

Mother Cassowary's Bones: Daggers of the East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea

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I.

LAND AND PEOPLE

THE MAJOR SEGMENT of northeast Papua New Guinea, the eastern part of the island of New Guinea, consists of the East and West (or Sandaun) Provinces. The far western border marches with that of Irian Jaya, the part of New Guinea belonging to Indonesia. Together the two provinces comprise about 30,000 square miles, forming an irregular right-angled triangle, with the coast of the Bismarck Sea as its hypotenuse. The triangle is bounded by low ranges of hills and mountains, which surround a huge, level alluvial plain across which winds, from the west to the east, the broad and sluggish Sepik River, fed by tributaries from both north and south.

The population consists of about 300,000 people divided by their use of separate languages into more than two hundred groups, which vary in numbers from a few with 40,000 people to several with less than a hundred. In the Sepik Provinces (Figure 1)¹ 214 Papuan languages are spoken, while a few Austronesian languages are found on the coast. The people were once as culturally diverse—a certain amount of homogenization has taken place in recent years—but some cultural features were so widespread as to be practically universal. For one, the Sepik people were notably warlike. As might be expected of people with basically neolithic cultures, their weaponry was limited to the usual archaic modes of piercing, crushing, and defense; they used spears, spearthrowers, shields, bows and arrows,

clubs, slingshots, and—the present subject—daggers made of human or cassowary bone.

The cassowary deserves a special introduction at this point: it is a large ratite bird resembling an ostrich or emu, which inhabits some eastern Indonesian islands, New Guinea, northern Australia, and New Britain (Figure 2). There are three species: the one commonly found in the Sepik Provinces is the Single-wattled or Northern Cassowary (*Casuarius unappendiculatus*). It is the largest land creature of the area, standing nearly as tall as the average man. It is, besides, an imposing sight in its black, wispy plumage, with its garishly colored head crowned by a bony casque, and its long single wattle conceptualized by the natives as a female breast. (Natural facts notwithstanding, the cassowary is always considered female.) The cassowary, moreover, is in both mythology and real life a large, dangerous, and aggressive creature.

Not all of the repertoire of weapons was used by all groups; indeed, there were very marked regional differences, dictated to a certain extent by environment, between the chosen types of armament. In keeping with the restrictions of a simple technology, the weapons could be used for hunting as well as hostilities; they were, in fact, part of a man's everyday equipment. In spite of this, they have never been studied quite as fully as they might have been. Shields in particular,² and bows and arrows³ and

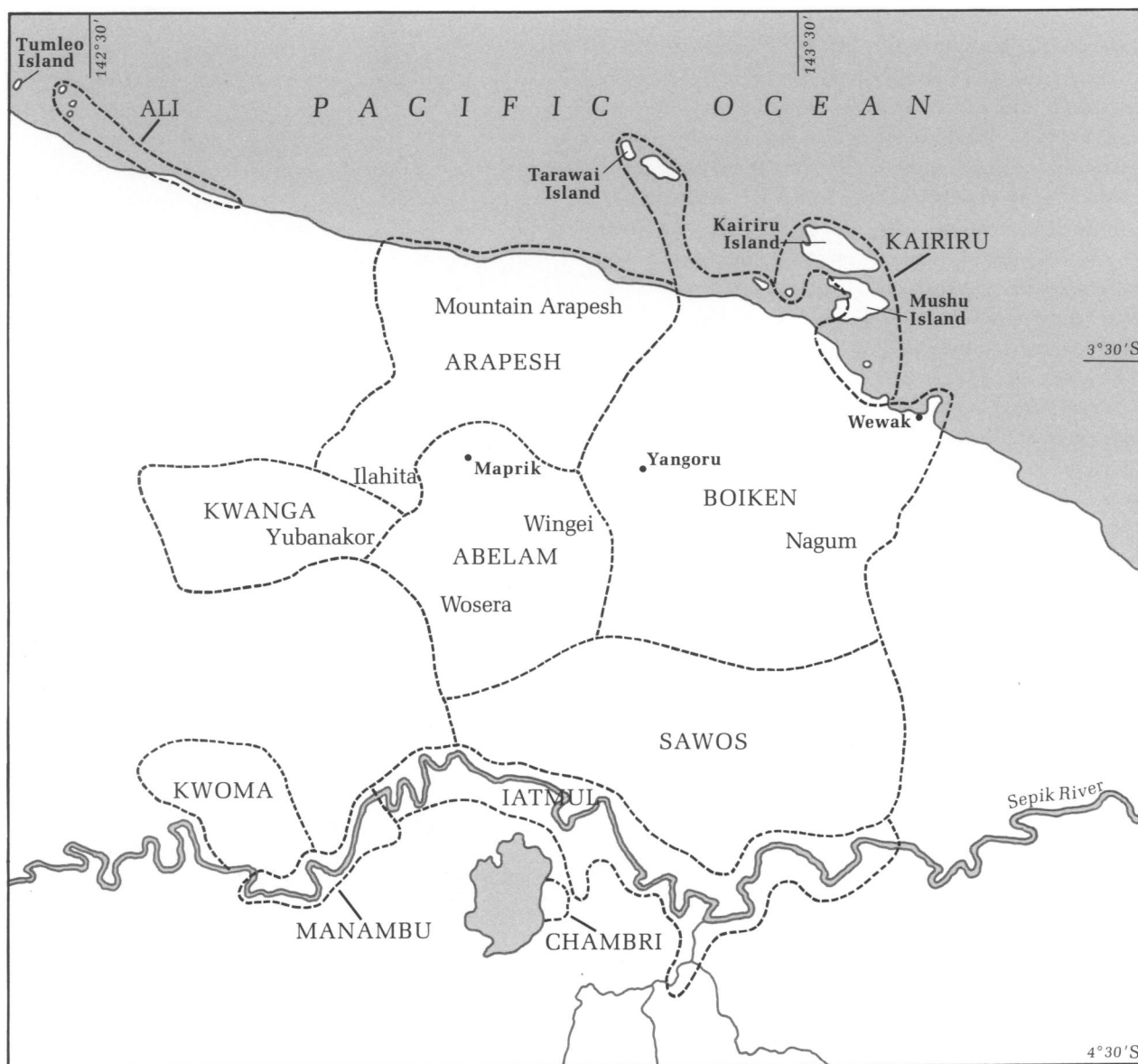
spears⁴ to a lesser extent, have received some attention in the literature; but daggers, strangely enough, hardly any, although some of them are among the most beautiful small objects produced in an area distinguished for its visual arts.

BONE DAGGERS

A Sepik man will say in Tok Pisin (New Guinea Pidgin) of some important part of a ritual "*Emi bun bilong singsing*" (It is the ritual's bones), or of the ritual itself "*Emi bun bilong yumi*" (It is our bones). "Bone" is recognized as not merely the scaffolding of the vertebrate body, but also as a metaphor for strength.

For cultures whose environment afforded a narrow range of materials, each of which had to be employed to its utmost potential, bone was very valuable. It proved a highly versatile asset to people who, as a rule, sought as much elaboration and variety as they could achieve. In ascending order of importance, Sepik people used the bones of small birds, dogs, pigs, cassowaries, and humans; with these they made pins, awls, gouges, scrapers and peelers, lime spatulas for betel-chewing equipment, ritual asperges, ornaments (such as combs and decorative slips), and daggers. Human bones (skulls, of course, but also others) were preserved as mementos of the dead, beloved or otherwise, ancestral relics of great significance. All the creatures that served as sources

1. Map of the East Sepik Provinces. Only language groups mentioned in the text are indicated (from Wurm and Hattori, map 6)



of bone figured in mythology; thus bone was not only useful, versatile, and figuratively “strong” but its “strength” derived from the powers of the supernatural world. Even the daily use of bone objects must have conveyed a sense of communion with the supernatural, which became profoundly enhanced on ritual occasions. The daggers, then, were highly charged with supernatural and symbolic affects—like many other items of New Guinea material culture—which made them fit objects to be used in ritual and magic. As this essay progresses, glimpses of these functions will appear. At the same time, it must not be ignored that, like all weapons of offense, daggers had the primary purpose of killing people. They were mainly used for finishing off victims brought down by arrows or spears, or marked for assassination, by stabbing them in the neck⁵ or behind the clavicle.⁶

The dagger was undoubtedly a popular weapon, but in a limited area. Otto Finsch (who discovered the Sepik River in 1885) describes it as found everywhere on the northeastern coast from what was then the Dutch colonial border (now the border of Irian Jaya) to Hatzfeldhafen, a station of the Neu Guinea Compagnie, established in 1885 on the coast directly southeast of Manam Island.⁷ (There were no daggers along the coast to the east.) Subsequent exploration has shown that it was also common inland, but the distribution of the dagger in the Sepik area is still hard to define—even harder, its distribution in the whole of New Guinea. Neither anthropologists’ reports nor museum collections are as complete as one could wish. Even so, it would seem that the Sepik Provinces (one should include the area of Humboldt Bay, now on the west side of the international border, and the Ramu River and its tributaries) were the part of the country where daggers were most prevalent. Elsewhere on the island daggers were made in a limited stretch of the south coast, from the Asmat region to the eastern border of the Gulf of Papua.⁸ In the mountainous central highlands they were used by only a few groups, who were possibly influenced in this respect by the coastal people.

The bones used for daggers are sometimes human femurs but more frequently cassowary tibiotarsi. Two overall aspects of the daggers must be described first: the topography and treatment of the bones.

Unlike daggers from elsewhere, the Sepik dagger has no separate or clearly demarcated grip and no

guards: it is a length of bone, pure and simple. The average length is about 33 to 40 centimeters; some miniatures are no more than 26 centimeters, but these are unusual. In all cases, the dagger was intended as a stabbing weapon, so the edges were not deliberately sharpened, but the tips were worked to needlepoints. Nevertheless, the daggers were shaped according to a number of styles dictated by local preferences (Figures 3–6).

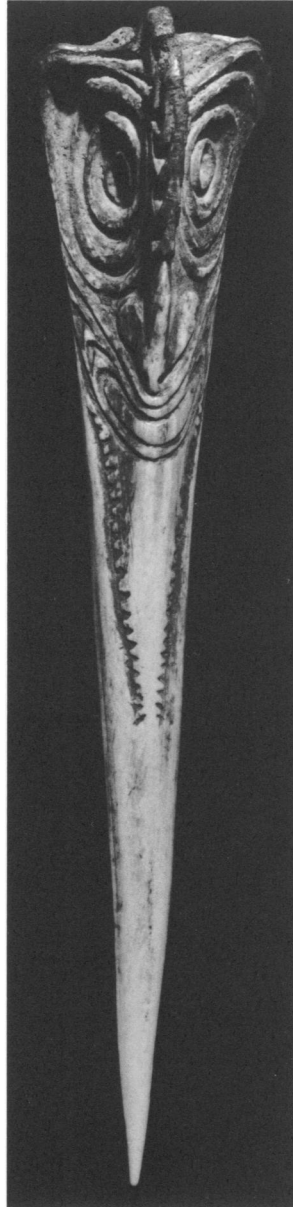
In the case of human bone, a man inherited the femurs of his father after the corpse was reduced to a skeleton,⁹ or he took those of an enemy.¹⁰ The section of the femur used comprises the condyles and

2. Painting on sago bark, Keram River, Kambot. A large cassowary is shown, the ovals in its body representing her eggs. The significance of the head and the animal (a cuscus?) is unknown. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Bequest of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1979, 1979.206.1568.





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3. Human-bone (femur) dagger, Kwoma. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1977, 1977.84. Note the shaping of the condyles.

4. Cassowary-bone dagger, Chambri or Iatmul, middle Sepik River. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur A. Cohen, 1964, 1978.412.835

5. Cassowary-bone (tibiotarsus) dagger, probably Abelam. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Bequest of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1979, 1979.206.1788

6. Cassowary-bone (tibiotarsus) dagger, Sunuhu village, Kwanga. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1978, 1978.124.1a. Note the use of the proximal end of the bone as the terminal.

part of the shaft; the trochanter is discarded. The condyles are never left unaltered: the outer surface is always removed, exposing the mass of cancelli, although sometimes part of the surface of the intercondylar notch is left. In the upper Sepik, among the Kwoma, Senap, and Iwam, the condyles are often cut in deeply at the junction with the shaft, producing a form like that of European "eared" daggers (Figure 3). In human bones, the removal of the posterior surface usually begins well below the condyles, with a narrow, expanding V-shaped cut (the apex to the top), which leaves at least three-quarters of the circumference intact for most of the length.¹¹ To judge by traces found in some Kwoma daggers, this was probably done to allow the insertion of materials such as parts of magic plants (ginger, for example).

The part of the cassowary tibiotarsus generally used is also the shaft extending upward from the condyles (Figure 5). It is unusual for the proximal end of the bone to be used, though this is done by the Kwanga (Figure 6). The condyles are often cut so that their flattened outer surfaces form a continuous plane with the shaft; in this case, the surfaces are often engraved, usually with a subspiral line, showing a parrot's beak, or are formed into a parrot's head. (This is particularly true of Abelam and Kwoma daggers, but is occasionally seen elsewhere.) Again, in the Abelam *suwega* type of dagger (see below) the joints were notched vertically, with each of the ridges so produced carved as a parrot's head. The outer segments (on both human and cassowary bones) are often pierced, with tassels of fiber or feathers attached to each hole or, more often, to a supporting bar made of a smaller bird's(?) bone, or a quill, inserted through the holes. Generally speaking, the posterior surface of cassowary-bone daggers is removed from the end up to the joint, leaving about only half the circumference or even less: many such daggers are almost as flat as a conventional knife blade.

The shafts of daggers are often marked with patterns or images, the most important area of which is placed below the condyles on the anterior surface. This is the natural position for the hand to grip the weapon, and it is more than likely that physical contact with the designs was believed to provide supernatural reinforcement to the wielder.

Tarsometatarsal bones, which are relatively small and thin, were shaped as objects that have often been

called daggers, but probably inaccurately. To judge from their size and from traces of wear, they were tools used for splitting or peeling, and they are not further described here.

Designs on the daggers are executed in three ways. Some are *incised* with lines (usually quite fine and shallow) expressing the outline of a motif. Others are *engraved*, with parts of the surface lowered to leave the design in relief, its surface continuous with the original surface of the bone. A rare technique is *carving*, in which the ground is lowered to the extent that the design stands proud of the rest of the surface. The Chambri (or Tchambuli) of the middle Sepik River were the only group to do this consistently, though among some other groups a panel was raised with an engraved design within it.

MYTHOLOGY AND CULT

Why, one may ask, should human and cassowary bones be used for making daggers? The reasons for the use of human bone are fairly simple but also diffuse. In a cosmology in which the ancestors were models of behavior, of rights and duties, the simple fact of their existence in the past validated the present. The ownership and display of ancestral bones thereby established the reality of the past, and proved the justice of the descendants' claims to the rights and powers that the ancestors held.

The reasons for the specific use of cassowary bone, rather than that of some other creature, may well lie not merely in its physical "fitness for purpose" but in two complexes of beliefs that are particularly widespread in northeast New Guinea. They are based on important myths about cosmogony. One group of them relates, in several versions, the adventures of two human brothers who were the creators of human institutions. The protagonist of the other group, again in several versions, appears as a female cassowary who was the creator of the world, including humanity. From place to place the human brothers may operate as crocodile avatars; the cassowary's children aid in and benefit from her creative functions.

The myth of the cassowary exists in two important versions, each consisting of two major episodes. In the first a scene is set; next a transformation takes place, the result of which is the second episode, the creation of human society.

Version 1: (a) In outline, the leading figure is a

being who can transform herself into a woman by doffing her cassowary feathers; a man steals the feathers and becomes her husband. (b) The mother of many human children, she is restored to her cassowary form by one of her sons, who finds and returns her cassowary garb. (c) She then creates for the children the “civilized” world of the village, the garden and its food plants, and the cults.

Version 2: (a) A cassowary gives birth to a human boy, who lives with her in a sort of pre-Adamic world. (b) The boy is kidnapped by a couple who mistreat him, but he is eventually rescued by his mother. (c) The cassowary tricks the boy into killing her, and humanity and yams are created from her feathers and bones. The creation of yams is almost as significant as the creation of people, for cults associated with yams are paramount among the Arapesh, Abelam, Kwoma, and other groups.

Myths of the cassowary-woman, as creator of cults, exist among the Abelam.¹² Version 1 exists among the Mountain Arapesh¹³ and the Southern Arapesh,¹⁴ who call the cassowary Nambweapa’w. The southern (Wosera) Abelam¹⁵ and the Kwoma¹⁶ have version 2, which is conflated among the Kwoma with still other origin myths. The myth does not exist in a standard text; variant incidents occur at equivalent points, although its basic structure remains constant. Elements of version 2 also appear in the mythology of upper Sepik groups (including the Manambu, Mayo, Wongamusin, Ngala, and Hauna Iwam).¹⁷ The western (Bongos) Kwanga¹⁸ version combines elements of the Abelam, Arapesh, and Kwoma versions. It also appears on the coast as far east as Hatzfeldhafen, among the “*moándo*” (?Pay-speaking people).¹⁹ It is striking that, in spite of Boiken initiatory practice (below), the myth does not exist—except for a single incident, version 1 (a)—among the Yangoru Boiken.²⁰

The cassowary is not in any sense a “goddess”; she is not worshiped, nor is she even represented very often in visual art. But she stalks through the undergrowth of much Sepik religion and her myth underlies a good deal of ritual action that alludes to the cassowary, rather than expresses it in any overt manner or incident. In the areas I have mentioned the cassowary is constantly immanent in one of the great human crises, the initiations that bring boys into manhood.²¹ Briefly, the cassowary symbolically devours the preadult novice, and then disgorges him, or gives

birth to him, as an adult. Part of the ritual, throughout a great part of the Sepik area, was (perhaps) the drawing of blood from the novice in order to eliminate from his body the “weak” or “bad” blood contributed by his mother during gestation. There were various ways of going about this; the best-known way, because it was highly conspicuous, is the patterned and often very extensive scarification practiced by the middle Sepik River groups, whose “devouring monster” is the crocodile. The most common procedure, however, appears to have been the drawing of blood from the penis. A number of methods were used, some of them carried out with cassowary-bone implements. Actual bone daggers were used by the Boiken at the second stage of initiation.²²

It is clear that during initiation not only was the whole process symbolic of “devouring,” but the operators themselves to some degree impersonated the cassowary. To give a few instances, the (Nagum) Boiken initiator was actually termed *amia*, the “female cassowary.”²³ The cassowary figures largely in cults throughout the Arapesh area, both in mythology and initiatory ritual. The religious complex of the coastal Arapesh belongs to the eastern Parak (Paraik) system, with the cassowary as the dominant *Parakgeist*. Its position and function were dramatized in initiation when the officiant stood with legs wide-spread, holding a dagger in each hand. The novices crawled between his knees and the daggers, being careful not to touch them, on pain of being stabbed—in theory to death.²⁴ This is not only a crucial moment because of its ostensible danger; it is a vivid symbolization of rebirth from childhood into adulthood practiced in many New Guinea societies—for instance in the adoption ceremonies of the Asmat.²⁵ The cassowary was also the main initiatory being of the Mountain Arapesh, among whom “swallowing by the cassowary” involved penile incision and the apparition of a man “wearing a ferocious pair of cassowary-feather eye-pieces, and having suspended from his neck a shell-covered bag in which are stuck two sharpened cassowary-bones.”²⁶

These few examples hint, even if lamely and disjointedly, at this extraordinary creature’s role in Sepik life and imagination. To sum up, the cassowary in myth is the maker of men and their world. Men in turn become cassowaries in ritual and, generation by generation, replay the cassowary’s role in creation. Besides, the cassowary not only “makes” men; it has

the qualities of aggressiveness a Sepik man desires for himself. We may at least guess that there are many men who could say of the cassowary that it "has bones," it is "our bones"—"ourselves, our yams, and our daggers."

II.

DISTRIBUTION, SPACE, AND LANGUAGES

There are three areas in the Sepik where daggers are decorated with any frequency and elaboration, and where they can be differentiated on stylistic grounds. They are (1) a small area on either side of the international border including Humboldt Bay, Lake Sentani, and Attack Harbour (Vanimo); (2) the coastal strip around the present town of Wewak, the islands opposite, and the hinterland to the south; (3) the coast east of Wewak to the mouth of the Sepik, the course of the Sepik itself, and some of its tributaries. Elsewhere, decoration is apt to be rudimentary and rarely consists of anything but minor, usually geometric incising.

The recurrence of individual themes throughout the Sepik Provinces is a well-known phenomenon, and other writers have pointed out that art styles, not to mention other aspects of culture, cannot be reliably demarcated by linguistic borders. My intention here is to describe the situation in the second area listed above in terms of a series of relationships and disjunctions between the designs on daggers and other aspects of local styles. This inevitably includes some aspects of the distribution of myths, ceremonial-house types, and some sculpture and painting styles.

DAGGERS OF THE COASTAL MOUNTAINS AND INLAND PLAINS

The groups to be discussed here include the Arapesh (speaking western Torricelli Phylum languages) and a number of Sepik-Ramu language speakers: the Kwanga, who live south of the Arapesh, and the linguistically related Kwoma, and the Ndu Family language speakers east of them, including the Boiken and Abelam. Together they amount to approximately 110,000 people, about a third of the Sepik Provinces' population.

The environment in which most of these peoples live is mountainous to hilly. Beyond a narrow littoral the Prince Alexander Mountains run east to west; rising abruptly and deeply dissected, they are largely covered with tropical forest. Southward they decline to ranges of low hills, which in turn grade into rolling plains succeeded by the alluvial floodplain of the Sepik River. The hill and mountain people are horticulturalists; like the river-dwelling groups, they exploit the sago palm for its starch, but they are mainly intensive growers of banana, breadfruit, taro, and, above all, the yam, around which some groups have constructed their most important cults.

In the northern part of this area, about two-thirds of the way eastward along the coast of the Sepik Provinces, there exists a linguistic and cultural situation of some complication, mainly in the small islands off the coast. Two of the islands—Kairiru and Rabuin—half of a third island, Mushu, and the adjacent coast are inhabited by speakers of Kairiru (an Austronesian language). Walis and Tarawai islands and the mainland for seventy kilometers to the south are peopled by speakers of Boiken. This is the northernmost language of the Ndu Family, which forms part of the Sepik-Ramu Phylum of languages.

THE BOIKEN

A number of daggers are attributed to "Dallmannhafen," a German colonial name for the area with no explanatory merit.²⁷ They are decorated in two distinct styles. In one, the designs are engraved, but the elements are isolated from each other or only loosely connected: the design occupies a relatively small area of the surface (Figure 7). In the other style, three or more oval apertures with pointed ends perforate the part of the bone just below the condyles; and the design is dense and highly integrated, with the lowered areas relatively small (Figure 8). Daggers in both styles were widely traded. However, on the basis of some exact provenances it would be reasonable to assume that daggers in the first style are Boiken²⁸ and the others Kairiru. Several daggers show a very distinctive design; a couple of them come from Sup (Kairiru speakers) on Mushu Island and from Tarawai Island (Figures 9, 10). The likelihood is that they are Boiken in origin. They have human faces at the upper end and a lateral row of hocker figures below.



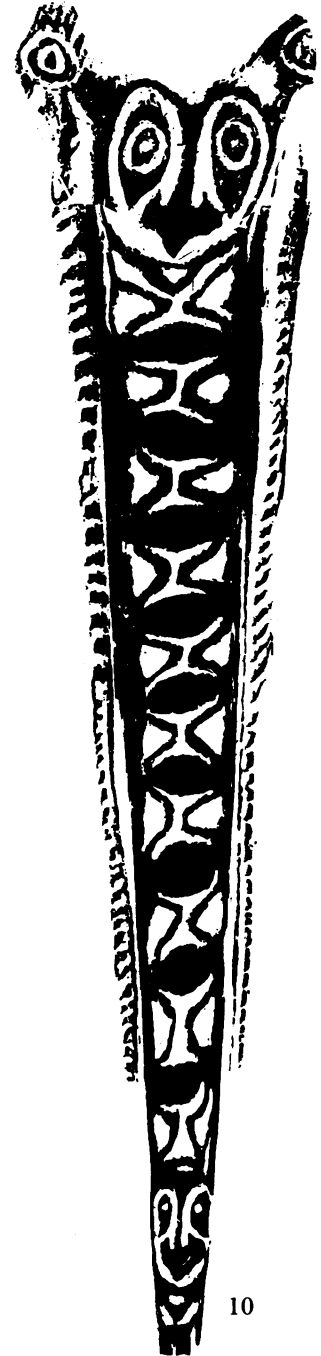
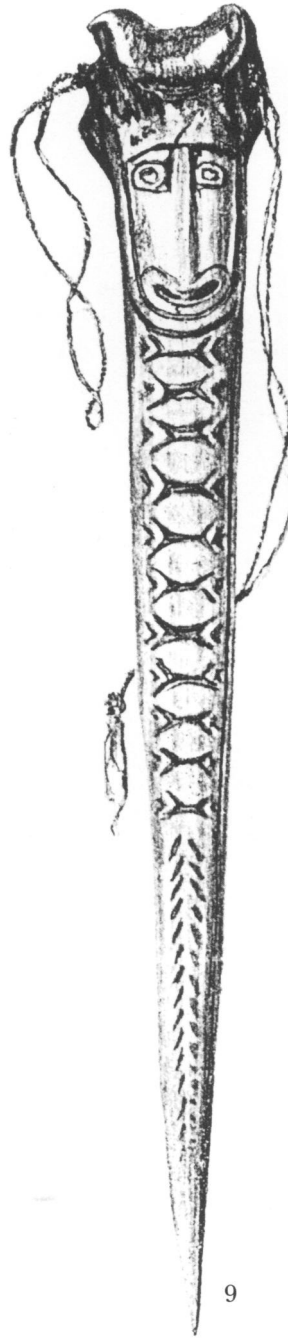
7. Cassowary-bone dagger, Tarawai Island, Boiken (from Janos Janko, *Beschreibende Catalog der ethnographischen Sammlung Ludwig Biro's aus Deutsch-Neu-Guinea* [Berlinhafen] [Budapest, 1899] pl. 14, 7)



8. Cassowary-bone dagger, Gnaussbucht, Dallmannhafen, probably Kairiru. New York, American Museum of Natural History, no. S867/204. Examples of this type have been founded traded as far as the Irian Jaya border (see Finsch, *Südseearbeiten* [Hamburg, 1914] table 14, 311). The design is also used on shields of the north coast peoples, such as the Tumleo.

9. Cassowary-bone dagger, from Tarawai Island, Boiken. (From Janko, *Beschreibende Catalog* pl. 13, 1)

10. Cassowary-bone dagger, from Sup village (Kairiru speakers), Mushu Island. Chicago, Field Museum of Natural History, no. 148467. Collected by G. Dorsey, 1908 (from a rubbing)



In other examples, the figures are reduced to a series of spindle forms.

The Boiken are one of the largest groups in the Sepik Provinces, numbering about 30,000 people who speak seven dialects divided into no fewer than sixteen subdialects, including Nagum and Yangoru. They occupy the Sepik's most extensive single territory but, despite this, they have been very little studied until recently.²⁹ They are apparently culturally diverse—for example, “Boiken ritual form varies considerably from one area to another, even from one village to another”³⁰—influenced by the Torricelli Phylum speakers to the east, the Iatmul (or Sawos) to the south, and the Abelam to the west.

In this general area, men's ceremonial houses differ from those of the coast and the lower Sepik River, which are pile-built, a necessity in potential flood areas. These houses have pitched horizontal roofs and overhanging gables at each end; the outer surfaces of the gables are clad with richly painted sago-spathe sheets.³¹ A carved wooden frieze often extends from side to side below the overhang. The inland houses exist in several local models, usually built on the ground; these have one high triangular gable sheathed with paintings on sheets of sago bark, with crosspiece friezes below the painted area. But the ridgepole slants down toward the back, ending not far above the ground, so that the building has a pyramidal appearance (Figure 11).

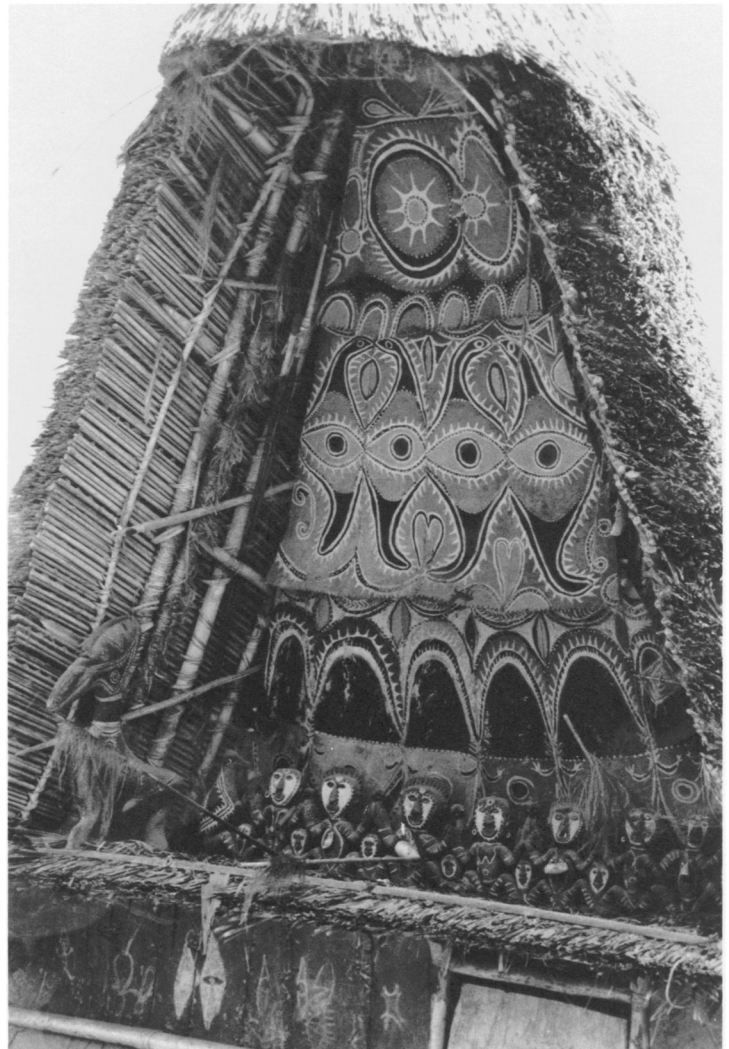
Boiken architecture follows the latter pattern. The paintings show a relationship to those of the Abelam, and Boiken sculpture is also highly reminiscent of the northern Abelam, as it is similarly based on large, oval, convex forms with much of the necessary detail expressed in paint rather than in carving.³² The Nagum Boiken have friezes with a row of small figures, sometimes with a bird at each end (Figure 12). The Yangoru Boiken, however, have a large horizontal face at either end, and a row of alternate birds and small male and female hocker figures between them (Figure 13).³³ A comparison of Figures 9, 10, and 13 makes the coincidence of the designs of the daggers and the friezes immediately clear, though sometimes the daggers have only one terminal face, placed at the condyle end.

13. Frieze from a ceremonial house. Yangoru Boiken. West Berlin, Abteilung Südsee, Museum für Völkerkunde, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Nr. VI 48 128 (photo: Fotoatelier des Museums für Völkerkunde)



11. Nagum Boiken ceremonial house at Halik village, side view, 1970 (photo: Douglas Newton)

12. Gable of the ceremonial house in Figure 11, showing its frieze and paintings, 1970 (photo: Douglas Newton)



THE ARAPESH

The name Arapesh refers to a large group of 23,000 people located to the west of the Boiken, speakers of a three-language Family of the Torricelli Phylum, who live in a belt of land extending from the coast southwest across the Torricelli Mountains. The languages are (from north to south) Mountain Arapesh, Southern Arapesh (which includes the Ilahita dialect), and Bumbita.

The daggers of the Mountain Arapesh living on the coast are very clearly related in their designs to

those of the Kairiru and might indeed in some cases have been traded from them (Figures 14, 15). In turn, the Arapesh living in the Prince Alexander Mountains to the south get daggers from the coast and make rather feeble copies of them. The relationship of cassowary mythology and ritual among the Mountain Arapesh studied by Mead has already been mentioned.

Ilahita Arapesh cassowary-bone daggers are not elaborately decorated; they have some geometric engraving and ends carved as parrots or cassowaries. Their ritual functions, however, are very important,



14. Cassowary-bone dagger, Dallmannhafen, probably Kairiru. Chicago, Field Museum of Natural History, no. 144786. Collected by G. Dorsey, 1908 (from a rubbing)



15. Cassowary-bone dagger, Mountain Arapesh. New York, American Museum of Natural History, no. 80.0.7111. Collected by M. Mead and R. F. Fortune, 1931-32 (from a rubbing)

and fortunately they are documented in much fuller detail than any others. The daggers were used in fighting, but were equally, if not more so, cult objects; among them are daggers reputed to have descended from the first ancestors. Daggers were worn through the loop noses of basketry masks (*hangahiwa wandafunei*) identical in form with Abelam *baba* masks,³⁴ which appeared mainly at early grades of initiation. Some of the daggers were imbued with supernatural power, which constrained their bearers to a type of ritual murder called *laf*, like the daggers themselves. The actual deeds were carried out with spears and were credited to clan spirits, not the anonymous masqueraders. Such murders were also committed with the more important daggers toward the end of Nggwal Bunafunei, the fourth and greatest initiatory grade.

As part of Nggwal Bunafunei, the novices crawled into the ceremonial house between the legs of the initiators—some of whom made passes at the novices with their daggers, but did no worse. What the novices saw inside the ceremonial house was a dense, magnificent display of carved figures and paintings “festooned with decorated cassowary daggers, mounted birds of paradise, and a multitude of shell arrangements. . . . All the remaining floor area was crammed with shells, feathers and daggers.”³⁵

The ceremonial house in and around which these transactions took place was a notably grand structure. It resembles closely those of the Abelam and Boiken in having a triangular gable covered with paintings, in horizontal registers, of hocker figures representing who or what exactly the Arapesh are somewhat at a loss to say. They may be ancestors or

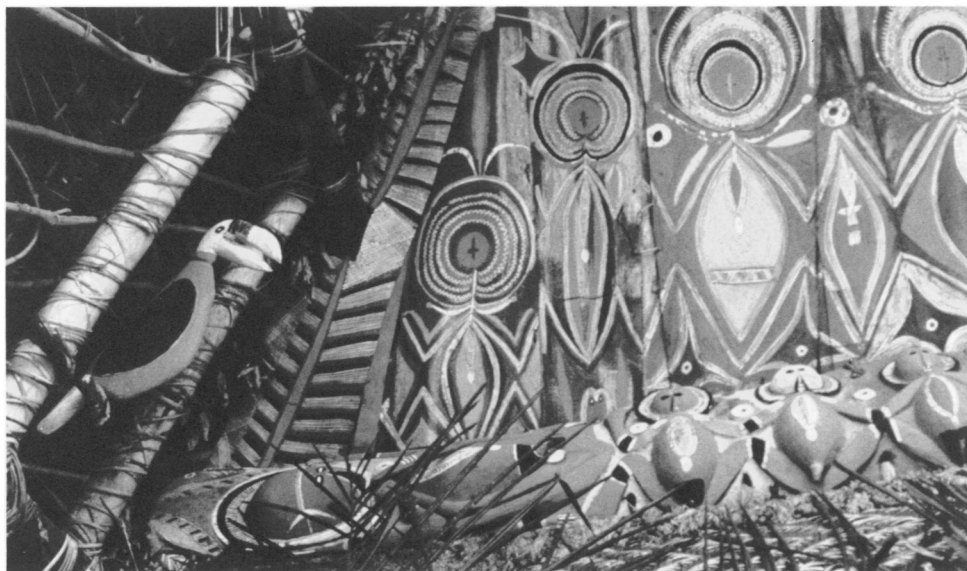
the paramount Nggwal spirits. Below them, however, is a long frieze about the import of which there is no doubt (Figure 16). “Each end is shaped and painted as a large adult figure lying on its side, one male and the other female. Stretching between them is a tightly spaced row of eighteen alternately sexed children. The explicit association is with the primordial Motherhood of Nambweapa’w.”³⁶ As an image this of course replicates in slightly more elaborate form the scheme of Boiken ceremonial house friezes and, more or less, the daggers. The point here is that it does not appear on Arapesh daggers.

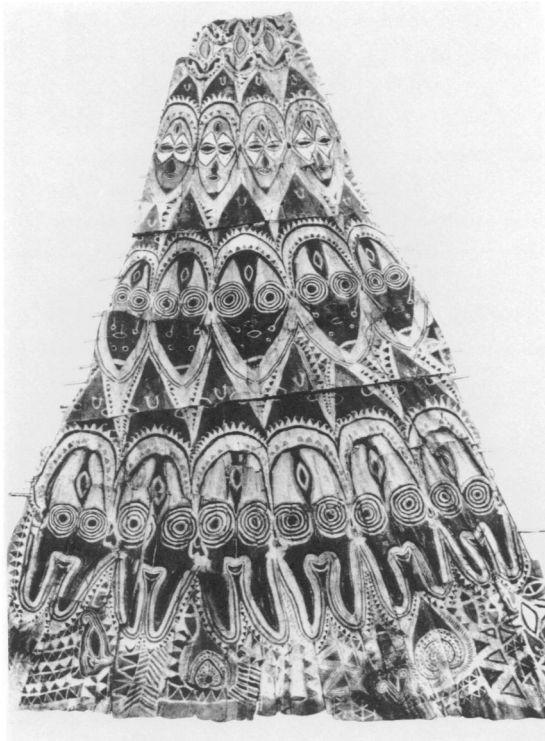
It is worth noting that the ceremonial house type of the Ilahita differs markedly from that of the southern Mountain Arapesh, who appear to have ceremonial houses with gables painted in northern Abelam style (except for small modifications) and slanting matting aprons below it in southern Abelam style. The frieze is carved with alternating large heads and small figures.³⁷ (It is always possible that the Arapesh employed Abelam artists for paintings and carvings.) The Ilahita form is thus closer to the Boiken in its details than to either the Mountain Arapesh or the Abelam.

THE ABELAM

The most justly famous of all ceremonial houses in New Guinea are those of the Maprik (northwest) and Wingei (northeast) Abelam. They are enormous structures, with gables towering up to ninety feet in height, covered with paintings above carved friezes (Figure 17). The lowest register of the paintings represents a row of several giant faces of spirits (*nggwal-ndu*) crowned with towering triangular panels

16. Ilahita Arapesh ceremonial house gable, Ningalimbi village (photo: Donald F. Tuzin)

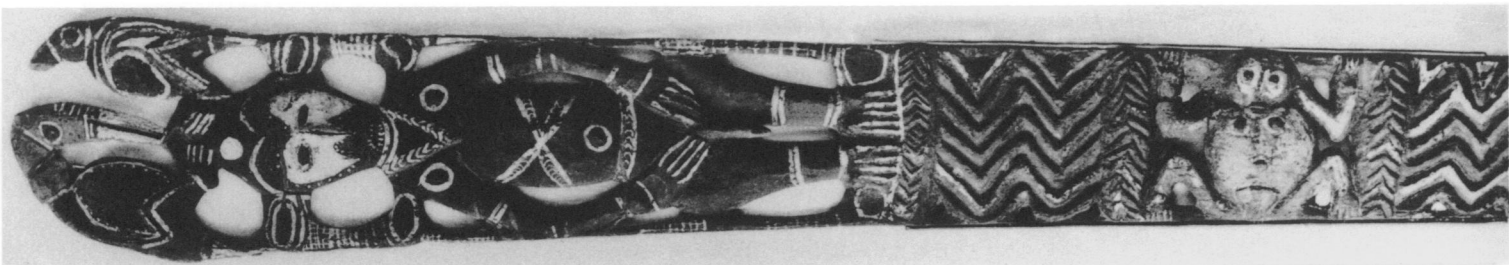




17. Gable of a ceremonial house. Abelam. West Berlin, Abteilung Südsee, Museum für Völkerkunde, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Nr. VI 47 057 (photo: Fotoatelier des Museums für Völkerkunde)

(*wakan*), which are related to the huge panels of featherwork worn in some rituals. (In much smaller form, similar coronals in basketry are actually worn by Boiken men; they are part of small masks the Abelam fix on prize yams and are also shown on Arapesh and Kwanga gables.) The faces have huge eyes shown as concentric circles; bands of parallel lines swing down from their noses, framing the mouths and sweeping up again. Registers of lesser heads and figures appear above, some of them with female references.³⁸ The interstices between them are packed with other designs from the Abelam design repertoire.

18. Frieze or beam from a Wosera Abelam ceremonial house (from A. Portier and F. Poncetton, *Décoration Océanienne* [Paris, 1930] pl. 14)



Many Maprik and Wingei Abelam lintels differ from Boiken lintels in being carved only with faces of *nggwalandu*, *baba* spirits, birds, and famous men killed in fighting, but without the Boikens' large faces at each end. In one village, Kimbangwa, however, the lintels show recumbent pairs of ancestors in sexual intercourse, with their children on either side.³⁹ A similar conformation appears frequently among the Wosera (southern) Abelam with groups of paired ancestors, birds, and heads disposed in varying arrangements (Figure 18).

The Abelam probably made a larger range of bone objects than any other Sepik group. In keeping with the general lavishness of their culture, they decorated their bone tools, ornaments, and ritual objects to the greatest degree of elaboration. They made bone daggers in large numbers, and these evidently had great symbolic value. Forge remarks that "the cassowary bone dagger, *yina* . . . plays a vital part in ceremony, where it is very definitely a symbol of male aggression"⁴⁰ and is equated with the phallic shape of the hornbill's beak. Like the Arapesh, the Abelam incorporated their daggers into rituals with differing degrees of secrecy. Some bone daggers were displayed to initiates as ritual secrets: a sight that, as in the Nggwal Bunafunei ritual, inflamed the initiates to seize them and commit murders.⁴¹ One is inclined to speculate on these killings as distantly related to some form of human sacrifice. Daggers were also used during initiatory rituals, as tokens of obligations between ceremonial friends (*tshambera*) and as tokens of peace.⁴²

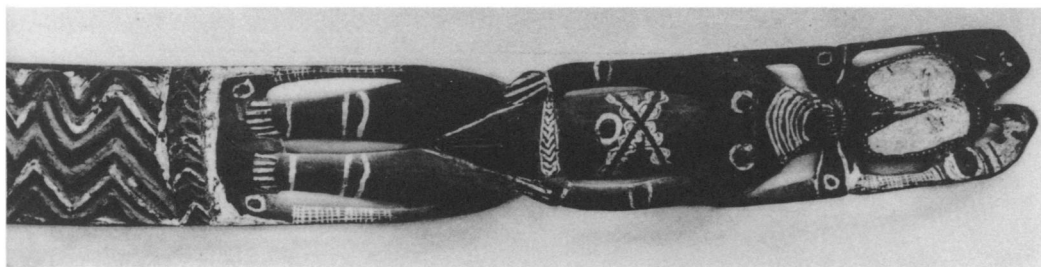
The cassowary-bone daggers take two forms (if human-bone daggers existed they were rare).⁴³ One (*tipakowgihe*) is the usual form with the posterior surface removed; the sides of the joint are frequently carved into detailed parrots' heads. The other type (*suwega*) is perhaps unique to the Abelam: the joint area is notched vertically and the resulting ridges are carved into three pairs of parrots' heads, facing as usual to the posterior side. The anterior surface of the shaft is removed, and the upper end is squared off. The posterior side then becomes the field for engraving.

The designs on the daggers (Figures 19–21) usually cover the whole front of the shaft. They are

19. Cassowary-bone dagger, Abelam. New York, American Museum of Natural History, no. 80.o.7024. Collected by M. Mead and R. F. Fortune, 1931-32. Note that all Abelam daggers illustrated are of the *tipakowgihe* type (from a rubbing).

20. Cassowary-bone dagger, Abelam. New York, American Museum of Natural History, no. 80.o.7073. Collected by M. Mead and R. F. Fortune, 1931-32 (from a rubbing)

21. Cassowary-bone dagger, Abelam. New York, American Museum of Natural History, no. 80.o.7068. Collected by M. Mead and R. F. Fortune, 1931-32 (from a rubbing)



based entirely on the designs used in painting, and the engraving technique resembles fine-line brushwork: the entire surface is covered with close-set, often geometric, parallel grooving. When abstract (referential rather than representational), as many Abelam designs are, the groupings on daggers tend to be based on vertical axes. When they are used, facial designs also correspond closely to those of the gables, though the headdress area is much abbreviated—no doubt by choice, as the field available could easily be adjusted to allow for its greater prominence. This kind of design in effect is the transfer of a vertical segment of a gable to another medium. One also finds an image in which two faces are opposed and joined at the chin. This suggests a sort of drastic abridgment of the frieze groups of Kimbangwa, with the bodies eliminated, or the friezes of the Boiken, Iahita Arapesh, and the Wosera Abelam, with the intermediate figures eliminated.

THE KWANGA

The 14,000 Kwanga live to the west of the Abelam and southwest of the Southern Arapesh, sharing a narrow border with both. Their language is in the same Nukuma Family (Sepik-Ramu Phylum) as Kwoma and has five dialects. The most firmly attributed cassowary-bone daggers are from the village of Sunuhu (Yubanakor dialect), which lies close to the Abelam and Arapesh areas.⁴⁴ It would appear that daggers are rare, if not nonexistent, among the Kwanga west of Sunuhu.⁴⁵

All but two of this group of daggers share a consistent design scheme with a few variations (for an exception, see Figure 6). The principal element in the engraved design is an extremely stylized figure in hocker position: the body is an oval pointed at both ends; the bent limbs are minuscule. The head is circular and the eyes are the only features indicated; it is crowned by a triangular form outlined by everted scrolls at the top, which is practically identical to the *wakan* headdress of the Abelam (Figure 22). In less than half the examples, this image is doubled by the placement of a second face at the lower end of its body, which also has a small triangular headdress (Figure 23). The image may be reduced to a geometric version showing little more than two circular faces, or the lower head may be expressed as male genitals. This again suggests the male-female pairs of

ancestors of the Boiken and Abelam. Below these main panels of design there are almost always several registers of chevrons separated by plain bands.

On some daggers two smaller subsidiary figures appear below the main figures (Figure 24). In another example, a row of three hocker figures is set transversely below a double figure (Figure 25). Here again one remarks a close resemblance to Boiken and Iahita daggers and lintels, but a divergence from Abelam models of both. The conventional figure, in a form identical to that of the daggers, also appears painted in horizontal rows on a ceremonial house gable at Sunuhu itself.⁴⁶

THE KWOMA

The Kwoma—a group of 3,000 people—live in a small range of hills near the Sepik River, south of the Kwanga and southwest of the Abelam. While they are closely related to the Kwanga linguistically, oral tradition suggests that some of their clans are immigrants from the Abelam area.

In both the yam cult and the Kwoma epos (which is what their mythological corpus amounts to), the cassowary is in many ways a dominant figure. Like other aspects of their culture, the Kwomas' cults and myths are similar to the broad aspects of the other cultures mentioned here. The variations that the Kwoma display raise the interesting question of whether they are superficial or fundamental.

Kwoma daggers as a group are unique in that human bone was used far more often than cassowary bone. Ritual use of daggers seems to have been minor, although that the daggers had supernatural power is attested by the fact that they were carried at

22. Cassowary-bone dagger, Kwanga, Sunuhu village. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1974, 1974.29.1g
23. Cassowary-bone dagger, Kwanga, Sunuhu village. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1974, 1974.29.1d
24. Cassowary-bone dagger, Kwanga, Sunuhu village. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1974, 1974.29.1j
25. Cassowary-bone dagger, Kwanga, Sunuhu village. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1974, 1974.29.1h



22



23



24



25



26

night to “frighten ghosts.”⁴⁷ They were also used in ritual murders, as of women who had spied on ritual secrets, and in fighting.

The Kwoma ceremonial house differs radically from the other types discussed here. (Figure 26 shows a house built by the Nukuma people, who

26. Ceremonial house at Weiwos village, Nukuma, 1970. The Nukuma speak a dialect of Kwoma, are their near neighbors, and have a very similar culture. The architectural style is identical. As this house stands on fairly open ground, its form is unusually visible. The front is screened for Mindja, a yam-cult ceremony (photo: Douglas Newton)
27. Human-bone dagger, Kwoma. Collected 1964–65; present location unknown. Note that in Kwoma daggers the engraving covers the entire cylinder of the shaft (from a rubbing)
28. Human-bone dagger, Kwoma. Collected 1964–65; present location unknown (from a rubbing)
29. Human-bone dagger, Kwoma. Collected 1964–65; present location unknown (from a rubbing)



27



28



29

speak a dialect of Kwoma, are their near neighbors, and have a very similar culture. The architectural style here is identical to that of the Kwoma.) It does not follow the architectural forms of the river or of the other hill peoples. It is not pile-built, having developed in hilltop villages. Instead of being pyramidal, the building is essentially a long, pitched roof with sharply elevated ends. It is completely open at front and back (although temporarily screened for some rituals), and therefore it has no gables to be decorated with paintings and no equivalents to Boiken, Arapesh, and Abelam lintels. The Kwoma indeed have a rich tradition of painting, but the paintings are attached to the interior of the house, along and between the rafters.

The main engraved panels of the daggers (Figures 27–29) are all based on the design elements found on the painted sago-spathes and the chip-carved ceramic

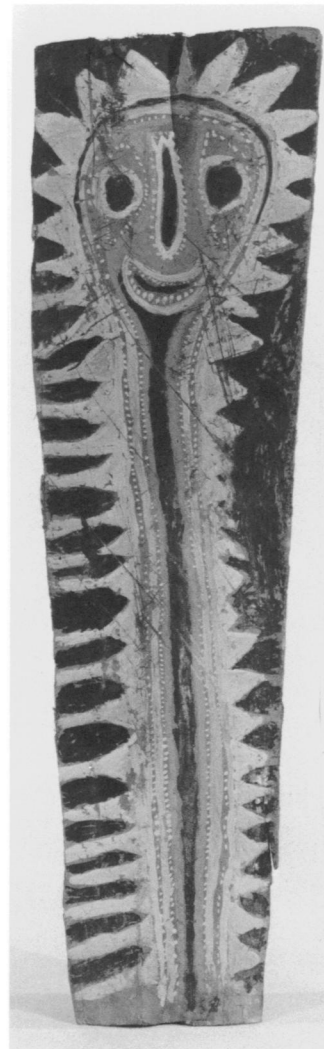
30. Painting on sago bark, Melawei village, Kwoma. Painted by Yindaka, 1973, represents a totemic eagle. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. David Nash, Anonymous gift. 1975.372.78



30

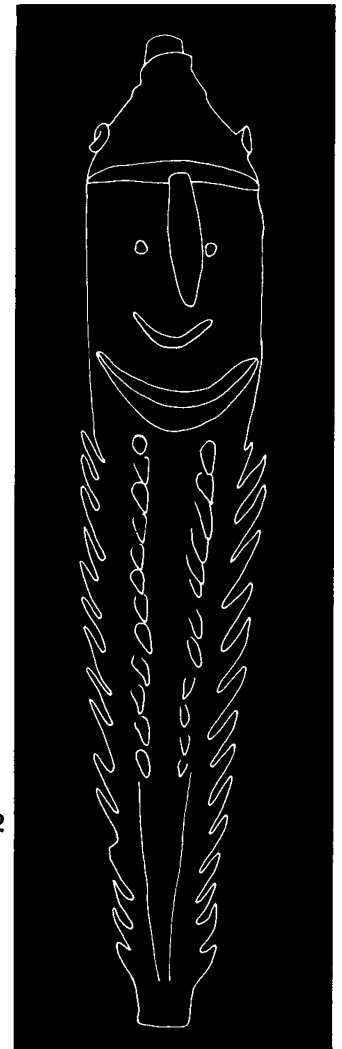
ceremonial bowls. Technically, in fact, the dagger designs are close to those of the bowls; both have decisively lowered backgrounds that stress a generous, open, and rhythmic layout of the designs. But since Kwoma motifs are highly standardized, all the dagger designs could be used for paintings, and indeed some replicate the paintings very closely (Figures 30, 31). The most common design, also frequently used in painting, seems to be that of two faces opposed vertically and joined at the chin; it is also seen on the Abelam daggers. Others replicate the faces of Abelam *nggwalndu* paintings, with their characteristic lines around the chin. Again, certain Kwoma designs appear simultaneously in paintings, on daggers, and as wood carvings (Figure 32).

31. Painting on sago bark, Melawei village: Kwoma. Painted by Kwurumbei, 1973, represents Waswendj, a mythical snake. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. David Nash, Anonymous gift. 1975.372.58.



31

32. Carving of a figure used in the Mindja yam-cult ceremony (from a field photo, about 1966)



32

III.

A NOTE ON HISTORY

Does the distribution of the dagger give us any clues to its history in this part of the world? As far as New Guinea is concerned, the dagger's geographical irregularity as a trait may suggest an exotic origin. Not only is its use limited to a few areas in New Guinea; it is far from common in the rest of the Pacific. It was used in the Hawaiian Islands⁴⁸ and—on flimsy evidence—in Tahiti,⁴⁹ but not elsewhere in Polynesia, nor, with one exception, in Melanesia. One might link this to the absence of cassowaries, but human bone was in constant supply, as were other materials. Hawaiian daggers (*pahoa*) were made of wood or the rostrum of the swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*); one surviving example of the latter has "a good claim" to have been used in Captain Cook's murder.⁵⁰

The Melanesian daggers were made in the Admiralty Islands, northeast of Papua New Guinea (and at the northwestern end of the Bismarck Archipelago now politically part of it). They have obsidian blades hafted into wooden handles, very often with a face carved just below the juncture.⁵¹ The Admiralties, with an active trading complex, were well within the range of Papua New Guinea's north coast. Possibly the original models for daggers were introduced from the island group to the mainland and spread from the coast into the hinterland.

To take the matter even further back in time, it is suggestive that Lou Island, in the Admiralties, was a source of obsidian for communities of the widespread Lapita culture (of about 3,600 to 2,500 years ago), which existed 270 kilometers away in the northwestern Bismarck Archipelago. These communities also drew on sources at Talasea, in New Britain, 390 kilometers to the south.⁵² Any degree of Lapita presence on the New Guinea mainland is at present attested only by a single shard from Aitape (West Sepik Province). However, flaked obsidian from Admiralty Islands sources has been found at a number of sites between Wewak and the border of Irian Jaya, although the dates at which they were imported are unknown. Besides these, a few finds of worked obsidian have come from inland in the East Sepik Province.⁵³ One example is from an undefined site south of Wewak (conceivably in the Boiken area), and another is from the Adjora area south of the lower

Sepik. (In both cases, the obsidian is from Talasea.) The latter could well have been a serviceable knife or dagger blade. It is an attractive thought, even without any solid base, that the dagger might have been originally a Lapita trait—though, it must be said, the known Lapita uses for obsidian do not support this idea.

IV.

CONCLUSION

The proposition that the visual arts of the Boiken, Abelam, Arapesh, and Kwanga constitute a regional style-area has already been made by Kaufmann,⁵⁴ who assigns the Kwoma to a separate area. His scheme is confirmed by the details given here about a few motifs more or less common to all the groups, but they also suggest a closer relationship between the Kwoma and the others than is at first apparent. In some respects, it would seem, the northern Abelam are stylistically closer to the south Mountain Arapesh, the Sunuhu Kwanga to the Ilahita Arapesh and southern Abelam, while the Boiken have somewhat tenuous links to the Ilahita and to both northern and southern Abelam. It has also become evident, in the preceding pages, that there is considerable common ground in the area's ideologies.

When one considers the art and the religious symbols of Sepik peoples—the two are always closely linked—it is often striking that they seem to consist of loosely assembled but in practice discrete units. They have no overriding unity and are not susceptible to exegesis by their adherents. They simply exist. The visual motifs refer to realities or mythical elements; the myths expound nothing; they describe origins and exemplify conduct. No New Guinea group has yet found its Ogotommeli, the Dogon sage who elucidated for Griaule the theology of his people. Perhaps it is a matter of time. It may have taken the Dogon ten years to begin explaining themselves to Griaule because it took that long for them to find a language of explanation that he would understand. But as far as the Sepik area is concerned, it seems to be generally assumed that indigenous systems of exegesis probably do not exist and that the onus of interpretation must be borne, if at all, by the researcher.⁵⁵

If we select, or if the material seems to select for itself, a group of units, even a rather exiguous one, we begin to find they are not necessarily individuals but that they have intimate links with each other. In the present case, such units include details of a mythological world—the cassowary, her feathers and bones, her children—and distinctly material items—ceremonial houses and their friezes, yams, and daggers. (To describe the units as either “material” or “mythological” is not intended to disguise the fact that all of them can be thought of as both.) Albeit units, each connects to at least one other; one might use the metaphor of a chain whose links had no fixed position. A better metaphor would be a constellation in which almost all the points are connected with each other. In several if not all cases, the “connections” are, of course, more properly transformations. Transformation is the mechanism by which events in Sepik mythology often take place, because more than one state of being is always latent in the mythical beings. One is simultaneously bird and woman, old and young, head and yam, and so on, even if for the sake of clarity these states are expressed sequentially. A being remains the same, but by exploiting one potentiality after another, it advances the drama and reinforces its reality.

As far as the Abelam in particular are concerned, the metaphor of the constellation is not entirely fanciful. In discussing his interpretation of their art, Forge speaks of “non-verbal communication” in which motifs can change shape and meaning. Huber-Greub puts it another way in remarking that “the Abelam are fond of making all kinds of ‘interdisciplinary’ correlations in the spheres of thought, knowledge and action . . . between all sorts of things, facts, beings, ideas and cultural spheres.”⁵⁶ It is also true that the lines of connection cut across what to Western thinking would be quite different categories of phenomena, material or ideological. Where there seems to be an absence of connections, it may be owing merely to our inadequate information. But as one reads what information is extant, more connections and transformations become apparent than are visible in the mere physical fact of the dagger, the subject here. Thus the cassowary mother bestows on man her bones, which in the idiom of mythology are transformed into yams and as physical objects are transformed into daggers. The principle of transformation raises some interesting possibilities not ex-

PLICIT in the existing data—for instance, since daggers are phallic symbols, and so are yams, is there a connection, or transformation, between yams and daggers?

The cassowary herself, in her human incarnation, is figured on the frieze that spans the front of the ceremonial house, her femaleness balanced by a male image. In the realm of material representations, the frieze is replicated on the dagger. The ceremonial house—mythologically speaking a female being, a womb that houses the males of a society at important times—is topped by a symbolically male finial. This gives to the whole house a symbolic sexual balance that is expressed with greater conciseness and precision by the frieze. If we return to the dagger, with its phallic symbolism on one hand and on the other its depiction of what surely must be the cassowary mother and her children, we find the same male-female symbolic balance again. In a sense the dagger is a portable reminder of a whole complex of ideas.

In the end, the inadequacy of our diagram is apparent: It is self-contained, finite, and regular. A number of cultural variations are here melded into a unity (on the presumption that this reflects the existence of common ground between the variations). But it reveals in the area under discussion something of what Barth calls a “tradition”—“the conglomerate stream of ideas and symbols of a plurality of genetically related and intercommunicating communities,” rather than a group of “sub-traditions,” which are “the ideas which a local community or single language group regard as true.”⁵⁷ It is noteworthy that in the cultures mentioned here, the “tradition” cuts across linguistic boundaries, and is at least one element that defines the cultures as belonging to an area.

Besides the probable inadequacy of our information, we have no guarantee that any individual member of any single society is privy to all the units mentioned here. One can be quite sure, however, that he is aware of a great many more, and that all of them might connect—or transform—to others in a huge and widespread series. This is not to suggest that there actually exists a canonical body of information common to all the groups involved, even though only imperfectly known by each of them—a dubious proposition indeed. The commonality of values can hardly be disputed, nor the fact that it lies at a profound level, finding coincident expressions through

mythology and material culture, those primary achievements of man as artificer. As they stand, the fragments described here may lift a corner of the veil concealing the rich complexity of a Sepik society's thought and indicate that even such a relatively minor trait as a dagger has its own part in a grander intellectual scheme.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A number of colleagues were generous with information and help during the preparation of this article. I am indebted to Professor Donald F. Tuzin for an illuminating discussion of Iahita Arapesh and Kwanga daggers, and for Figure 16. Dr. Markus Schindlbeck obtained Figures

13 and 17 for me at the Museum für Völkerkunde, West Berlin. Professor William E. Mitchell, Professor Paul Roscoe, and Dr. Dirk Smidt gave me valuable information from their fieldwork. Paul Beelitz, at the American Museum of Natural History, and Dr. Phillip H. Lewis, Dr. John Terrell, and Dr. Robert Welsch, at the Field Museum of Natural History, gave generous access to the splendid collections in their institutions. Dr. Mary Lecroy kindly advised me on cassowary osteology. Professor Mary Catherine Bateson and the Institute for Intercultural Studies, Inc., graciously gave me permission to cite unpublished work by Gregory Bateson, although changes in the form of the article eventually precluded my doing so. Like innumerable others, I am once again, as so often before, indebted to The Robert Goldwater Library of the Metropolitan Museum, its staff and resources.

NOTES

1. The basic references used here are D. C. Laycock, *Sepik Languages Checklist and Preliminary Classification* (Canberra, 1973), and S. A. Wurm and S. Hattori, *Language Atlas of the Pacific Area* (Canberra, 1981).

2. Major references are listed in Douglas Newton, "Shields of the Manambu (East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea)," *Baessler-Archiv* n.f. 35 (1987) pp. 249–259, to which should be added Frank Tiesler, "Tragband Schilde aus dem Hatzfeldhafen-Gebiet. . .," *Jahrbuch des Museums für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig* 27 (1970) pp. 185–217.

3. See Peter Valentin, *Die Melanesischen Pfeile und Bogen im Basler Museum für Völkerkunde* (Munich, 1968).

4. See Otto Reche, *Der Kaiserin-Augusta-Fluss* (Hamburg, 1913) pp. 314–334; A. B. Lewis, *Decorative Art of New Guinea. Incised Designs* (Chicago, 1925); Ulli Beier and Michael Somare, "The Kakar Images of Darpoap," *Records of the Papua New Guinea Museum* 3 (1973).

5. Dirk Smidt, personal communication concerning field information on Ramu River groups, including Rao, Igom, Breri, and Aiome.

6. Field information from Nukuma people, 1973, concerning a woman who had spied on male cult objects.

7. See Otto Finsch, *Südseearbeiten* (Hamburg, 1914) p. 215. The Manam islanders are perhaps the only group of whom we are categorically informed that they had no daggers: see Karl Boehm, *The Life of Some Island People of New Guinea* (Berlin, 1983) p. 134.

8. Gunnar Landtman, *Ethnographical Collection from the Kiwai District of British New Guinea* (Helsinki, 1933), describes (p. 57) cassowary-bone daggers from the Kiwai, Gogodala, and Gulf tribes. The latter had the unlovely habit of "stabbing prisoners

. . . through their hip-joints, knees or ankles . . . the prisoners were prevented from running away, and could be kept alive until needed for a later cannibal feast." The Asmat use both cassowary and human bone, but while their daggers are often decorated with netted snoods hung with feathers, coix, and abras seeds, they are rarely carved. (For examples, see Michael C. Rockefeller, *The Asmat of New Guinea* [New York, 1967] p. 338.) The Asmat also make monstrous daggers from crocodile mandibles.

g. Among the Kwoma and the Iwam of the May River.

10. For example, the Alablak: see Eike Haberland and Siegfried Seyfarth, *Die Yimar am Oberen Korowori (Neuguinea)* (Wiesbaden, 1974) pp. 136–142, for a detailed account.

11. This is always the case with Alablak and Kwoma daggers, but the backs of rare human-bone examples from the Abelam and Murik are treated like cassowary-bone daggers.

12. See Henry Aufenanger, *The Passing Scene in North-East New Guinea* (St. Augustin, 1972) pp. 254, 275–276.

13. See Margaret Mead, *The Mountain Arapesh* (New York, 1938–49) II, pp. 364–365, 376–377, 388; and equivalent texts in R. F. Fortune, *Arapesh* (Washington, 1942).

14. Donald F. Tuzin, *The Voice of the Tamberan. Truth and Illusion in Iahita Arapesh Religion* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 1980) pp. 1–8, for a full text.

15. See Aufenanger, *The Passing Scene*, pp. 350–352, 395–397.

16. The text of the myth is given at length in Ross Bowden, *Yena. Art and Ceremony in a Sepik Society* (Oxford, 1983) pp. 106–110, in a version with an alternative ending.

17. See Douglas Newton, "Why is the Cassowary a Canoe Prow?" *Art Journal* 23 (1973) pp. 41–45.

18. See Aufenanger, *The Passing Scene*, pp. 433–434.
19. For this extremely abbreviated version, see W. Tranel, “Völkerkundliche und sprachliche Aufzeichnungen aus dem moándo-Sprachgebiet in Nordost-Neuguinea,” *Anthropos* 47 (1952) pp. 465–466.
20. Paul Roscoe, personal communication.
21. A remarkable early article on the subject by A. B. Deacon (“Thè Kahikan society of Ceram and New Guinea initiation cults,” *Folklore* 36 [1925] pp. 332–361) was once celebrated, but now seems almost forgotten.
22. Among other descriptions, see especially Patrick F. Gesch, *Initiative and Initiation. Studea Instituti Anthropos* 33 (St. Augustin, 1985) p. 235.
23. See Aufenanger, *The Passing Scene*, p. 21.
24. See H. Meyer, “Das Parakwesen im Glaube und Kult bei den Eingeborenen an der Nordost-Küste Neuguineas,” *Annali Lateranensi* 7 (1943) pp. 170–171.
25. The adoption ceremony of the Asmat is a particularly spectacular example; see an account and illustrations in Tony Saulnier, *Headhunters of Papua* (New York, 1963) pp. 43–48.
26. See Mead, *The Mountain Arapesh*, I, p. 309.
27. A large collection of daggers from the north coast is in the Field Museum, Chicago. Some were obtained from J. F. G. Umlauff, the Hamburg dealer (1909–10); others were collected in the field by George Dorsey (1908) and A. B. Lewis (1909–10).
28. Andreas Gerstner has a small, almost illegible photograph of four daggers illustrating his article “Aus der Gemeinschaftsleben der Wewäk-Boikin-Leute, Nordost-Neuguinea,” *Anthropos* 48 (1953) p. 430, pl. 1.
29. Patricia May, “Art Styles of the Boiken People,” *Sepik Heritage*, Nancy Lutkehaus et al., ed. (Durham, N.C., in press).
30. Paul Roscoe, “Male Initiation among the Yangoru Boiken,” *Sepik Heritage*.
31. For illustrations, see Reche, *Der Kaiserin-Augusta-Fluss*.
32. See Aufenanger, *The Passing Scene*, pl. 9 (11).
33. Pamela Swadling et al. illustrate Yangoru Boiken gables and friezes in *The Sepik-Ramu: an Introduction* (Boroko, 1988) figs. 186, 188.
34. See Tuzin, *The Voice of the Tamberan*, pp. 40–43, 47–54 and fig. 6. For *baba*, see Gerd Koch, *Kultur der Abelam. Die Berliner “Maprik”-Sammlung* (Berlin, 1968) figs. 67–79; and for Arapesh masks (*hangamor*), figs. 87–95.
35. Tuzin, *The Voice of the Tamberan*, p. 238.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 189.
37. Photographs taken by E. A. Briggs in 1924 at Kaboibus, a Mountain Arapesh village near the Maprik Abelam.
38. See Barbara Huber-Greub, *Kokospalmenmenschen* (Basel, 1988) pp. 227–230.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 231–234.
40. Anthony Forge, “Art and Environment in the Sepik,” *Proceedings of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland 1965* (1966) p. 30. Note that G. Koch spells the Abelam word *ina*; note also the other terms used by Mead and Fortune for types of daggers (see note 43).
41. See Aufenanger, *The Passing Scene*, p. 419.
42. See Anthony Forge, quoted in George A. Corbin, *Native Arts of North America, Africa, and the South Pacific, an Introduction* (New York, 1988) p. 226; Ingrid Heermann, “Ein Lunggwalndu-Initiationsraum der Abelam,” *Tribus* 32 (1983) pp. 127–162.
43. These descriptions are based on the Mead-Fortune collection in the American Museum of Natural History; the terms *tipakowgihe* and *suwega* are from their catalogue.
44. MMA, New York, acc. nos. 1974.29.1a–u.
45. Dr. Karen Borison, quoted by Tuzin, saw only a couple of undecorated daggers at Inakor (Yubanakor dialect), but pots in the same village were decorated with very similar figures.
46. See Swadling, *The Sepik-Ramu*, fig. 184.
47. See J. W. M. Whiting, *Becoming a Kwoma* (New Haven, 1941) p. 135.
48. See Te Rangi Hiroa (Sir Peter Buck), *Arts and Crafts of Hawaii* (Honolulu, 1964) pp. 424–438.
49. See Adrienne Kaeppler, ed., *Cook Voyage Artifacts in Leningrad, Berne, and Florence Museums* (Honolulu, 1978) p. 122.
50. See Kaeppler, “Artificial Curiosities” (Honolulu, 1978) p. 25.
51. See H. Nevermann, *Admiralitäts-Inseln* (Hamburg, 1934), for illustrations.
52. See Patrick V. Kirch, “Lapita and Oceanic Cultural Origins: Excavations in the Mussau Islands, Bismarck Archipelago, 1985,” *Journal of Field Archaeology* 14 (1987) pp. 172–173, 178.
53. Swadling, *The Sepik-Ramu*, figs. 44, 50, 52.
54. See Christian Kaufmann in *Art and Authority. Art of the Sepik River Papua New Guinea*, S. Greub, ed. (Basel, 1985) pp. 40–41.
55. The question of interpretation is central to the work of Barth, Bowden, Forge, Kaufmann, Huber-Greub, Brigitte Hauser-Schäublin, and Tuzin.
56. See Barbara Huber-Greub, “*k + pma* (Land) in the Abelam Village of Kimbangwa,” *Sepik Heritage*.
57. See Fredrik Barth, *Cosmologies in the Making* (Cambridge, 1987) p. 1.