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Some comparative remarks about the Dani of the Baliem valley and the Dani at Bokondini

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SOME COMPARATIVE REMARKS ABOUT THE DANI OF THE BALIEM VALLEY AND THE DANI AT BOKONDINI¹

The name "Dani" refers to about 150,000 to 200,000 people (Bromley; 1960, 235) living in the Central Highlands of West New Guinea. To a certain extent they form a cultural unit and in this paper I would like to discuss some identical and diverse elements in the cultures of two Dani groupings. The groupings are Dani living in the upper catchment area of the Hablifoeri and Dani living in the Grand Baliem Valley. For brevity I will refer to the Grand Baliem Valley as the "Baliem Valley" or as the "Valley". The Central Highlands of New Guinea form a very rugged, mountainous area extending for over 600 miles. Here and there they are over 75 miles wide. The highest peaks exceed 16,000 feet, while some of the valley floors are over 6500 feet. The Dani live in the western, Indonesian, half of the Highlands. The exploration of this area has not yet been completed and a large part of its population has not yet been brought under control. The development of the eastern, Australian, half proceeded more quickly. Only a few remote spots are not yet under control. The economic development has progressed further than in the western part and anthropological investigations took place on a larger scale.

From the data which have become known so far about the inhabitants of both the eastern and the western parts of the Highlands it is clear that great cultural resemblance exists between both areas (see e.g. Watson; 1964, 11). This will be touched upon in the course of this

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Its content is partly based on data gathered during field work I carried out as a Ph.D. Scholar of the Australian National University. I would like to thank the University and especially the members of the department of anthropology for the many-sided support they gave me.

At least some of the geographical names used in this paper are obsolete. After the Indonesian government took over the administration of West New Guinea, a number of geographical names were altered. At the time of writing however, the new names were not available to me.

paper. To start with I would like to provide a few data about the inhabitants of the Indonesian part of the Highlands.

Very little is known about the inhabitants of the areas immediately west of the border with Australian New Guinea (see Map). The only publication concerning these people is a paper by Pouwer (1964). It seems that large concentrations of population do not occur and that great cultural homogeneity may exist here (Pouwer; 1964, 133-134). It does seem that there is a fairly great difference between these people and the inhabitants of the central parts, the Dani. The inhabitants of these central and western parts are commonly subdivided into four groupings. The Dani live in the central parts with the Grand Baliem Valley in the southeasterly corner of their territories (see Map, a). Next to the Dani there are the Uhunduni living both north and south of the Carstensz Mountains (Map, b), and the Moni whose habitat is bound to the east by that of the Dani and in the west by that of the Kapauku. The latter live round and west of the Wissel Lakes (Map, c). The classification of these people into the four groupings was introduced about 25 years ago, but it is still not known whether it is correct. It is also not known to what extent there is cultural homogeneity among the people belonging to the several groupings.

The Dani speak a number of related languages and dialects. These are divided into two: Eastern Dani spoken mainly in the Grand Baliem Valley and Western Dani spoken in most of the rest of the Dani areas, including Bokondini. Eastern Dani and Western Dani are mutually unintelligible. The data concerning the Dani living in the Baliem Valley are derived from a paper by Bromley (1960), a report by the first administrative officer in charge of the area, Veldkamp (1958) and publications by Matthiessen (1962) and Peters (1965 a). Further data were obtained through personal communication from Peters (1965 b). Finally, I draw upon the papers submitted to a conference held in Wamena, Baliem Valley, in August 1962. These papers are published under the title "Working Papers in Dani Ethnology No. 1". Below I refer to them as W.P.i.D.E. Most of these data are based upon investigations done during the last 10 years and in the northern and central parts of the Valley. They may not apply to the inhabitants of the southerly parts. The Valley is an oblong plain surrounded by mountains and measures about 40 miles by 10. Its altitude is slightly over 5000 feet and its population is estimated to be about 50,000 (Peters, 1965 a, 16). This is probably the largest population concentration in this half of the Highlands.

The data concerning the people living near Bokondini were collected during anthropological field work I carried out during the years 1960-1962.

The Western Dani at Bokondini live in a number of narrow river valleys broken by a plateau of a few square miles (Map, d). This plateau offered scope to construct an airstrip and mission and government stations. The altitude at Bokondini is slightly over 4000 feet. The total number of the population may be about 5000. Passes covered with jungle separate Bokondini from the upper catchment area of the Swart River, where Western Dani live (Map, e) and from the Baliem Valley. Many Bokondini Dani maintain frequent contacts with Dani living in the Swart Valley and the cultural resemblance between the inhabitants of the two areas is large. Contacts between Bokondini and the Baliem Valley are few and this concurs with a smaller degree of cultural resemblance. Like almost all mountain dwellers of New Guinea, both Eastern and Western Dani are cultivators with the sweet potato as their main crop. Pigs provide the bulk of the animal food and here too the Dani resemble most of the other mountain peoples. The material culture of these two Dani groupings is very similar. Clothing and finery are practically identical and so are utensils and weapons.

As is the case in many other parts of the Central Highlands, men and women sleep separately. Modes of constructing men's houses and women's houses are only slightly different. Next to these two types of houses Baliem Valley Dani use oblong structures for pig-sties and kitchens. Kitchens have often more than one cooking place, each used by a small group of women. Such a group does not always coincide with the group sleeping together in one women's house (Peters; 1965 a, 54). These oblong structures do not occur in Bokondini. Both cooking places and pig-sties are made in the women's houses. At Bokondini the women using the same cooking place are those sleeping together in one women's house. The methods for preparing food are the same in both areas.

Settlements near Bokondini consist of small hamlets. In the political community in which I carried out field work and which comprised about 500 people, hamlets consisted of one men's house and from one to six women's houses, with an average of about three. In 1960 the mean number of inhabitants was about 15.4. About half of the hamlets were built according to the plan shown on the figure.

FIGURE

Plan of a fenced-in Bokondini hamlet

The yard (A) with the houses is surrounded by a garden in the form of a horse shoe (B), so that the groundplan of the hamlet is roughly elliptical. The whole is enclosed by a heavy fence, about seven feet high. The yard is closed off from the garden by a lower fence with a few crossings. There are two gates (C) in the outer fence, in most cases corresponding with the two doors of the men's house (D).

Women's houses (E) have only one door leading towards the yard. The gates can be closed during the night and during the middle of the day.

The size of a yard of a hamlet with three women's houses is about 40 by 15 yards, and the length and width of the hamlet itself are about 60 and 40 yards respectively.

Settlements in the Baliem Valley are larger than those in Bokondini, but it appears that most consist of a number of wards the plan of each of which resembles the above plan of a Bokondini hamlet (see Peters; 1965 a, 46). The whole settlement may consist of up to 100 houses. Settlements of this size seem to occur especially in the central parts of the Valley (Bromley; 1960, 242). In Bokondini it occurs a few times that settlements cluster together. The comment of the Dani was that the inhabitants had felt unsafe. According to Peters (1965 a, 6) this association is not made by the Baliem Valley Dani.

The agricultural techniques used in the Central Highlands of both East and West New Guinea are often quite refined and skilful. The

methods used in the Baliem Valley are an outstanding example of refinement and skill, whereas the methods used at Bokondini are much cruder. Here gardens are clearings in virgin jungle or forest regrowth. The tree stumps are left in the gardens and no efforts are made to mould the soil into beds or to dig a system of ditches. People know about the occurrence of ditches in other parts of the Highlands but they say that in Bokondini there is only occasional need for them because normally there is a good drainage anyway. The Baliem Valley Dani have very sophisticated agricultural techniques (Brookfield; 1962, 252). In their gardens on the valley floor they make elaborate systems of ditches draining the fields during the wet periods and retaining the water during the dry. The soil made available by digging the ditches is used to heighten the beds. Beds may be used more than once and in this case may be somewhat shifted. When shifting the bed people look to it that the soil brought up from the ditches is put on top of the bed, to promote its fertility. Brookfield argues that without the ditches large parts of the Baliem Valley would be marshy and unfit for agriculture. He compares the Baliem Valley with parts of the Wabag Valley in East New Guinea where apparently similar geographic conditions occur but where the inhabitants have not succeeded in converting the swamps into garden land (Brookfield; 1964, 22). In the gardens on the mountain slopes surrounding the Baliem Valley floor, the Dani build small walls of stones to prevent erosion. These walls are also lacking at Bokondini. Their gardens are dotted with tree stumps contributing to the retention of the soil.

The Baliem Valley Dani invests generally more labour in his gardens than the Bokondini Dani. In his discussion of land tenure in the Baliem Valley Peters argues that both the "local patrilineal" group — to be discussed below —, the individual cultivator and the political leader of the local patrilineal group have a say concerning the use of the land. On the one hand he states that the leader of the group allocates garden land to the individual group members, but on the other hand he writes that one acquires rights over land by cultivating it and that the cultivator afterwards can serve it out to kin relatives like his brother or his son. Although it does not become clear how rights to land are allotted to the three categories of title holders, it would seem that investment of labour in a tract of land provides the cultivator with some claims to this tract. This is the same in Bokondini and it becomes most clear where gardens are made on tracts covered with virgin jungle. Felling virgin jungle is a laborious undertaking and hence the cultivator

is entitled to use the tract a second time after he has let it lie fallow. In case of tracts which have been brought under cultivation a number of times, this right is less definite and it is doubtful if the former cultivator will return to the tract after the period of fallow.

The division of labour in opening gardens is the same in Bokondini and in the Baliem Valley. The men, either on their own or in a group, clear the tract and, if necessary, surround it with a fence to keep the pigs out. Subsequently they subdivide the tract into plots and allot each plot to one woman, either a wife or a married or unmarried adolescent daughter or sister. The members of the household to which this woman belongs consume the greater part of the yield of her plot. The rest is distributed to working parties, visitors and so on. In Bokondini a man is supposed to build a house for each of his wives so that ideally a household coincides with a nuclear family. In March 1961 40.2 % of the households were composed of one nuclear family. Another 28.4 % of the households were composed of either the rest of a nuclear family — that is to say a widower or a widow with his or her children or siblings without parents — or a nuclear family with one or a few people attached, usually the children by a previous marriage of one of the spouses. At that time the mean number of household members was 4.8. In Bokondini the household is the most important economic unit. Cooperation between households and between the individual members of households does occur, but there is no economic necessity forcing households to cooperate. Cooperation occurs in strict reciprocity. Comparable data on the position of the family and household among the Baliem Valley Dani have not been published so far.

Bokondini Dani consider an ongoing exchange of goods and services to be essential in maintaining interpersonal relationships. People help each other when making a garden or when building a fence, during the organization of a large meal, during fights and raids, they contribute mutually to marriage and other payments. Thus an individual Bokondini Dani maintains a wide range of relationships with his kin and affines and with the people living in his own or in nearby hamlets.

The Bokondini Dani are united in a number of political communities which I call parishes (Hogbin and Wedgwood; 1953, 253). Exchange of goods and services between members of the same parish is much more intensive than between members of different parishes. On the contrary, exchange of hostilities is a prominent feature of inter-parish relationships.

Parishes contain several sections, the core of which consists of a number of seemingly agnatically related men with their children. Sections are named, they are exogamous and they have their own territory. The spouses of the male members of a section are born as members of a section of either the same or of another parish. In 1962 94 % of the married women lived virilocally. In many cases not all men living on the territory of a section are agnatic members of this section. Mostly they are non-agnatic kinsmen or affines. They may be married and, if so, their wives and children live with them. From the information I collected in one parish it appeared that 62 % of the adult male member population was residing on the territory of their traditional section, that is to say that they were agnatically descended from the ancestor of the section on the territory of which they were living. The other 38 % of the adult male population did not live on the territory of their traditional section. The difficulty is whether or not these 38 % of the adult male population were considered members of the section on the territory of which they lived. Supposing that they are considered to be members, then membership of a section is not restricted to the agnatic descendants of the section ancestor. In this case the sections would not be patrilineal. The Dani themselves are inconsistent here. Sometimes they say that a non-agnate has become a member of the section because he has been living among the section members for a very long period of time, sometimes they maintain the opposite saying that this non-agnate is not a member. It seems to me that this inconsistency might result from the importance the Dani place on maintaining interpersonal relationships by a flow of reciprocal prestations. This may induce them to apply several criteria to decide whether or not an individual is a member of a particular section. A first criterion is based on agnatic descent, a second on co-residence on the section, a third on participation in the affairs of a section in the form of reciprocating prestations. In the case of agnatic descendants of the section ancestor who live on the territory of their section and thus take part in the affairs of the section, application of these criteria yields the same result. In the case of non-agnates living on the section territory, the application yields contradictory result and hence the inconsistent information.

The core of all Bokondini parishes is formed by a named pair of sections which — as the Dani put it — “give each other their women”. Marriages between the members of the sections are preferred, not prescribed. In the parish where I carried out field work maximally

80 marriages could have taken place during the period of about 1910 to 1962. Actually 37 marriages took place, that is to say 46 % of the maximal number. In August 1962 this parish comprised 485 people of whom 267, or 55 %, were members of the section pair. As far as I know, all Bokondini parishes contain next to the section pair one or more small sections. The Dani emphasize that parishes form political communities because they are grouped around a section pair and because the paired sections "give each other their women". Often a parish is identified with the section pair. Parishes do show a marked unity. I mentioned above that exchange of goods and services between co-parishioners is more extended than between members of different parishes. Relationships between co-parishioners are not always peaceable but, if violence takes place, it is less ferocious than violence committed in inter-parish relationships. After most killings committed in an intra-parish fight indemnification is paid. This does not occur as often after killings in inter-parish fights and it is mostly omitted when the fighting parishes do not have common boundaries. The literature concerning the Baliem Valley Dani mentions the occurrence of groups I call sections. Most writers refer to "patrilineages" and it does not appear if the patrilineality of these "patrilineages" is as qualified as is the case in Bokondini. In the Baliem Valley also the patrilineages may be united into named pairs, while the members of the paired lineages intermarry frequently. Peters (1965 a, 57) denies that marriage ties are essential for establishing a lineage pair. According to this information the multiplicity of the marriage ties is attributed to the contiguity of the lineage territories (Peters; 1965 b). The political communities in the Baliem Valley are larger than those in Bokondini and their organization is more complex. They are confederacies containing several lineage pairs and other attached small lineages. Confederacies contain from about 1000 to about 7000 members and they are named either after the most prominent section pair which forms part of it or after the most prominent man among its members. Bromley writes that confederacies may be united into alliances (1960, 242; W.P.i.D.E. 1962, 2).

The occurrence of section pairs is not restricted to the area under discussion. They occur among all Dani groupings about which so far data have become known and also among a group Uhunduni living north of the Carstensz range (Ellenberger; W.P.i.D.E., 1962, 11). The organization of the political communities in the Swart Valley is similar to the organization of those in Bokondini but the communities in Ilaga

more to the West (Map, f) are larger and resemble the organization of the Baliem Valley confederacies (Larson; W.P.i.D.E., 1962, 32). The section pairs among the Uhunduni and those in the Swart Valley are united by marriage ties (Ellenberger, W.P.i.D.E., 1962, 11; O'Brien and Ploeg, 1964, 282; Wirz, 1924, 50 ff.). This is possibly also the case in the Ilaga Valley. The occurrence of fixed connubia among the Dani is remarkable because such a tie implies a deliberate concentration of marriage ties, whereas it has been argued that among New Guinea Highlanders one can expect a dispersal of marriage ties (Barnes; 1962, 8; Pouwer; 1961, 17). Dispersal does occur among a number of peoples of the central parts of the Highlands so that there the local kin group is linked with a number of other local kin groups (Meggitt; 1965, 95-96; Bulmer, 1960, 5; Ryan; 1959, 271; but see also Langness; 1964, 177 ff.). It should be noted that among the Dani sections, or lineages, are parts of widely dispersed or fragmented clans. This does not apply only to the Dani under discussion but holds for all Dani referred to above (Peters; 1965, 22; Larson; W.P.i.D.E., 1962, 32; O'Brien and Ploeg; 1964, 282). The territories of the section belonging to one clan may be as far apart as a few days' travel on foot. Many Bokondini Dani regularly visit agnatic kinsmen belonging to distant sections so that, at least in Bokondini, there is less point in deliberate dispersal of marriage ties in order to create a dispersal of kin relations.

Finally, Baliem Valley lineages and clans are divided over two named exogamous moieties, Wyta and Waja. In Bokondini occur two named moieties, Woda and Weja, but, although the Bokondini Dani say that these groupings are exogamous, this does not appear to be the case. In the upper Swart Valley, at one day's travel on foot from Bokondini, moieties do not occur at all.

The prominent men in the parishes near Bokondini are referred to as *ap gwok*, big men. Prominent men in the Baliem Valley are either referred to in the same way or they are called *gain*, a word which does not seem to appear in other contexts. Big men derive their status from their capacities as warriors and as leaders in fights. This has been reported from most, if not all, peoples in the New Guinea Highlands. In Bokondini oratory is less important in order to gain status than it is elsewhere in the Highlands but people there admire a man who can be witty and to the point. In Bokondini big men are not necessarily the sons of big men.

They have to achieve their status by outshining their fellows during fights and discussions and when they are no longer able to do this they lose status. Most big men are middle aged, that is to say they are between 30 and 55 years of age. A rather large proportion of men qualify as "big": in the above mentioned parish 27 % of the middle aged men.

In all political communities a vague hierarchy of big men exists, headed by the best warrior and war leader. In Bokondini big men are not distinguished by either greater wealth or polygyny. In daily life they are not distinguished by clothing and finery. They work as hard as or even harder than the other men. On most occasions big men are not recognizable from the behaviour other members of the community adopt towards them.

Baliem Valley big men dispose of a larger number of riches than other men. According to Peters polygyny is the privilege to the big men (1965 a, 35). Big men seem to be powerful and they are conspicuous in daily life from the behaviour other men adopt towards them. In Bokondini the influential position of the big men appears almost exclusively during large scale meetings and during fights. In case of hostilities they play an important role in the organization of the fighting. They have little power to intervene in quarrels between fellow-parishioners. They can only try to persuade them orally or to deter them by threats. They do not have groups of followers or helpers they can rely upon and with the help of whom they would be able to enforce their decisions. An important aspect of the status of big men is their prestige, the reputation they enjoy. Being a good fighter, being witty and to the point, and being a good worker are the personal qualities the Bokondini Dani values most and the big men owe their reputation to displaying these properties more successfully than the other men.

It is not quite clear what power and authority the Baliem Valley big men possess. Bromley writes that their voice is important during meetings but that they may be overruled (W.P.i.D.E., 1962, 5), Heider mentions that if a big man wants his suggestions to be accepted by the other men, he has to be very careful in choosing his suggestions and to gauge them to the feelings of the others (W.P.i.D.E., 1962, 17), Matthiessen's book hints that the lesser men may retaliate privately and independently of the big men. He writes that during fights some men usually stay in the rear guard or even abstain altogether without the big men forcing them to join the fights (Matthiessen, 1962,

248-249). Peters' analysis gives the impression that big men have a say in the allocation of garden tracts, whereas in Bokondini this is not so.

As far as the size of the political units is concerned: the above mentioned Bokondini parish would seem to be of about the same size as the other Bokondini parishes. During 1960-1962 its membership varied from about 525 to about 475 people. Next to these parishes were a few much smaller groups not centered around a section pair. As was mentioned above Baliem Valley confederacies may contain up to about 7000 people. Comparing these figures with Table I of Brown's 1960 paper "Chimbu Tribes: Political organization in the Eastern Highlands of New Guinea" it appears that Bokondini parishes are smaller than many of the political units listed in the table. Some of the Baliem Valley confederacies, on the other hand, are larger than any of the units mentioned. The span of time during which Baliem Valley confederacies remain in existence is not yet known. It might be supposed that a confederacy comes into being as the result of the political activities of one big man, and disintegrates when his power and authority decline. Peters denies that this is the case (Peters, 1965 b).

The genealogies I collected in Bokondini give the impression that a section pair may exist during a number of generations and the Dani themselves state that the parishes had been in existence "for a long time".

In the above it appeared that the Baliem Valley big men wield more power and authority than the Bokondini big men. This is associated with a greater amount of governmental machinery.

The Baliem Valley Dani have to be continually watchful for attacks and hence post a number of sentries. The sentries are young, often unmarried men, chosen for their task by the big men. Because of their function they cannot take part in the production process so that they have to be provided for by the community (Peters, 1965 a, 83). Such a guard system does not occur in Bokondini.

Warfare and membership of the political groups seem to play more important roles in the lives of the Baliem Valley Dani than in the lives of the Bokondini Dani. This is indicated for instance by the differences in organization of the "pigfeasts". Both in the Baliem Valley and in Bokondini a great many pigs are slaughtered and consumed during these feasts, but the further content of the festivities differs considerably (see Peters, 1965 a, ch. 5). In the Baliem Valley a pigfeast is celebrated

by a confederacy in its entirety, so by maybe 7000 people, in Bokondini it is celebrated by a parish, so by about 500-600 people. In the Baliem Valley the feast is proclaimed by the biggest man of the confederacy, whereas in Bokondini the proclaimer is not necessarily a very big man. The right of proclaiming a pigfeast is inherited patrilineally. In the Baliem Valley three major ceremonies take place during the festivities; a number of weddings, a distribution of pork commemorating deaths and thirdly the initiation of those boys who are members of one of the moieties. In Bokondini marriage ceremonies do not take place only during the few days of the pigfeast, but occur in the course of the whole year, while the fixing of the date is a matter for the parents of the bride. The marriage ceremonies in the two areas have many features in common. They consist of two parts, during the first the bride is dressed in a marriage skirt and during the second, a few days later, she is brought to the settlement of the groom. Differences exist however with regard to the payments and other prestations in connection with the marriage.

Peters concludes that warfare is the dominant theme of the third part of the Valley pigfeast, the initiation ceremonies. The Valley Dani themselves say that during the ceremonies the boys are introduced to warfare (Peters, 1965 a, 147).

The second part consist of offering pork to the closest relatives of those who died during the years since the last pigfeast. In the Baliem Valley this concerns only those people who died during wars, in Bokondini it concerns all such people. The culminating point of the pigfeast in Bokondini is a large distribution of pork to non-parishioners. Before the distribution the parishioners assemble on a ceremonial ground, while each nuclear family takes with it a large amount of pork. The distribution is not led by a big man, each family hands out its own store of pork to kin relatives from neighbouring parishes.

Peters argues that the primary goal of the Baliem Valley pigfeasts is promotion of the strength and the welfare of the confederacy. In Bokondini this aspect was not emphasized. Here it seemed that the adult male parishioners by taking part in the feast and by distributing and receiving pork tried to affirm or improve their status.

Further research might show if the above mentioned differences between the two feasts are somehow comparable with the differences between the pigfeasts held in two areas in the eastern half of the Highlands, as reported by Read (1954, 18-19).²

² see postscript.

In his 1960 paper Bromley emphasizes that the Baliem Valley Dani are very much preoccupied with the existence and the manifestations of a supernatural force, *wesa*. *Wesa* is manifested in a great many ways: it is present in natural objects like the sun and the moon, in culturally conceptualized groupings like the clans, in human behaviour like sexual intercourse, in norms like the law of exogamy, and in persons like the big men. Though writing on Valley Dani religion — which he defines very broadly (Peters, 1965 a, 151) — Peters does not mention this supernatural force. This may be due to cultural diversity in the Valley since Bromley based his paper mainly on data gathered in the southern part of the Valley (Bromley, 1960, 236), whereas Peters worked in the central parts (Peters, 1965 a, 16). Another indication of this diversity is the variation in meaning of the words *ap wesakun*. Peters refers with these words to the above mentioned sentries. Bromley uses the same words to refer to certain specialized ritual leaders (W.P.i.D.E., 1962, 3). Heider, working further north than both Bromley and Peters, mentions that he got conflicting information concerning the *ap wesakun*. Sometimes these words were said to refer to the sentries, on other times to men with curing powers (W.P.i.D.E., 1962, 17).

Finally I would like to point out two conspicuous differences between the two Dani groupings under discussion. Sorcery plays a very important role in the lives of the Bokondini Dani. They believe that all women are sorceresses, capable of killing people and easily provoked to do so. Neither women nor men are safe from their sorcery. Many Dani consider the sorcery worked by women the counterpart of the weapons used by men. While men kill with bows and arrows and with spears, women kill by sorcery. A Bokondini Dani is afraid to become a victim of sorcery and he tries to avoid women who might nourish a grudge against him. Many people do not leave the territory of their own parish, avoiding women from hostile parishes. In practice Bokondini Dani believe that not one of them dies naturally; people are always killed either in wars or fights, or from women's sorcery, or — maybe — from the activities of malevolent spirits. These views bring about the prolongation or reopening of many quarrels. Bokondini Dani hold that in the past women did possess bows and arrows and spears and that these weapons have been taken from them by the men. To compensate for this women took to sorcery. It seems to me that next to this account of a mythical past contemporary social conditions may also

validate the beliefs in sorcery worked by women. In Bokondini women are not regarded as intellectually inferior to men. Men often consult their wives, for instance concerning the disposal of riches. Women are not subordinated to men. The latter do not order them around and a man normally does not press a decision against his wife's wishes. Women have their own range of affairs which they manage independently. But they do not have weapons and so they have no chance of becoming prominent and of gaining prestige by showing their killing capacities during fights. This opportunity is only open to men. These circumstances also may underlie the beliefs that women kill by sorcery thus trying to compensate for their lack of other weapons. In fact, a few Bokondini women, who reputedly had killed a number of people by sorcery, were referred to as "big women".

In the Baliem Valley these beliefs do not occur. Peters mentions that there it is believed that some people possess a not clearly conceptualized capacity to kill, but this capacity is not restricted to women (1965 a, 103).

Among many New Guinea Highland peoples relationships between males and females are strained and uneasy. It may be that this is not so in the Baliem Valley. Peters says that the relationships between spouses is "good" (1965 a, 36). This is not conclusive however, since in Bokondini also husband and wife may be very devoted, whereas the relationship between a man and other women than his wife is often strained.

The second difference I would like to discuss is in the response to the efforts of mission and government to establish respectively Christianity and the Pax Hollandica. Mission posts in the Baliem Valley were opened in 1954 and later and the government started pacification in the beginning of 1958. Although energetic efforts were made, they were not successful and the inter-confederacy warfare continued. A number of casualties occurred, both at government and at Dani side. In 1962, when the UNTEA took charge of the administration, considerable parts of the valley were not yet under control and it was unsafe to enter these areas without an armed guard. The presence of the Europeans was resented by most Baliem Valley Dani. They were unwilling to work for the Dutch administration so that finally workers had to be brought in from other areas. The missions were less successful in the Baliem Valley than in other Dani areas. In the beginning of 1960 western Dani responded to the missions teachings and this resulted throughout the whole area in burnings of sacred

objects and rejection of the former religion (Hitt's 1962 book "Cannibal Valley" presents a missionary's view of these events. See further papers on "Nativistic Movements" in the W.P.i.D.E. and O'Brien and Ploeg, 1964). In the Baliem Valley a burning occurred in the northernmost tip only, on the boundary between Eastern and Western Dani. In the middle of 1962 a mission post by one of the Baliem tributaries had to be evacuated, because of the hostility of the great majority of the Dani in that region. During the last months before evacuation police guarded the station in order to deter attacks.

The area around Bokondini was pacified within one year after the establishment of a government station. No casualties occurred during the pacification. The Dani here were eager to work for mission and government and the supply of labour often exceeded the demand. The people took part in the 1960 religious movement and did not only burn the traditionally sacred objects but also abandoned all ceremonies intimately or vaguely connected with their former religion. They strongly condemned their former way of life stressing especially the badness of their frequent fighting. People took it that the days of the traditionally big men had gone. The latter lost their prominence and by 1962 their place was being taken by the men most closely associated with the missionaries.

That the Dutch efforts to pacify the Baliem Valley were unsuccessful, can be correlated to the attitude of the people towards fighting. Baliem Valley Dani are said to feel obliged to carry on fighting. Peters reports that they consider failure to carry on fighting to be bad and injurious to the welfare of the community (1965 a, 80 and 112-113). Bromley argues that with regard to Baliem Valley fighting one should distinguish between inter-confederacy fighting, which he calls "war", and intra-confederacy fighting, which he calls "feud". About warfare he says that any Valley Dani male after initiation "is conscious that he is a member of a patrilineage with a sacred obligation to fight. . . .". Feud, in his view, "is primarily a legal sanction in the local system of law justice" (W.P.i.D.E., 1962, 22 and 24). (It does not concern my argument that this view may imply an incorrect stretching of the concept "legal" (compare Hoebel, 1954, 330)). Bromley seems to indicate that Valley feuds develop out of retaliatory action and in this respect they resemble Bokondini warfare. Bokondini Dani do not feel obliged to fight, they feel obliged to retaliate, if necessary by fighting.

It seems clear that there are internal functional relationships between

the elements from either of the two Dani cultures under discussion, but I feel unable to state what factors may underlie the differences and similarities between comparable elements from both cultures. Firstly, the importance of warfare and, secondly, the role of the political groups in the lives of the group members seem to be greater in the Baliem Valley than in Bokondini. It may be argued that introducing these factors merely brings out differences in culture foci and does not account for the reasons why differences exist between the foci. It seems to me that the external element of the physical environment to some extent may underlie the differences between these two cognate cultures. The habitat the Baliem Valley provides may have induced people to cooperate in order to revert the area into cultivable garden land. Unfortunately it is not known to what extent the Baliem Valley irrigation agriculture depends upon intra-confederacy cooperation. It is also not known what role the big men have with regard to agriculture.

Although finally the more refined agriculture practiced in the Baliem Valley may have increased the maximum carrying capacity of the land, it may be that in the Valley the population pressure on the land is larger than is the case in Bokondini, where land seems to be plentiful. Many parishes have two territories so that parishioners can move from one territory to the other, for instance in case of war or soil exhaustion. Quite apart from the consequences a larger population density may have in this respect, it may be interesting to investigate the population pressure and its possible consequences on social organization and warfare.

A. PLOEG

POSTSCRIPT

While writing this paper I unfortunately did not realize that in order to describe the contrast between the Valley and the Bokondini pigfeasts, I could have profited from Gluckman's hypotheses concerning the social context of "ritual" and "ceremonial", as developed in his 1962 essay "Les Rites de Passage" (in *Essays on the Ritual of Social Relations*, Manchester University Press, 1962) and in his 1965 book *Politics, Law and Ritual in Tribal Society* Basil Blackwell, 1965. In Gluckman's conceptualization "ritualization" refers to "a stylized ceremonial in which persons related in various ways to the central actors, as well as these themselves, perform prescribed actions according to their secular

roles...". It is furthermore believed "by the participants that these prescribed actions express and amend social relationships so as to secure general blessing, purification, protection, and prosperity for the persons involved in some mystical manner which is out of sensory control." (Les Rites de Passage, pp. 24-25). In his 1965 book Gluckman describes the dances held when an Anuak village headman is installed. He comments: "The dance is ceremonial, not ritual, for it does not influence the prosperity of the village. It 'signalizes' the temporary capacity of the villagers to reach an ephemeral unity and ability to have internal peace; it does not 'symbolize' and influence mystically their solidarity despite conflict" (*Politics, Law and Ritual in Tribal Society*, p. 253).

It might have been interesting to investigate whether the Valley pigfeast is the more ritualized of the two and whether the Bokondini feast is primarily ceremonial. Peters concludes about the Valley pigfeast that it is "the culminating point of Dani social-religious life" — "hèt hoogtepunt in het sociaal-religieuze leven van de Dani" — and he states that the celebration of the pigfeast promotes the prosperity of the confederacy (Peters, 1965 a, 148). These two aspects are not prominent in the Bokondini feast. If the Valley feast is more ritualized, it might be investigated if in Valley Dani culture common interests and welfare (and the political groups?) play a more prominent role than in Bokondini Dani culture.

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