of totemism with hardly any ritual implications. Unfortunately, Verschuieren was not an anthropologist and was not familiar with any of these books.

His opinion that the *yevale* are *not* ancestors, and certainly not ancestors of the type of the Marind-anim *dema*, is better founded, though at times doubts about this arise. Many *yevale* are localized spirits who stand in a certain relation to a particular local *jéi* and can be invoked by its members. However, the myths related in Chapter IX depict them as a kind of spirits which are more akin to those of Landtman's Folktales than to the Marind-anim *dema*. The few examples we came across in Section 3 of the previous chapter, as well as those we shall find in Chapter VIII, point in the same direction. The Yéi are always on their guard against the *yevale*, who, more often than not, are harbingers of evil. Actually, there is only one weak point in Verschuieren's argument for refusing to classify the *yevale* with ancestors: the few times he speaks of the Yéi-nan ancestors he omits to mention the native term by which they are designated by his informants. Nevertheless, this can hardly be a reason for not placing in him the confidence which he deserves as a gifted and dedicated observer. The less so because the data furnished by him form a consistent and coherent whole. They confront us with an out-and-out phallic cult of which Verschuieren himself had not even an inkling. Under these circumstances we are well advised to take him at his word.

Two errors barred his way to a correct understanding of his mythical material. The one is his underestimation of the significance of headhunting in Yéi-nan culture as a result of his regarding them (like so many others) as victims rather than as agents

of the practice. Nevertheless, the fact that the Yéi preserve not only the skulls but also the long bones of their victims and arrange these into a kind of still-life displayed on the central pole of the communal house - the Yéi are wholly unique in this respect - should have warned him that there was more to it.

His second error was the result of his being confused by the fact that the Yéi have two main myths of origin. His conclusion was that there are two mythical cycles, the one social and the other magico-religious, and he treated these separately, the one (the cycle concerned with Ndiwe, Nak and Telle) in the context of the origin of the clans and moieties, the other in that of magic and religion, disregarding the fact that this second "cycle" is not really a cycle. It begins with one important myth, the myth of the *orei* tree, which has little to do with the other "religious" myths, which are relegated here to Chapter IX. The myth of the *orei* tree, however, is given a place in this chapter, not because it stands in contrast to the myths of Ndiwe, Nak and Telle, but because it forms their complement. The reasons for this will become apparent in due course.

2. *The myth of Ndiwe*

Like the upper Bian people and the Boadzi, the Yéi assume that they did not originate in their present area of residence. Together with the Boadzi, the upper Bian Marind, the Aroba [a Suki group?] and the Kanum, they owe their existence to Ndiwe, the demiurge who among all these tribes plays the role of originator. Ndiwe (also called Ndiwa or Nggiwe) is not a creator, but rather an improver who brings the shape of man to perfection and gives him his social institutions. Before Ndiwe's intervention the upper Bian Marind had no females, the Boadzi lived underground as pigs and the Aroba were cassowaries at the mercy of a malignant supreme being. The Yéi, for their part, lived somewhere in the middle Fly region¹ in a subterranean hole, together with the other "nations" just mentioned. None of them had either mouths or noses, eyes or ears. It was Ndiwe who, by cutting them open, finished their human shape. They immediately started talking. Ndiwe listened. Hearing their speech, he said to some of them: "You are upper Bian Marind", to others: "You are Boadzi", while others again he called Yéi, and finally there were those whom he called Kanum. He then divided them into groups and escorted them one by one to the country where they belonged: the Marind to the upper Bian, the Boadzi to the upper Fly, and the Yéi-nan to the Maro.

In a more detailed version we are told that Ndiwe came from the east or northeast [the three documents are not consonant on this point]. He came from the middle Fly, and was accompanied by his old mother. He brought the ancestors of the Yéi. They entered the Maro region at Karopo, a place on the upper Bârkí River, east of the heart of the present-day Yéi-nan territory. Arriving on the Burrau (the Maro River), they discovered the territory to be occupied by other people. But Ndiwe commanded: "These people do not belong here. We must chase them away; so we must fight them". (According to an alternative version, told at Kwél, the Burrau did

not yet exist at that time. It came into being after the first occupants had been expelled.)

The ancestors who followed Ndiwe did not have any personal names. Ndiwe now gave each of the men his proper name, at the same time handing him a *kupe*, a disc-shaped stone with a hole in the centre. Through this hole a stout stick, usually a rattan one, may be passed, making the whole thing into a club, the formidable weapon of the Yéi. But the stones may be of various kinds. Besides the disc-shaped stones, the *kupe* proper, there are also egg-shaped ones (*bawa*) and stones that are notched (*giri-giri*). They all serve the same purpose, and the term *kupe* can be used for all of them.

Editor's comment. The *kupe* may also be placed on the *pöggul*, the ceremonial staff (and club) of the *gab-elul* (headman) described in Section 2 of Chapter II. The *pöggul* is the exact counterpart of the Marind *pahui*, described and discussed in Van Baal 1966: 617ff., 662f., and 730-43 as one of the latter's most important ritual attributes. Among the Marind the disc-shaped stone (*kupa*) is a female symbol, the egg-shaped one (*wagané*; Yéi: *bawa*) a male one (Van Baal 1966:273). On their use as parts of the *pahui* (Yéi: *pöggul*) and their possible association with each of the two moieties see Van Baal 1966 Chapter XII, in particular p. 742. It is not impossible that the Yéi made a similar distinction, equipping the Nak with a *bawa* and the Telle with a *kupe* for their *pöggul*. Unfortunately, this must remain hypothetical.

Another interesting character in this context is the old mother who accompanies Ndiwe on his peregrinations in the territory of the Yéi. She plays an important part in Boadzi myth and ritual, notably in the ritual surrounding headhunting. What is more, she is identified with the stone disc on the *pahui* of the Boadzi, an association which is in perfect harmony with her place in the present story. For relevant literature see Van Baal 1966:590-7, 726ff., and in particular 730.

Ndiwe, then, handed such a stone to each of his companions, simultaneously defining the receiver's identity by bestowing a personal name on him, viz. *Kupe gön, bu Dambu ... Kupe gön, bu Kello* ("Here is a *kupe*, you are Dambu ... you are Kello"), etc.² And this, the Yéi will add, was the origin of the *jéi*. [Note that Dambu and Kelle are *jéi* names!]

But Ndiwe did more. According to an informant from Kwél, Ndiwe had kept behind two *kupe* passed over a shaft topped by a beautifully carved fretwork blade. Once everyone had received a *kupe*, Ndiwe let the men run a race. The two winners were Nak and Telle. Each of them received one of these beautiful ceremonial clubs, *pöggul*, and thus became the first *gab-elul*, war-leaders, of the Yéi-nan.

Now fighting broke out. They first expelled the people of the southerly area and chased them down the Maro River to beyond Tayas. Then they returned to drive out the occupants of the upper reaches of the river and chased them to the Kumbe and the Bian. On their flight the Northerners left their drums behind, which were taken by Ndiwe and his men. Then Ndiwe said: "Now this is your country", and he gave each of the ancestors a territory of his own. These ances-

tors then took their *kupe* and everyone laid his *kupe* down in the centre of his own territory. And this division of the land into *jéi* territories has persisted until the present day. After the division of the available land among the *jéi*, a big feast was held at Gelel, a place near Benóng [exact location unknown]. (According to an alternative version from Bupul the Yéi-nan originated here, in Gelel, during the celebration. They emerged one by one from a hole in the ground.)

The story testifies that the *jéi* originated as territorial groups, and that their names are those of their ancestors [cf. above and note 2], which names sometimes do and sometimes do not have a meaning in the Yéi language. There is no question of any totemic relation, however. Down to the present day the *jéi*-stones are still kept where they were laid down, each in its own territory. They are called *komen*, in order to distinguish them explicitly from other stones and objects which spring from the *yevale* themselves and will be discussed later [which promise remained unfulfilled]. These *komen* are deeply revered but not worshipped. They are simply designated the "heart" or "navel" of the territory.

[In ms. C the data on the *komen* are summarized as follows: The ancestors laid down their *kupe* as the navel of their property in the centre of the territory assigned to them. Their descendants, who have adopted the name of their ancestor as the name of their group, consider the still treasured *kupe* as the centre of their inherited territory. These stones, *komen*, are reverently preserved but not worshipped, unless, as is quite often the case, they have been chosen by *yevale* for their abode.]

Editor's comment. The passage just quoted from ms. C is of interest because it gives substance to the distinction made between reverence and worship. Evidently, there is no question of ritual taking place at the location of the *komen* unless it is at the same time the residence of a *yevale*. The same idea is expressed in the curious passage introducing the account of the myth of Ndiwe in ms. B, a passage which we have passed over in silence because it contains a few elements which, in an introductory statement, would have a confusing rather than an elucidating effect. The passage, which is more in place here, runs as follows:

"As has already been noted by Wirz, the entire *jéi* system is focused on a stone of the most fantastic form. Every *jéi*, as a territorial group, has somewhere in its territory, on some spit of land or other - sometimes in a coconut garden, then again in a clearing in a dark forest, in a bamboo grove, or simply in the centre of an open plain - a stone which is guarded with every sign of respect. The ground around the stone is kept scrupulously clean, and croton shrubs are planted around it, with one or more hardwood poles added. These stones are called *komen*; they are the permanent property of the local *jéi* and are deeply respected." However, as even Wirz admitted: "Der Schwerpunkt liegt nicht so sehr in dem Naturobjekt aber im Jewale, das er unter Umständen darstellt" (i.e., It is not so much the natural object as the *yevale* occasionally represented by it that matters) (Wirz 1925 (III):202).³

Although the quotation is incorrect and out of place - as Wirz said this not of the *komen* but of the totems which he believed to be associated with the *yevale* - the author's intention is evident: the place derives its ritual importance from the occasional presence of a *yevale*. The description of its outward appearance is intriguing. Why are one or more hardwood poles planted here? The answer is not too difficult. What can they represent but the shaft of the club or *pöggul* from which the ancestors took their *kupe* when, on their return from the campaign against the foreign occupants of their territory, they put it down at the navel of their newly acquired territory? It is a tempting thesis, reminiscent of the procedure, described later on in this chapter (Section 7), whereby a returning war party pay their respects to the *arow yevale*, where the *gab-elul* then plants the shaft of his *pöggul* after taking off its *kupe* (the fretwork blade having already disappeared in the battle).

It is a hypothesis to which we shall have to return later. Here another problem demands our attention. It is raised by Verschueren's description of the *komen* as stones of the most fantastic shape, while at the same time assuring us that they are *kupe*. He does not explain the discrepancy. Apparently we must assume that the Yéi, in the firm conviction that their *komen* are the one-time *kupe* of their ancestors, did not bother too much about such deviations in form. They were once *kupe*, and in things religious this is enough. Nevertheless, further inquiry into this matter teaches us that the Yéi were not as indifferent on this point as Verschueren's rather haphazard description suggests. Wirz, too, has seen these stones and has given a short description of five of them. Two were stones of the size of a human head (III:204), the third was a real *kupe* (III:207), the fourth was a stone with an artificially incised groove, suggesting its former use in grinding axe-stones, and the fifth again a *kupe*, but this time with an unfinished hole (both p. 208).

3. The myths of Nak and Telle

[The mythical account of the exploits of the ancestors was broken off at the point where they met at Gelel to hold a big feast. From now on no more mention is made of Ndiwe. After having divided the people into clans and moieties and distributed land and *kupe* among them, he fades out of the story.]

The feast at Gelel was a glorious feast, but it ended in chaos, as a result of the crime committed by Belám, a Marind man of the Kumbe River who, with his wife Genggen and their baby daughter, lived in the bush not far from Gelel.

Every day Genggen went to the nearby swamp to catch fish, leaving Belám alone with their little daughter. Belám was working on a new drum, which would bear his own name, Belám. However, he also had to take care of the child. It was so young that it was still lying in a cradle. This caused him a great deal of trouble and vexation. When his wife stayed away too long, this irritated him. Nevertheless, she brought home fish and sago, and thus he controlled himself and kept quiet. In the long run, the constantly returning bur-

den of having to look after the child became too much for him, the more so because he heard the sounds of the dancing and singing of the merry-makers at Gelel every night. His drum was almost finished and, putting the final touches to his work, he sang: *Oh, oh, oh, Belám ah, Gelel ago ah*. But the child started crying again. It drove Belám out of his mind. Suddenly he arose, took the baby, cradle and all, and threw it into the fire, where everything burned to ashes. He then took his drum and hurried off to Gelel, where he was jostled into the centre of the crowd of dancers, so that his wife would not be able to find him.

On coming home, Genggen soon discovered what had happened. She was furious. She fastened the sharp nails of a cassowary to her fingers and toes and tried them out on a banana stem. They passed right through. She now turned herself into a lean dog and went to Gelel in search of her husband. All over the feasting-ground she sniffed at the legs of the dancers, who, in their irritation, kicked her off, wondering who the owner of that lean dog could be. But Genggen did not give up till she became tired and lay down on a rubbish-heap to sleep. The second day she was more successful. She managed to penetrate into the inner ring of dancers and there, indeed, found Belám dancing. She straightaway started biting and scratching at his body with her cassowary nails. Belám screamed and cried so loudly that all the dancers took a tremendous fright and ran off, back to their country, without so much as thinking about their possessions. Nak and Telle, too, ran off and did not come to rest until they reached the Obat River, where they had their domains on opposite sides of the river. (According to an alternative version Telle fled alone to his house and Nak followed him later.) On their flight each of them had salvaged at least some of his possessions, Nak the fire and his bow and arrows, Telle the sago.

Nak and Telle were friends, and even more than friends: they were men of the same age, *yát*. Consequently Nak invited Telle to go hunting on one of the elevated spits of land on his side of the river. "Let us go hunting, *yát*", said Nak. "All right, but how will I catch any game?" asked Telle, because he did not have a bow. And Nak answered: "You just throw a stick at the game". Telle replied: "All right. You stay here and wait and I shall run around the hill and drive the game in your direction". He collected a couple of sticks and then took off. He did not know that Nak had a bow and arrows, nor that he had concealed them in a hollow tree. As soon as Telle had left, Nak took them out and without any difficulty shot a cassowary and a wallaby. He put his bow and arrows back in their hiding-place, and painted a couple of sticks with the blood of the animals he had killed. When Telle turned up, breathless and empty-handed, he praised Nak's dexterity. "Yes", said Nak, "I aimed carefully and hit them in the right spot". Then he fairly divided the catch, and Telle returned to his own territory.

Nak secretly made a fire, singed the hair off his catch and roasted the meat. But Telle had to eat his meat raw, with hide and hair. Fortunately he had sago which he mixed with the raw meat, whereas Nak had to make do with sand for a side-dish. Consequently Nak's teeth wore down unevenly, and more and more came to resemble those of a wallaby.

Whenever Nak and Telle hunted together, the same thing happened all over again. At last Telle became suspicious. He thought: "Why is it that Nak always catches the game and that he eats of it so well?" He asked Nak about it, who answered: "Well, I always aim very carefully at the head of the animal. That is where you must hit them. And the meat, well, it is dry because I expose it to the sun for some time." But Telle was on the alert. One day he received a portion of meat with part of an arrow in it which had broken off on striking the bone. Besides, part of the hide had been scorched by fire. "Ah, that's it!", he thought, *ukulede kene gen, ban kane gen* [translation lacking]. He said to Nak: "Yát! Let us go hunting again; and this time I want to go a long, long way. When you no longer hear me calling, you will know that I am far off." Beforehand he had decorated a pole in such a way that, from afar, it resembled a man wearing a headdress of cassowary and bird of paradise feathers. He made off, now and then running very fast, and finally disappeared in the bush, to return in secret to the place where he had left Nak. The latter had been scanning the plain, and had sighted the feathered pole. He smiled and went to the hollow tree to fetch his bow and arrows [and, according to another version, the fire]. Telle, who had seen where he kept them, hurried off in search of game. When he finally returned, Nak had already shot a few animals. Telle was empty-handed, and complained: "I never catch anything!" Again Nak explained that he should try to hit the head, and Telle replied: "Indeed, I should throw better. Perhaps I would do better if you, yát, did the driving and I stayed here and waited." Nak agreed and made off, but hardly had he disappeared when Telle took the fire, the bow and the arrows from the hollow tree and hurried back home. He set the savannah afire to let Nak have his part of the fire, but kept the "head" of the fire for himself. In the meantime Nak ran after him. As the grass-fire went out, he overtook Telle at Kíndél, on the Palwa River. But they did not fight. They were yát. Nak praised Telle for his shrewdness and taught him how to make a bow and arrows for himself. In return, Telle filed Nak's long teeth until they were as neat and even as his own.

The story of the fire and the bow is sometimes combined with that of the sago, Telle giving sago in exchange for Nak's bow. Another alternative version is the following: Nak asked Telle how he kept his teeth so nice and even. Wishing to keep his possession of sago a secret, Telle answered: "By adding mud to the sand which I eat with my meat". Nak tried this out, but the mud stuck to his palate and he realized that Telle had tricked him. The next time that they had hunted together, he secretly followed Telle on his way home and saw how Telle took sago from a bag, and mixed it with the meat which he had brought home. Now Nak had taken his two trained red cockatoos with him. He ordered them to perch on the banana trees near Telle's house, and there make all the noise they could. They did this, and Telle immediately jumped to his feet to run after the cockatoos. Meanwhile Nak snatched the bag with sago and ran off. Telle happened by accident to look over his shoulder, and immediately realized that he had been outwitted by Nak. Smiling, he returned, and said: "Yát, you found it", and taught him the technique of sago-making.

The two red cockatoos also play a role in a variant version of

the story of the fire which was told in Erambu. Telle had noticed that Nak was burning his garden site. He wished to get hold of the fire but could not come near enough, because the two cockatoos warned their master as soon as anyone approached. So he asked a *po mermer* (lizard) clinging to a coconut tree to steal the fire for him. But the *po mermer* could not carry it. Then he appealed to a *bengkaron*, a somewhat larger lizard with a tilted head, but the *bengkaron* refused. Finally, he asked the small *dagole* lizard, this time successfully so. Unfortunately, the firebrand was too large and the *dagole* burned its chest. And this is why the *dagole* has a red spot on its breast up to the present day. In return for the fire Telle taught Nak everything about the sago.

The exchange motif recurs in the story of how Telle taught Nak to build a house. Telle had a house roofed with sago leaves; Nak slept under a large tree. Telle told Nak how to construct a house, but Nak complained that he had no sago-trees there. "Then take eucalyptus bark", Telle answered, and explained how to cut the bark with a shell. He sat down, giving instructions, and Nak did the work. When Nak had finished his house, they were both happy, Telle because of the bow and arrows, Nak because of his house. And each of them stayed in his own house.

There are lots of stories about Nak and Telle. One of these relates how Nak terrified Telle by beating a drum which he had secretly manufactured. But the most instructive of all these stories are those about their making a fish-trap together.

One day Nak said: "Yát, you should come here to fish. The water is dropping. On your side of the river there is only bush, and the fish are scarce there". As it happened, Nak had erected a weir in the [small] river. On one side of this he had placed a number of fish-traps (*bubus*). When they came to the river bank, Nak said to Telle: "We must dive here. Each of us will take a strip of rattan with him. If you see a fish, then wait till it opens its gills. If you are quick, you will be able to thrust the strip through them." He pointed out where Telle should dive (on the side without the fish-traps), and they both descended. Nak swiftly emptied his traps and emerged with his rattan strip full of fish. But Telle, in spite of all his efforts, caught no more than only one single fish. Back on the river bank, they collected their catch and divided it into two equal portions, because they were *yát*. But Nak mocked Telle, saying: "You are just like a small boy with that tiny little fish of yours".

Telle, well aware that Nak had tricked him once again, kept silent. The next morning he hid himself near the weir and saw how Nak pulled up his fish-traps, well filled with fish, and then placed the traps on a fallen tree to dry them in the sun. And toward evening he noticed Nak tying up the open ends of the traps and placing them back again into the holes in the barrier under the water. The next morning, before dawn, Telle emptied the traps. He tied the fish to a rattan strip and hid everything under the water on his side of the barrier. Putting on an innocent face, he now went to Nak and proposed going fishing once more. This they did. Telle emerged with his rattan full of fish and Nak empty-handed, because Telle had forgotten to tie up the open ends of the traps

after clearing them. Nak was furious. Back on the river bank, they fought, Nak beating Telle with a fish-trap and Telle thrashing Nak with the fishes. Then they made peace, and Nak told Telle how to make and use a fishing-weir. He promised to come to Telle's side of the river to help him construct one for himself.

So they worked together on a new barrier. Nak descended into the river to stop the barrier with sago leaves which Telle, standing on the upper edge of the barrier, handed to him. Now Telle was actually a woman, though he was wearing a penis shell. Nak emerged from the water, saying: "I am getting cold. I think it is your turn to descend." Saying this, he looked up and saw something really startling. He cried out: *Mugu gen bu, Elisame, Kamé Kamé!*: "You are of the Mugu-jéi, of the Elisame, of the Kamé jéi!" All three are Telle jéi. And from this moment on he refused to call Telle *yát*. Yet they finished the fish-weir and made a fire. Then they inspected the fish-traps and collected an enormous amount of fish. Telle fetched firewood and *nibung*-spathes with which to roast the fish, and Nak brought kava from his garden. That night Nak brewed a really potent kava drink for Telle. He himself took only a small sip. Telle got completely drunk, but Nak took a torch and inspected Telle's genitals. That night he made her his wife. He gave her a *sinak* (women's apron) and said: "You must discard your *possé* (penis shell) because from now on you are my wife".

Finally [this is added in a note], there is a last alternative version which tells how Nak and Telle came to blows near a fish-trap and then changed into a *nak* (= fish-eagle) and a *telle* (= hen-harrier).

Editor's comment. There could be no better proof of totemism among the Yéi than precisely this last addition to the myths about Nak and Telle, made more or less as an afterthought. Only here do we learn that their names are the names of birds of prey, a fish-eagle and a hen-harrier. The pair finds an exact parallel in the moiety totems of the Keraki, about which F.E. Williams wrote: "We may first briefly consider the hawks, which alone find a wide and more or less consistent distribution as totems for the two moieties. The two principal species which are commonly acknowledged by Bangu and Sangara respectively (the two moieties) are *wana* ... and *inifiak* ... The former is the large brown kite with white breast which hunts for snakes and bandicoots; the latter is a somewhat smaller white-headed hawk" (Williams 1936: 89). We shall not attempt an exact identification of the two birds concerned. Geurtjens (*Woordenboek* pp. 406-7) identifies the *nak* and *telle* (spelt *tale* by him) with the *kidub* and *kéké* of the Marind, i.e. the fish-eagle and the hawk. The scientific names are not as important as the question of why Verschueren never gave a thought to the fact, altogether too familiar to him, that his heroes bear birds' names. The answer is that he was too much engrossed in their human traits, which led him to make the following comment:

1. The most obvious feature of the stories of this cycle is that they are concerned with ordinary human beings. They do not bear the

marks of a "sacred history", but are purely human tales which mirror the relations of dependence prevailing between the two moieties as well as between husband and wife. That Nak is the male and Telle the female is not borne out by the scene on the fishing-barrier alone; it is reflected throughout the whole cycle. Nak is a fisherman and possesses such male articles as a bow and arrows, fire and drum, whereas Telle has sago and a house. The stories are an example of how a husband and wife should supplement one another, forming a dualism based on true friendship and togetherness, which time and again lapses into the comical conflicts arising from good-natured trickery. The story as a whole is a gem reflecting deeply human, psychologically well observed relations in which the recurring tensions are ultimately reconciled to give substance to their unity.

2. The myths reflect the ideal relation between the moieties. The one needs the other, and not merely because of the marriage system. On every occasion of social importance the other moiety is invited as the indispensable complement. Big hunting and fishing parties require the cooperation of members of both moieties. At the celebration of a marriage the young women (all of the bride's moiety) assist the newly wed in making a new sago garden which, ultimately, will be the property of the husband and his moiety. At a pig-feast it is not the feast-givers who eat the pigs, but the guests of the other moiety. At the inauguration of a newly finished canoe, others, the members of the opposite moiety, must test the new dug-out.

3. The playful element characterizing the adventures of Nak and Telle plays a comparable role in all celebrations. At the end of a pig-feast, when the raisers of the pigs receive their share of the meat, they find themselves suddenly drenched with water poured over them by their guests to the boisterous hilarity of all those present. Something similar befalls the male guests who, on behalf of their hosts, pull a newly finished canoe to the river bank. They will suddenly find hot embers on their path, be besprinkled with stinging ants, and be made the butt of other such jokes. Even the mourning ritual has its playful elements. A few days after a mature man's death, the wives of the deceased's in-laws [i.e. his classificatory sisters!] present pantomimes portraying past events and exploits in which the deceased has had a hand. The women are dressed up as males, and their travesty, combined with their clumsy imitations of male behaviour, are a source of mild amusement.

4. The question arises whether and to what extent this notion of complementary dualism can be extended to the homosexual relations between a boy and his pederast. True enough, he is always a member of his own exogamous moiety. Men of the other moiety live too far off to be able to participate in the daily guidance of the boy. Yet, if we consider the boys as girls in disguise, their role reflects that of Telle in the myth establishing the institution of moiety dualism. She was a woman in the guise of a man, a brother who became a wife. The travesty motif is clearly present in the episode relating how Telle filed Nak's teeth. Nak had to lie down on the ground with Telle sitting on top of him.

4. The myth of the orei-tree

Editor's introduction. The myth of the orei-tree explains the origin of the yevale. There are various myths of this category, says Verschueren, but they all agree on the point that all yevale "originated from the orei-tree (magic palm) ... (and) came to the country in an orei-canoe which was made from that tree. And they all took a chip of the orei-tree with them as a magical implement (the kupör or bullroarer). At the end of their peregrinations they all disappeared into the ground ..."

The elaborate version of the myth presented by Verschueren is the one related in the southern part of the Yéi territory. "It betrays relations with the Kanum as well as a certain influence of the Marind", he adds. However, I must confess that I have not been able to discover what these specific Marind-anim influences can have been in this myth, unless the author means - as is practically certain - that the myth bears clear traces of totemism, just like the story of Nak and Telle. That these traces of totemism go back to Keraki (and allied) forms of totemism rather than to Marind-anim influence need not be argued again.

A large orei-tree (a wild areca palm) stood somewhere in Elijéi, in the open plain formed by the delta of the confluence of the Maro and Wanggo rivers. Once upon a time all the yevale of the Boadzi, the Marind and the Yéi had assembled here. But the Kanum were absent. The tree stood inside the territory of the Aroba, a small tribe usually classified with the yam-eating Kanum. Every night the neighbouring Kanum heard the sound of singing and dancing. They did not know where the sound came from. They went in search, and finally came near the orei-tree. But every time they came near, all the occupants of the tree entered their tree through a hole, and all the Kanum were able to discover were the traces of a celebration.

One of the Kanum men hid near the tree and listened. After some time he heard the sound of people inside the orei-tree. He went home and told his tribal fellows: "They are lodged inside the hollow orei-tree". He went to fetch rattan from the forest to tie his stone axe to its shaft, because he wished to cut down the orei-tree. In the meantime the yevale had come out again and were dancing, but as soon as the man with the axe appeared, they ran back and crowded into the hollow tree. The Kanum man took his axe and gave the tree a hard blow. The tree was hollow and its bark very thin. The axe struck one of the tree-yevale on the forehead, and this is why some people suffer from headaches.

But the orei-tree fell apart, and all the yevale came tumbling out. Each of the yevale took a chip of the tree and took it to his own country; these became the kupör, the bullroarer-like or spatula-like objects used in all forms of magic. And the wood-cutter took fright and ran off to his house to tell his people what had happened.

The orei-tree had fallen to pieces, and each of these pieces constituted a canoe, in which the yevale went to their country. The Yéi-yevale had their own canoe, and so had the Boadzi and the

Marind. They all went their own way.

But Orei made all his men, the Yéi-yevale, enter his canoe (Kwar).⁴ The canoe was full to the brim because, in addition to the yevale, everything had been loaded into it that is typical of the Obat River region. This included a slim hardwood palmtree, loam, mud, sago, wild kapok, bamboo, and pandan trees. They put off. Orei had pushed off his canoe with a certain kind of nibung, and now wished to change it for a bamboo. But the nibung fell from the canoe, and this is why nibung trees abound near the mouth of the Obat. Then he began to scrape the ringworm scales off his body. Where he threw them away at the mouth of the river's tributaries, they turned into sago. The canoe was overloaded, and so he put a yevale ashore at every tributary. At the mouth of the Jármu, Korew was disembarked, at the Wuj River, Kupale, Godye was put ashore at the Waimon, and Tsakwe at the Tawái. And each of the yevale was given his *kupör* to take with him.

At the Sembe, Orei set Jögwul down, and gave him his *kupör* in token of his authority there. At the Yelma, Paltye and Mub were disembarked. The one is the yevale of the earth-hog [echidna?], the other of the fish called *ikan saku* in Indonesian. Kworeo, the *ikan duri* (Indonesian, meaning thorny fish), was set down here too, because, as Orei said, we are still far too many in the canoe. In Mamter he put Balgo, the yevale of Yoakema, ashore. With Balgo, Dedeqiam also left the canoe. And at Wanggepo he set Widi down.

When they arrived at the Yób River, Orei began to cut down a tree (Indonesian name: *pohon susu*). It was meant to fall across the Yób River. A friend of his by name of Wolpaka wanted to help him. Orei had concealed the rattan strip by which he had tied his axe to its shaft. Wolpaka, not knowing any better, tied his axe with a bark string. He had hardly begun cutting when it snapped. Orei said, "You had better look in the forest for a new string". Whilst his friend was in the forest, Orei finished felling. The tree was very high and began to swing. An ant-nest fell southward, and came down near the mouth of the Wanggo River. But the nest of a wood-pigeon was hurled northward and landed near Beow. After some time his friend returned. Only then did Orei teach him that he should use rattan for an axe-string. "Dunce", he said, "this will not work. Turn around; there you will find rattan".*

The tree had fallen across the Yób River, and Orei told Wolpaka: "You belong here. It is your home. Go up the river." And he presented him with the yevale of the yam, of the *tuba* (Indonesian for fish-poison) and of the stone axe, who were all with him in the canoe. And Wolpaka set out. He accidentally lost his penis shell. It changed into a turtle which crawled into the river. When Wolpaka became aware of the loss, he put all his things down and went in search. He found the shell and tried to pick it up. But the shell said: "No; I am a turtle now, and I want to stay here". Wolpaka returned to the spot where he had left his possessions, meaning to

* In Kwél the story of Orei and Wolpaka is related as one of the adventures of Nak and Telle, a context which seems more appropriate.

pick them up. But his things cried out: "No, no! Leave us here, because this is henceforward our country." Thus Wolpaka continued, until he arrived at the head of the river, where he remained.

But Orei had continued on his way in his canoe, putting *yevale* ashore everywhere. Arriving at the Omboge, he set down Daberow and Alabel. Daberow changed into a cassowary, Alabel into an eel. At the mouth of the Watseda, Yegerep went ashore, and near the Ugu, Sangwol. At Bádgobberter, in the vicinity of Kekayu, he set down Bád, who entered a large rock which is still there. At Grigripelebák he put a young girl ashore. By now the canoe had become very light, and therefore he no longer let anyone out. All that had been left in his canoe were the trees, the mud and the water-lilies. He rowed straight on to the head of the river. There, at Mallin, he put down his punting-pole. It changed into a bamboo clump. The canoe had run aground. To set it afloat again, he went down on his knees. The imprint of his knees is still visible there. But he did not get the canoe afloat. He now unloaded everything that was left: all the various kinds of sago, the yellow clay, the shells, the frogs, the thick bamboo (Indonesian: *buluh*) and the *abal* (a thorny kind of wood), and also a young girl whom he had brought with him. Orei stayed there together with her. And he left the canoe where it was. It had delivered all the *yevale* on its way, each with his own *arow* and his own country.

My informants of Polka (Kekayu) admit that they certainly did not mention the names of all the *yevale* who were put ashore from the *orei*-canoe, but they are absolutely positive in their assertion that *all* the *yevale* came by the *orei*-canoe. Those of the other rivers [note that the journey here described is confined to the Obat River only!] also came to their country by the *orei*-canoe. Some assume that the canoe, at high water, travelled overland to the Maro River, something which is technically quite feasible. Others believe that Orei went all the way up the Maro River first, and then returned to follow the Obat. The main point is that all *yevale* originated from the *orei*-tree, that they were brought to their home country in the *orei*-canoe, and that they all carried a *kupör* with them as the symbol of their authority.

Editor's comment. Before turning to Verschueren's exposition on the nature and functions of the *yevale* (and to his theories on that subject) in the next section we will need to dwell for a while on the factual content of the above myth, in particular the identification of the *yevale* with the *orei*-tree and their close association with the *kupör*. In ms. A Verschueren makes a few revealing comments on this point, but before examining them one purely formal problem will have to be solved. This is the regular recurrence in mss B and A of an alternative term for *kupör*, namely *kupoi*, or, less frequently, *kupoï*. The documents being typewritten copies of Verschueren's handwritten papers, it is obvious that the copyist (Father Hoeboer) had difficulties with Verschueren's handwriting. As it is highly improbable for *kupoi* to become corrupted into something like *kupör* in swift writing, whereas it is easily conceivable that *kupör* would be read as *kupoi* or *kupoï*, I have accepted *kupör* as the correct term.

In ms. A Verschueren states that *orei* is the special kind of wood of which bullroarers are made everywhere in South New Guinea. "The Marind name is *gonggei*." From Van Baal 1966 we learn that the word *gonggei* (*gongai*) is also used as an alternative term for bullroarer (*sosom*) and even for *pahui*. The point is of interest because in this same ms. A, Verschueren repeatedly designates the concept of *kupör* with the word *orei*. Apparently, the two terms are interchangeable. But there is more to it than that. *Orei* refers not only to the bullroarer or bullroarer-like object used in ritual, and not only to the tree, either, but also to *Orei*, the leader of all the *yevale* taken by him to their respective territories in a canoe which again is called *orei*. It is reminiscent of the fact that the Marind-anim bullroarer, *sosom*, is in effect the same as *Sosom*, the *dema*, who is the brother of *Waba*, the central *dema* of the great Mayo ritual.

Nevertheless, there is also a difference. Among the Marind the *sosom* (bullroarer) is terminologically differentiated from the *tang*, the bullroarer-like object used in all magic, the object, too, which is presented to all the new initiates at the conclusion of the Mayo initiation (Van Baal 1966:534). Outwardly, *tang* and *sosom* differ only in as far as the one has a hole for a cord to swing the implement by, and the other does not. Among the Yéi the two are terminologically identical as well. There, too, the new initiate receives one (a *kupör*) during his initiation. Whether this is one with or without a hole will be left undecided; really important only is the fact that it is handed out to young males at their initiation, and that every male must become identical with *orei* by symbolically swallowing the implement. The ideal is to become an *orei-kerau*, that is, an *orei*-man or medicine-man (cf. Chapter V). What, then, does the implement stand for?

There can be no doubt on this point. As early as 1963 I argued that everywhere in South New Guinea and Australia the bullroarer is the symbol par excellence of the male sex. Three years later I elaborated the point with regard to the bullroarer among the Marind-anim (Van Baal 1966:485ff.) and demonstrated that the *pahui* is identical with the bullroarer, and, like the Yéi-nan *pöggul*, symbolizes a large penis piercing a small vulva (Van Baal 1966:724-43). This symbolism of the *kupör* turns the myth of the *orei*-tree from just another myth of origin than that of Ndiwe, into its logical as well as symbolical complement. Ndiwe's men brought female symbols to the territory, the *kupe* which are kept in the centres (navels) of their respective territories. In contrast, *Orei*'s men brought male symbols, *kupör*, which as such stand for the shafts which turn the *kupe* from mere stones into formidable war-clubs or ceremonial *pöggul*. We noted above (Section 2) that on the site of a *komen* hardwood poles are never absent, and also that, on the return of a war party, the *gab-elul* leaves the remains of his *pöggul* (notably its shaft) at the residence of the *arow yevale*, a residence described in the same terms as that of a *komen*. One thing is certain: the *komen* (*kupe*) is by origin associated with warfare, which kind of association is not foreign to the *kupör*, either, for when the central headhunting pole of a new house is erected, a *kupör* is planted at its side

(see Chapter VII, Section 3).

We will have to go more deeply into this matter. To that end a closer examination of all Verschueren's data and theories on the *yevale* is necessary. Not only are his explanations often confusing, but his facts also give rise to controversy. For instance, he states that all the *yevale* originate from the *orei*-tree and that they all brought a *kupōr* with them. Yet there are also female *yevale*, and though we are not told anywhere that they, too, brought a *kupōr*, this is nowhere denied, either.

5. The *yevale* and their role in the headhunting ritual

At the outset of his observations on the *yevale* in the uncompleted chapter on Religion and Magic in ms. B, Verschueren states that the term *yevale* is best translated with "spirit", more or less in the sense of the Marindinese term *dema*, but with the exclusion of the latter's connotation of totem-ancestor. The *yevale* constitute a group of anthropomorphic beings, gifted with exceptional powers, who are spread all over the territory. After performing their extraordinary feats, they all settled in one or another area inside the country, always the basin (*arow*) of one of the numerous affluents of the Maro River, where they retired in some such place as a tree, a well, a brook or a stone. Obviously, the tree or the stone is not considered as a *yevale* by the Yéi, being no more than the place of residence of a definitely man-like being. Such places are revered as sacred places by all the people of the relevant *arow*.

There are male and female *yevale*, and though apparently the Telle preferably worship female and the Nak male *yevale*, this cannot be generalized for the whole of the territory. In ms. A, however, the author is more specific, saying:

Among the *yevale* males and females are of about equal numbers. It is intriguing that almost all the female *yevale* are found in Telle territory, and the male ones in that of Nak. This once again stresses the male-female relation, and this time not only in the social field, but in the magico-religious one as well.

Editor's comment. Actually, this paragraph contains one of the most dubious of all of Verschueren's statements concerning the *yevale*. The myth related in the previous section rarely ever mentions the sex of the *yevale* who were put down from the *orei*-canoe, though the story seems to imply that, with two exceptions, they all were males. Of these two exceptions one is the consort of *Orei*, the other a girl disembarked somewhere near the head of the river; moreover, neither of the two is explicitly connected with a specific *arow*. The one *yevale* who, besides *Orei*, is explicitly identified as a man is *Wolpake*. He is the *arow-yevale* of the *Yób* River, which is not a Nak but a Telle *arow* (cf. the map in Section 3 of Chapter II). What is more, the final phrase of the quotation from ms. A with its emphasis on Nak and Telle and their male-female relation strongly supports the suspicion that the association of the sex of the *yevale* with that of Nak or

Telle is a generalization based on an over-simplified interpretation of the existing moiety-dualism rather than on the facts yielded by research. Verschueren's interpretation of the impact of moiety dualism represents, in fact, a misjudgement of the dialectics inherent in dualism. It never goes to the extent of opposing an all-male to an all-female moiety. Besides, the myth itself repeatedly presents Telle as a male.

The *worship* of the *yevale* is connected primarily with the fact that they unite the various *jéi* occupying a common *arow* through a new bond of a religious nature. They all share the same *yevale*.

What, then, is the relation between the *yevale* and humans? The *yevale* are *not* creators; hardly any of them are said to have made or transformed anything at all. They are not spirits of the dead or ancestors, either, because they have acquired their functions in their human, corporeal form, a form cast off by the dead.⁵ What they really are is guardians of the rules of morality, judges of the good and evil acts of mankind. Virtually all of them are associated with one or other aspect of human life, with regard to which specific aspect they give the individual their support or punish him when he misbehaves. Because of the strong impact of war on Yéi-nan culture, several of them have a close relation with headhunting.

Editor's comment. Ms. A is more detailed on one point. It says that some things which are dear to the Yéi originated or received their present form through the medium of *yevale*, adding that we never find this stressed in the mythology, and thus conveniently forgetting that the myth of the *orei*-tree makes mention of several of such cases. One page earlier the same document states that admittedly several *yevale* had all sorts of goods which are useful for mankind, such as yams and fish, with them on their arrival in their specific *arow*, but also that no indications are found of any specific relation between a *yevale* and his treasures, or the descent or family relations of the *jéi* concerned. In other words, there is no totem relation. Ms. B advances similar views. It states that in a few, rather rare, cases the *yevale* appear as a kind of totem-ancestor, but adds that, nevertheless, these totems have no specific relationship with the people concerned. The author stresses that this totemic element is found only among the southern Yéi, and that this suggests borrowing from neighbours, notably the Marind, based on a partial or complete misunderstanding.

In the introduction to the present chapter the remark was made that the totemism of the Yéi, far from having been adopted from the Marind, is akin to that of the more easterly tribes, a view which was corroborated in my comment on Nak and Telle (Section 3, above). The myth of the *orei*-tree includes several examples of a *yevale* turning into an animal (fish, an echidna, a cassowary), and even speaks of the *yevale* of the yam and the *tuba*. As the *yevale* concerned are bound to a specific *arow*, and every *arow* has connections with at least one *jéi*, a relation between *yevale*, totem and *jéi* seems obvious. But Verschueren denies this, at least for the more northerly communities. He also denies the existence of totemic food taboos. Now, totemism can exist without

food taboos but not without clans or other social groupings with an exclusive relation with the totem. Must we agree with Verschueren, then, that totemism is, at the very best, an imported institution among the Yéi? Most certainly not. Later, in the chapter on Death and Burial, we will come across the use of a *maker*, a sign used for identifying either its manufacturer or a particular addressee. These *maker* are of a totemic nature and are used as the distinctive mark of the totem group concerned, a fact which is documented in detail by Nevermann. In other words, totems are connected with groups, and there are no indications that this is confined to the southern groups.

On the contrary, the data collected by Wirz provide undeniable evidence that the more northerly *jéi*, too, had their totems. Perhaps not all of them did, for Wirz states (1925(III):202) that the Yéi include clans without a totem, a circumstance due to the fact that their *yevale* (translated as "ancestor" in the sense of clan-ancestor by him) had no relation with a particular natural species or object. In this translation of *yevale* with "ancestor" lies the reason for Verschueren's stubborn refusal to recognize the totemism of the Yéi as genuine. He does not deny that certain *jéi* have specific relations with certain *yevale* and consider these *yevale* as belonging to them, but only that these relations can be described in terms of descent. His point is that *yevale* are *not* ancestors, even though in some cases they do resemble them. For Verschueren, who derived his knowledge of totemism from the Marindanim form, the descent relation is essential for totemism. This explains his contempt for Wirz and Nevermann, as well as his attempts to play down the facts concerning Yéi-nan totemism to the extent of making himself guilty of tendentious description.

The *yevale* punish those who misbehave, for which the sanctions applied are illness and death. The punishing aspect is predominant and is more in evidence than those of mutual support and assistance. In the chapter on Sickness and Healing quite a number of data have been assembled which are unanimous on the point that the cause of illness lies invariably in sins against tribal rules and norms. These illnesses are of two kinds, namely male or female, and it is interesting that the male illnesses are, in principle, always curable, whereas the female ones, those caused by the female *yevale* Baderam, may bring on death. But we should not anticipate too much what will be discussed in detail in Chapter VI, and confine ourselves to a consideration of what ms. B has to say on the nature of the *yevale* in general. This is that, all things considered, the *yevale* are not feared because they are respected, but respected because they are feared, an idea subscribed to also in ms. A.

This statement is too general, however. Ms. A, without for a moment denying the fear inspired by the *yevale*, stresses that they also give help. Every *yevale* has his own *arow* and inside that *arow* takes care of everything, though this care may often be specialized. One will ensure a good game-bag, another a rich catch of fish; one will provide fire, another garden produce. But in principle they are all universal in their responsibility, which is most emphatically reflected in the expectation that the

yevale will give assistance on headhunting expeditions. In the sphere of headhunting the active communication of the local community with its *yevale* is at its most intensive. After every headhunt the heads taken are immediately taken to the *yevale*'s residence to show him the catch. And that is not all. A grand feast is held in the presence of the heads in the same spot. The area around the *yevale*'s residence is cleaned up and decorated, and the ceremony is concluded with a meal. Besides, even before the expedition the community of the males has visited the *yevale* to invoke his protection, because, according to the senior men, formerly the *yevale* went with the headhunters in person to see to it that they made a good catch. Ms. B discusses these topics in more general terms. It states that the abodes of the *yevale* were kept meticulously clean, that their assistance was invoked whenever the people concerned were in need of anything, and that it was more specifically a headhunt which prompted them to solicit the *yevale*'s assistance and to offer a thanksgiving when all had gone well.

After a short observation on the respect paid the *yevale* also when the Yéi speak of them in daily life, the document turns to a more theoretical consideration of the subject.

Characteristic of the *yevale* is their magical power, their underworld aspect: they are said to originate from the *orei*-tree (a magic palm); they travelled in an *orei*-canoe; they all brought a chip of the *orei*-tree with them as a magic implement (the *kupör* or bull-roarer), and they finally disappeared into the ground. The latter circumstance contrasts them with the sun. As for the sun, the few times there seems to be mention of an absolute, supreme being, this being is the sun. Finally, some details from the total cycle of myths give rise to the thesis that they all form part of a single great moon-myth, the moon as such standing in opposition to the sun.

6. *Editor's synthesis*

The author's final observations on magic and the underworld, on the possible role of the sun as a supreme being, and on the relation between the *yevale* and a supposed moon-myth tell us more about the difficulties of the author in placing the *yevale* in a more general context than about the forms of belief current among the Yéi-nan. The available data do not give any ground for such speculations. There is never any mention of an underworld, nor is there any mythical material on hand which can be interpreted as a moon-myth, let alone that the moon is mentioned in it. References to the sun are confined to the statement that the souls of men who have died in combat go skyward in the direction of the sun (see Chapter VII, Section 1), and nowhere is there any question of a supreme being. The one thing that is certain is that the author uses the latter term loosely, even extremely loosely. In one place (p. 5) he refers to the *yevale* as supreme beings!

Besides, these reflections on the nature of the *yevale* generally are always *ad hoc* and dependent on a fortuitous context which at the given moment was foremost in the author's mind. A case in

point is the statement about the respect always shown the *yevale*. This is not true. They are regularly chased away without any sign of respect (Chapter III, Section 3; Chapter VIII, Sections 1, 2). Another is the statement that all the *yevale* came by the *orei*-canoe and carried a *kupör*. I have already expressed my doubts on this point. It is evident that the *yevale* are of different kinds, and above all we are in need of a more systematic description of these various kinds.

There must be myriads of *yevale*. We are told that they sneak unseen into the communal house and make the children ill (Chapter III, Section 3). Before hauling a newly hewn dug-out from its place in the jungle, the *yevale* must be chased away (Chapter VIII, Section 1); the same must be done at the pigsties before a pig-feast. Apparently these *yevale* are just malignant. A really malignant one is the ogress of Chapter IX, Section 2, who is killed by crocodiles or annihilated by fire. In all these cases there is no ancestorship involved at all; they are merely (more or less) localized dangerous spirits who have to be avoided, chased away or, in myth, killed. Even the benign woman *yevale* of Chapter IX, Section 1, cannot be an ancestress, either; she is carried off by the Boadzi. There is no reference to the *orei*-tree in connection with the *yevale* mentioned thus far. Apparently informants have not been questioned on this point.

If they had been, the result might still have been negative because the *yevale* originating from the *orei*-tree are different. They are associated with authority over the *arow* of their area of residence, with the origin of certain plants and animals, and with the headhunting ritual, in other words, with positive functions of protection for certain specified processes and activities, among them hunting, fishing, gardening, the fire, and, the most important of all, headhunting (see above). Not mentioned above are the *yevale* involved in healing rituals. They are, for the so-called "male" illnesses, the bamboo and the rattan *yevale*. No names are mentioned for them, but their totemic relation with plants which provide the raw materials for the implements of the headhunter (the bamboo knife and the handle of the club respectively) makes this understandable. The situation is different with respect to Baderam (Chapter III, Section 3; Chapter VI), the *yevale* of the female illnesses who spirits a woman's apron into her victim's body. Reportedly a special myth is told about her. We are kept in ignorance of its contents, but a woman's apron is not quite congruous with a *kupör*, an instrument, moreover, which is more beneficial in its effects.

The ancestor role imputed to the *yevale* by Wirz has already been discussed (Section 5 above), our conclusion being that the relationship between a *yevale* and "his" *jéi* is not definable in terms of descent but in the vaguer ones of "belonging to". We will not need to return to this point, as we will to that of the *kupör*. Of some four or five of the *yevale* it is explicitly stated that they had their *kupör* with them, and of one of these that Orei handed him his *kupör* at his departure in token of his authority. The supposition that the term *kupör* is used here as an alternative for *pöggul*, the ritual implement which is the symbol of

the *gab-elul*'s office (Chapter II, Section 2), is not too far-fetched. It certainly argues in favour of an *arow yevale* whose special function is the protection of the party of headhunters, whom he accompanies on their expedition. The fact that the *kupör* (whether or not it is a *pöggul*) functions as a symbol of authority constitutes another argument against the supposition that female *yevale* could ever have carried one.

However, a caution is well in place here. Although the various *yevale* all acquired their own *arow* in the course of their journey in the *orei*-canoe, this does not mean that they are all *arow yevale*. The *arow yevale* is the spirit of the headhunting ritual who affiliates several *jéi* into a common worship as well as headhunting unit (Chapter II, Section 2; Section 5 above). On p. 51 Verschueren also stated that not all *yevale*, but only several of them are connected with headhunting. Yet, *yevale* not associated with headhunting have their own *arow* as well. The point is that the term *arow* denotes not a genealogical, but a geographical concept (Chapter II, Section 1) and can be used in different contexts. If one tries to trace the *orei*-canoe journey down the Obat River on the map, one glance will suffice to convince the student that it stopped at many more rivers which became the specific *arow* of the *yevale* who disembarked there than there are or possibly can be headhunting-*arow*. The *arow yevale*, or war-gods, form a special group among the numerous *yevale* who maintain positive relations with certain *jéi*. As war-gods, they are more appropriate bearers of the *kupör* than anyone. Though other male *yevale* may also be associated with the *kupör* as the indispensable implement in most forms of magic, the *kupör* is closely connected with the headhunting pole in the centre of the communal house (Section 4, p. 49), and, as we have just noted, may also be associated with the *pöggul*.

7. A note on headhunting

Headhunting was instituted by Ndiwe. Though headhunting as such is not explicitly mentioned in the story, the fact that Ndiwe equipped his men with *kupe*, the essential component of the headhunter's club, and moreover two of them with a *pöggul*, leaves no room for doubt on this point. The war-gods proper, however, are the *yevale* originating from Orei. This circumstance alone is enough for us to assume some kind of a relationship between the myth of Ndiwe and that of Orei. Verschueren, too, inclined toward this view, but his reflections on this point led him into speculations of a pseudo-historical nature which are not very helpful. In a note on the Orei myth he wrote:

The contrast between the social cycle dealing with the origin of mankind and that concerning the *yevale* is evident. Both cycles run parallel to the extent that neither the origin of mankind nor that of the *yevale* is considered as a tribal affair, but both are put in a kind of "international" context. Ndiwe accompanied not only the Yéi, but also the upper Bian people, the Boadzi and the Kanum on their path through life. The *yevale* who congregated in the *orei*-

tree belonged to the Boadzi, the Marind and the Yéi. But there is also a contrast between mankind and the *yevale*. Mankind came into existence earlier, and the *yevale* owe their origin to human beings (the Kanum) who were already present. The activities of the *yevale* are of no importance for mankind until well after they have been released through human interference.

Editor's comment. I do not believe that this brings us to the heart of the matter. In order to arrive at a more meaningful interpretation we should first summarize what we know of the head-hunting practices of the Yéi. Our information on this point is scant.

In the introduction to the myth of Ndiwe, I pointed out (Section 1 above) that the Yéi are unique in their treatment of their war booty. The heads were suspended from a two-metre long rattan loop, with the long bones of the victims fastened at either end to each side of the loop, like the rungs of a ladder (cf. Wirz 1925(III):Tafel VIII no. 1, and cover). The artefact was ultimately suspended from the central pole of the house, where it marked the dividing-line between the *soama* and *wake*. The presence of the long bones (those of the legs and arms of the victims) is suggestive of cannibalism. The latter supposition is confirmed in one of the teachers' papers and in the myth of Wane, the good sister, at the end of Chapter IX, Section 1, where cannibalism is presented as a normal practice.

We also know that of the *gab-elul* of a particular *arow* the first in rank was the headman whose *jéi* "owned" the *arow yevale* (Chapter II, Section 2). And further that, in spite of Verschueren's eulogies on the *gab-elul* as an arbiter and whatever else (Chapter II, Section 2), he was first and foremost a (ritual) war-leader (Chapter VIII, Section 4). Of his functions as such we only know that, before a war party set out, the community of the males paid its respects to the *arow yevale* and invoked his protection, and above all requested his participation in the expedition (Section 5 above). Once the party had met the enemy, the headman tried to thrust his *pöggul* between the legs of a fleeing enemy so that its fretwork top broke off. He would then raise the shaft of the implement, now simply a club with a *kupe* at its end, and fell the enemy by striking him between the shoulder-blades. The club was taken back home together with the remains of the shattered fretwork, which had been collected on the spot, and were afterwards deposited near the residence of the *arow yevale* (cf. ms. B, p. 31). The document does not tell what happened following the felling of the victim, but on this point we can be certain. As everywhere in these parts, the victim will have been beheaded with the aid of a bamboo knife. The document restricts itself to the information that on its return, the war party goes to the residence of the *arow yevale* for a thanksgiving. The *gab-elul*, after taking the stone ring (*kupe*) off the shaft of his damaged *pöggul*, carries it ceremonially around the *misâr*, the pole with the heads, and inserts the shaft in the ground near the *yevale*.

Ms. A gives additional information (on p. 14). The heads are

taken to the *yevale's* place for display (apparently they are suspended from the *misár*). The place is cleaned and decorated, and the ceremony is concluded with a meal. The author does not provide any further information, but there can hardly be any doubt that this was a cannibalistic meal.

One problem that remains is where the *yevale's* residence was. Obviously this was at the *komen*. In Section 2 above we pointed out that the *komen* is quite often chosen as a place of residence by a *yevale*. The description of the place testifies that it is suitable for the holding of a headhunting ceremony. It is decorated with croton shrubs and hardwood poles. The latter feature in particular suggests that the place was once used for some ceremonial purpose including the planting of hardwood poles. The only occasion about which we know of such a thing happening is the final headhunting ritual (particularly in connection with the *misár* and the shaft of the *gab-elul's pöggul*). Besides, as has been argued in Section 4 above, the *komen is*, ritually, a *kupe*, and as such is directly associated with headhunting. On top of all this, what the *gab-elul* does on the return of the war party, namely remove the *kupe* from the shaft of his damaged *pöggul* which he then inserts in the ground near the *yevale*, is the exact complement of what the ancestors did on their return from the campaign against the foreign occupants of the country. They removed their *kupe* and laid them down in the centre of their respective territories as the latter's navels.

The symbolism is plain. Ndiwe was accompanied by his mother, *Atu*, the Bad Woman of Boadzi ritual and mythology (Section 2 above). She is the instigator of the practice of headhunting and is identical with the *kupe*, the implement which the ancestors placed on the ground as a vulva awaiting renewed copulation with the *kupör (pöggul)*. In my analysis of the functions of the *pahui*, the Marind-anim *pöggul*, I arrived at the conclusion that headhunting is in these parts a symbolic form of copulation (Van Baal 1966:725-45). It may in fact even be classified as a fertility rite, which conclusion I elaborated in my contribution to Gilbert H. Herdt's book on ritual homosexuality in Melanesia (in the press). Fertility is, ultimately, the prerogative of the males, and they promote it by killing: life springs from death, just as it does from sexual intercourse. The interconnection of the two is embodied in the *pöggul*, the death-inflicting implement which is at the same time a penis piercing a vulva.

Subconsciously, the men are aware that their almost exclusive claims to fertility are void. In this context Verschuieren's remarks on the temporal precedence of Ndiwe over the *yevale* are of interest. Only, it is not mankind in general, nor even Ndiwe who came prior to the *yevale*, but who came first of all is *Atu*, the great mother of both Ndiwe and mankind, who lies waiting as a stone vulva - also a deadly implement - for renewed fertilization by the warriors, the *orei-men*, the bearers of *kupör* and *pöggul*, who, like the *yevale*, are maleness incarnate. Yet no mention is made of the *komen*. On the surface, all the honour goes to the males. All the same, the presence of the woman, whether she be called *Atu*, *kupe* or *komen*, is the basic condition for the honour

that is paid to the *arow yevale*. And it is probably no coincidence that Orei and Ndiwe both came from the east. The east is the direction in which most of the Yéi-nan's headhunting expeditions led them.

To a reader unacquainted with the ethnography of the southern New Guinea lowlands, these comments must seem a mystification rather than an explanation. However, if he perseveres, he may learn in the next chapter how deeply the ideology of the *kupõr* and of ideal maleness has affected the ways and thoughts of the Yéi-nan.