

Details of the Mengge People's Culture in the Highlands of New-Guinea

By

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While working as a member of the anthropological Nanzan expedition in the Hagen district, I spent the time from 20.11.1964 - 3.12.1964. in the Kuli-Mug area. As far as I could make out, there had not been any anthropologists there previously. The Kuli-Mug natives live in the foot hills of the north-west slopes of the Kubor Range, on the right bank of the upper Wagi River. The river flats are deep and malaria infested swamps. Many streams and streamlets come down from the high mountains, which often becomes serious obstacles to travellers and cars. There is one Government-built road going through this district from Mt. Hagen to Minj. This road connects the villages, or rather settlements with the centers of trade and business. The natives are not any longer as poor as they used to be. They plant coffee now, which is bought and collected from them by traders, who visit the area in their trucks and cars. There are schools now, which are taken care of by catholic and protestant Missions.—Apart from the above mentioned facts, there has been little change in the basic way of living of the natives in this area. They still live mainly on the products of their gardens and on their pigs. Once in a while they are able to shoot a marsupial, a casowary or other birds, catch fish and collect edible fruits and leaves from the forests. Game is very rare in the high mountain-chains of New-Guinea. So the people appreciate it very much to be now in a position to buy some canned meat or fish.

The natives of the Mug-Kuli area are apparently a mixture of Hagen- and Middle Waghi people (and possibly they can

claim certain elements of their own). There are certain culture elements in their possession, which are typical for the Hagen people, for instance the Hagen dance ground, but not for the Middle Wagi natives, and others, which are found with the Middle Wagi natives, but are non-existent with the Hagen population, as for instance, the spirit flutes. Their language seems to be a composition (entirely) of Hagen- and Middle Wagi dialects. (The latter language is known to me from my long sojourn in this area—about three years, at Nondugl and Banz.)—I did not have the time to make a thorough study of the Kuli and Mug dialects, but my informants told me, there was a difference between the two idioms.—According to my informants the Mengge are divided in four clans: 1. Eveni. 2. Mombuge. 3. Mengge (!) 4. Kunabu. Mug is the native name for the place, where there is now a Catholic Mission station. This seems to be about the center of the Mengge people's territory.

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Jim bun, a man of Mug (or Muk) reports: When we Mug-people had killed one of the Kuli men, we allowed the Kuli to bury their clan-fellow. If somebody had been wounded with a spear or with an arrow, he was usually killed by his enemies with a stone axe. He was beheaded. Then his chest and belly were cut open. His arms were hacked into three parts. Then his knees and the lower parts of his legs were cut off. After that the victors withdrew and the enemies were allowed to collect the corpse. They made quickly a stretcher, laid the dead man's body on it and carried it near his house. At daytime he

was bewailed in the open air, but at night he was taken into the house. Next day he was buried. The bones of warriors killed in battle were often taken out of the grave and buried somewhere else. In a similar way the bones of great men were reburied in a new grave, a little distance from the former grave. We did not take any bones of the dead with us into the battle.

The Mengge people have one important man, whose name is Mendape. He is a "menua". He can cure sick people, remove bad magic, and pull stones out the bodies of the people. When bad magicians have stuck sticks into the bodies of their fellow men, Mendape can pull them out again, saving by doing so, their lives. Mendape is a doctor and much more than that. He is a most efficient magician. Mendape is, as I was told, the only one of the whole Mengge tribe, who has those powers in his possession.—I had the privilege to meet this man personally. He is now an old man, and one would never expect him to have such an immensely important position in the Mengge tribe, but even up to this day he has many customers, who ask his help in many different kinds of trouble. Since I could not speak his language, and he was not very willing to let me participate in all his secret knowledge, I did not make much headway with him.

In the Mug-area I visited a dance ground, called "pene". These dance grounds which show the shape of a rectangle are known from the writings of various scientists, for instance Vicedom and Tischner, "Die Mbowamb". On one end of this rectangle the Mug had erected a "pugumbo". This is a tun-like structure, made from upright standing sticks. It is round and about 1,10 m high. This whole tun is filled with ground. Lianas, which have been bespelled by a magician, are girding the tun at its upper and lower part. On top of this tun a young "kaibigl" (tree of life) has been planted. All around this tree of life small red cordyline plants have been planted on top of the *pugumbo*, and bones of pigs are lying there. Near to the tun a long, about 6 m long bamboo pole has been rammed into the ground. It is filled with the sap of the *mambugla* tree. This tree does not grow in this area. The Mug buy this bamboo (with the sap in it) from the Hagen people, and they get it from the Wabag natives. The Mug have to give the Mundike (a Hagen-tribe) a young girl in marriage.—If somebody dared take out the young *kaibl* tree, or the bamboo, a fierce battle would result from it. The bamboo is left there, until it decays. All the trees

and shrubs around the dance ground are taboo. The removing or cutting of only one of them would start a fight. As I have often seen in the Hagen area, the life trees on the *pugumbo* drive their roots straight down, and when later die sticks that surround them, rot away, the life tree appears standing on many roots about three feet or more above the ground. The whole dance ground gives the Mug people a great prestige. They all are proud of having it in their possession. Behind the dance ground, at its upper end, there is a small round house, in which the Mug people at the time of a big festival used to assemble a great many mother-of-pearl shells. People would bring living pigs and receive for payment five pearl shells for a big animal.

Vicedom has well described the "poklambo" hills in the Hagen proper area, but even he, who had been living there for several years, was not able to give a definite answer to the problems connected with these hills.¹ One important difference of the *pugumbo* from the Hagen *poklambo* seems to be, that we have the bamboo tube filled with tree sap in the Mug area. This does not seem to be in use in the Hagen area.—Since I was only for a short time in the Mug area, I could not get any more information on this interesting culture element.

The "Kemunga" is a mysterious, death causing poison, or magic, or poison-magic. The application of *kemunga* was explained to me as follows: An enemy, for instance a Kuli man, takes some *kemunga* from Kuli and sleeps in the house of his friend at Mug. There he gives his *kemunga* to his friend. This man will hand it over to another member of the Mug community. This person will strew the "poison" into the food of one of his tribesmen. When the latter has eaten it, he will die.—The Mug people are not sure, where the dangerous stuff originates from, but they think, it is traded from the Wabag area via Hagen to Kuli. The Mug say: Our ancestors told us: "Do not accept any food from others!"—When somebody had died, people would say: "He ate *kemunga*. That is the reason for his death."

In order to find the person, who had applied the *kemunga*, a *menua*-magician was called in. All the male relatives² assemble at the grave of the dead person. Now many bamboo strips are

1. See: Die Mbowamb. Vol. 1. p. 149.

2. In other parts of the highlands, for instance with the Chimbu and Gende people, mainly women are made responsible for killing other people through death magic.

brought. A fresh young *wan* tree is felled and split (at one end). Fresh leaves of *kugump* leaves are laid underneath it. The *menua* man murmurs secret words over all these things. Now the first man tries to produce fire by rubbing the bamboo strip underneath the split wood. The man, who is not able to light a fire, is the culprit, who gave the *menua* to his dead relative. Really confirmed is his crime, when the bamboo strip which he applied for the producing of fire, snaps. In that case all the men jumped at this man and killed him.—When the enemies heard the crying and mourning of the Mug people, they rejoiced and said: “We have given them *kemunga!*”—This kind of death magic or deadly poison has been responsible for untold evil.—Nobody knows, whether any poison was ever handed over from the Wabag people to the Kuli or not. The very belief in this poison or death magic was most detrimental, because it caused much havoc among the own tribesmen and many wars against other tribes.—How dangerous it was for the people, who had to prove their innocence by producing fire. If it is not easy to rub fire with dry wood and dry leaves, how much harder would it be to do so with fresh wood and green leaves! I have seen with my own eyes, that again and again the bamboo strip broke while first people were rubbing fire. And one can easily imagine, that people would put those men to the test, who were least liked.

Funeral.—The dead were buried on common cemeteries. I was able to see at least one of them. It was lying in the shade of very high and thick trees. All dead men, women and children were buried there. After the burial people waited for three days. Then some pigs are slaughtered. The man who is to kill the pig, lifts up the wooden club and addresses the dead person: “Eat this pig! After that do not look at my children! (in order to make them sick). Watch well over us! Do not make us sick!”—Then he clubs the animal to death.—As I mentioned above, the bones of some men and boys are taken out of the grave and reburied not far from the first grave. People believe, that the ghost of the dead person remains with his bones.—When the bones are taken out of the grave, several pigs are killed. With the fat of these pigs the bones are greased. A kind of a flat coffin was manufactured, the bones laid into it and then it was laid into a niche grave. None of the bones are kept to be used for any other purposes. If after the reburial of the bones somebody gets sick, people will say: “The dead has come and

has caused this person's sickness." In that case the father of the patient will say to the dead person: "You must not make my child sick. I shall give you a pig." When after a while the child recovers, its father will kill a pig at the grave side of the deceased person and speak to him: "You finish always all my pigs. Now I will give you one more. After this you must not come back any more."

After a successful fight with our enemies, for instance with the Tengei, (towards the east of Mug), when we had killed one of their warriors, we killed a pig, which we ate ourselves. We did not give it to the soul of the dead enemy. During the following night the soul of the dead enemy comes to the man who killed him and whistles. It makes a scratching noise at the wall of the house. This ghost is harmless. The men gather in one house and do not sleep, in order to be ready for a good and efficient defence. The ghost of the dead warrior announces the coming of his relatives, who seek revenge for the loss of their man. In the many fights no prisoners were taken. Every man and boy and male child was killed. Women and girls were usually not put to death. The cemetery was and still is a place of awe. Especially at night time nobody would be courageous enough to go there.—Pigs are killed very near to the grave of the person, who is to receive the sacrifice. When I visited an old cemetery, which is still used, the boy, who accompanied me, did not like to go with me. Several times he told me: "I am afraid." Under the high towering trees I saw several graves. Near the side of a new grave was a bier, made from bamboo, leaning against one of the trees.

When somebody's child is sick, and people do not know who caused the sickness, the above mentioned *menua* (doctor-magician) is called in. This man will take a *keming* ginger bulb and pierce it with a little stick. If the stick goes right through, the *menua* will say: "A *gui ming*, i.e., a ghost has caused the sickness. But if the little stick breaks, he will say: "No, a *gui ming* did not bring about this disease." Then he puts all the different spirits and ghosts to the test, until he finds the culprit. After that the *menua* tries to find out, which pig the spirit or the ghost wants. Again he thrusts the little stick into the ginger bulb, putting the black, the white or differently marked pig to the test. Usually it is a *gui ming*, the ghost of a dead relative, who in order to get a pig, makes a member of the family sick.—The required pig is led to the grave of the

deceased person and killed there. If the pig dies right away after a heavy blow with the wooden club on its forehead, the dead person has accepted the sacrifice. If the pig still makes a lot of movements after the first blow or even after several blows, it means, that the ghost is not satisfied with this sacrifice.—If a *gui vagl*, i.e., a *masalai* spirit causes somebody's sickness, the patient's belly swells up.

Fight.—Wi, an old man from Mug told me the following: When we had killed an enemy, we let the enemies take him away. When we were very angry, we dismembered the body. Neutrals would carry it to the dead man's relatives. We went home and steamed a pig. The pig's liver was roasted over an open fire, hanging on a stick. A *menua* turned a casowary dagger over the liver and bespelled it. Then he cut it into small pieces, stuck them on a little stick and gave one of them to each of the warriors. When all of them had eaten this, we would say: "Now we have eaten the liver of the killed enemy." (This might be an indication, that the ancestors of the Mug have been cannibals)—We were afraid, the soul of the dead enemy might come during the night and eat us. We were also ashamed, because the soul of the dead enemy saw us now. We trembled with fear, when the soul of the dead enemy came and made its presence known by making certain noises. Next morning the *menua* had to come. The men go and get a young *ketan* tree from the bush. The root-stock is cut off and the lower end of the tree is sharpened. The *menua* smeares pig's blood all around the pointed part of the tree and sticks it into the ground, as deep as the blood covers the wood. This is sometimes not easy, because the blood covers a large part of the young tree's pointed end. If the *menua* is not able to thrust the tree into the earth so deep, that the blood cannot be seen any longer, it means, that the soul of the dead enemy is staying with his living relatives. If the blood cannot be seen, it means, that the soul is present in the midst of his enemies.—In the latter case, the dead warrior will make our arms strong against his own brothers.

In former times the Mengge were beaten by the Tengei people. So they withdrew to the territory of their friends, the Kuli. Later again drove the Mengge the Tengei (sometimes they are called Tungei) out of the from their forefathers inherited area.—Then again the Mengge did battle against their former friends, the Kuli. Both sides had losses, but neither of

them was excelling the other.

Spirits.—The Mengge people know besides the spirits of the dead several other spirits.

1. The *gui vagl* spirit lives in the waterholes near the Waghi river. He kills human beings. Persons who have been hit by this spirit swell up. Their eyes become red. Their skin turns white.—A magician can expell the *gui vagl* spirit. For this purpose he bespells water in a bamboo tube. When the patient drinks this water, the spirit takes to his heels. The *menua* magician, who has the power to put the spirit to flight, receives his power from his father. The power and the office of a *menua* are passed on from father to son.

2. The *gui novarem* spirit lives in the forest. He cuts the skin of the people, who go through the bush, using his little stone axe. He goes into the anus of a sick pig and eats the flesh around the pig's anus. The owner of that pig will cut off the parts of the pig, which have been bitten by the spirit and thrown away. The other meat is eaten by the members of the family.

3. The *gui reimi* spirit lives on the bank of little streamlets. He looks like a small, very fat man. He is quite harmless.

4. The *embe gui* lives on the cemetery. (Perhaps he is a spirit of the dead?)

5. The *gui oinde* lives in hollow trees in the bush. If somebody walks through the bush, he is hit by this spirit and becomes semi-conscious. His hands and legs tremble.—People thus treated do not die though.

Birth.—There are birth huts in the Mug area. The term for them is *ngei tega*. A female *menua* helps the mother at the time of her delivery.

Disposal of the placenta.—Near Mendape, the most important Mengge magician's house, I saw a small round fence, made from sticks. This is the place, where the placenta of a mother is buried. Her husband makes a shallow hole into the ground, places the placenta on dry leaves, lays these into that hole and covers it with ground. The excrements of the infant are later

packed in leaves by its mother and put into this fence, which is termed *ents kui*. If the mother threw these excrements away and dogs, pigs, or spirits ate them, the child would become sick and die.

The mythical lady of valuables and ornaments.—In a northerly direction from Mug, there is a long-stretched hill towards the Wagi-River. This hill is known by the name of Koro. According to a myth there used to live in a cave on the Koro hill a spirit woman, whose name is "Koro onugl amp". November 23, 1964, I went to see this cave.³ My companions were Mr. Johann Geyer and some natives. It was very hard to get near the cave. For a long time we had to walk through deep stretches of swamp. But even when we reached the cliff, in which the cave is situated, it was very hard to get into it. One had to force oneself through a narrow hole in the rocks, which was about 8 feet above the ground. The interior of the cave was very roomy, but there were no signs of its having been used for a dwelling room. The floor seemed to be original ground. It was strewn with strips of dry bamboo, which apparently had been used by natives as torches for hunting bats and swifts, who use to nest in the crevices of the rocks.

Here is the myth as it was told me by the natives of Mug: In the olden times there came a man from the east. He walked around the northern tip of the Koro hill and saw a fire shining from out of a cave in the rocks. (The entrance of the cave can be seen from far like a huge black hole in the side of the white cliff.) The man went thither and found a girl, who wore the most precious and wonderful ornaments. Near her dwelling place there was a garden, full of beautiful bananas, sugarcane, vegetables etc. In the house (probably in the cave) there were lots of big and fat pigs. The girl slung a rope around the fore-legs of the pigs and tied them up. Then she went out and came back with many bananas and sugarcane for her visitor. She told him: "You are the first man to come here." When it was time to sleep, she told him: "Now we will sleep. I shall sleep at this side and you may sleep at the other side." The man found near the girl's home some nettles, which had fruits on them. The man took the nettles and laid them on both ends of the sleeping place. After a while the girl said: "I want to sleep,

3. The Kuli call this cave *kumangge*.

but there is something, that bites me all the time." The man answered, "the same happens to me." Now the girl said: "Well, in that case you move over to me." Now the man lay down near her and the two had intercourse.—Now she became furious and said: "I told you, you should sleep over there and I would sleep here. But now you have done this." (Next morning) she said: "Now I will give you a little package. When you have gone away, you may not open it in order to see what is in it. After two months only you may unwrap it. You must not tell other people, what has happened here." The man went, but did not observe the words the girl had told him. Before the two months had passed, he opened the package. He showed the contents of it to all the men and women and said: "Look! This was given to me by a girl." He told them also that he had intercourse with her. The things he showed the people were to prove the correctness of his assertion. The girl had given him a mother-of-pearl-shell, a gam-shell, a string of Nassa-shells, and a string of Kauri-shells. When he had shown them all his treasures he felt a terrific heat. He lay down and died.—If the man had kept his secret and if he had not opened the package before the fixed date we would be able to find all these good things ourselves. Now he spoiled it all.

The Timbi spirit.—At Anggelimp in the Mug forest lives a *gui* spirit, whose name is Timbi. When we are hunting marsupials, we avoid going to this area. If somebody went there, he would feel a great heat. We can hear Timbi calling. It is like the voice of a man. He kills human beings, us and our enemies as well.

The name-giving ceremony.—In the Mug area I saw at various occasions small baskets on top of sticks, standing in front of the houses. Bak, a tribesman of the Mengge, told me the following: About one week after the birth of a child its mother leaves the birth hut, termed "child house" in the Mug language and goes into her real house. Then the half-grown boys go into the bush and shoot birds, if the baby is a boy. For a girl they catch rats and mice. When they have come back, a young tree is cut, sharpened and thrust into the ground on the left side of the entrance of the woman's house. (Sometimes it is done in front of a men's house.) With the barkstrip of *kinjip* lianas the twigs of the young tree have been shaped into a basket.

In the woman's house a woman heats stones on a fire. A large wooden war-shield (*kump rewi*) is brought and laid on the ground in the house. On the inside of this shield the hot stones are heaped, taken out and carried to the young tree and the basket on it. A man lays the hot stones into the basket. On these hot stones are laid the birds (or rats for a girl). Together with a few vegetables the animals are cooked in the closed basket. Men, women and children assemble for the ceremony. After a while the birds are taken out and laid on a banana-leaf on the ground. All the guests get a little part of them. Then the child's mother lays the baby on a leaf-mat in her netbag. A man brings a small bow and a little arrow for shooting birds. Then the mother goes with the baby around the house and waits standing at the back of the house. The man holds the head of a (cooked) bird in his hand. He lifts it up and calls with a loud voice: "Who is there?"—The mother answers: "I and my child." Then the man asks: "What is the child's name?"—Now the mother will call the name, which they have agreed on beforehand. After that the man signs out: "N.N. (the baby's name) come and eat the head of the bird." The mother goes now all around the house and the man gives her the head of the bird, which the mother will eat. The small bow and its arrow are tied to the upper part of the basket-oven. They must never be taken from there. Otherwise the child would fall sick. They are left there, until they themselves fall down and decay.—For a girl the same ceremony is performed. The only difference is, that instead of a bow and arrow a round wooden ring, representing a handnet, and a little stick, which indicates a digging stick, is tied to the basket-oven.

The casowary-bird.—The big, ostrich-like casowary bird has an important place in the economy of the Mengge. The term for casowary is *raima*. People rear young casowary birds. The feathers from the bird's back are plucked out and used for ornamental purposes. The meat of the casowary is eaten. At the occasion of the great Moka-festivities⁴ casowaries are killed and eaten.—The casowary is not clubbed to death as the pigs are. Only old men or halfwitted men do the killing. For this purpose a post is rammed into the ground. A loop is slung around the bird's long neck and the end of the string is tied to the post.

4. See Vicedom und Tischner, *Die Mbowamb*. Vol. 1.

As soon as the bird makes a movement, the loop tightens and the more the animal struggles, the tighter the loop lays itself around its neck. People told me, it takes often hours before the casowary dies. The toe-nails of the casowary are fitted on the points of spears. When the birds have grown (they grow very fast and eat very much) they are put into small houses. Only very small birds are allowed to run loose. They are fed with sweet-potatoes, tree-fruits, etc. Grown-up casowaries have to be kept in a little house, because they would run back into the woods or become dangerous to women and children. Usually there are holes in the casowary's stable, that the bird can put its neck out.—Sometimes the bird is killed by two men, who put the rope around its neck while it sticks it out of the house. Then the men strangle it by pulling the rope tight.—That the casowary is not an animal, which is kept only to provide the people with meat, may be seen from the fact, that the magician turns a casowary bone dagger over the liver of a pig, as described above. This bone dagger is a dangerous weapon. It is made from the thighbone of the bird.

When I was at Mug, there was a court-case about the ownership of a casowary: A man A had reared a casowary. It had grown very large and fat. Then one night it broke out of its house and ran into the bush. At that time a man B went with his dogs into the woods, and soon they surrounded a casowary. The hunter was able to catch the bird alive and bring it home. When now A heard about the catching of the casowary, he asserted, that the bird belonged to him and had to be given back to him. The hunter was by no means willing to hand the casowary over to A. He said: "This is not your bird. It is a wild one." Now the talking went on and on. A said: "The wild casowaries have all white legs, because they are not fat. Only the tame ones have yellow legs, because they are fed."—Since the tame casowaries have no marks of any kind, it was very hard to decide, who had the first right to the animal.—Since I could not stay long at Mug, I cannot say, what the outcome of this native court-case was.

The rainbow.—The term for rainbow is *kona kump pivim*.—"Kone kump pivim porom" means the rainbow stands (like a man with both feet on the ground). The Mug-man Wi told me: People say: "The rainbow has intercourse with the *em* and with the *komba* pandanus-tree. When the rainbow leaves

the *em*-tree, it bears fruits and people help themselves to these fruits. When the rainbow later returns in order to collect fruits, they are all gone. Then he gets angry. He goes then into the valley to eat *komba* fruits, but they too have been eaten by the people. Furious with shame and anger he hides himself.—The rainbow is like a man. After eight months he comes back.

Hot food.—In order to make hot food cool, people blow over a glowing piece of wood on the hot food. This method is used also with the Gende.

First ancestors.—Mendape reports: The name of the first man is Koipe. Dimba is his wife. They originated at Kerei on the left bank of the Tuman-River. The Tuman is a tributary of the Wagi-River. Kerei is situated on a hill. We do not know how they came into existence or where they are now.—Before we went to collect stones for our stone-axes we killed first a pig. The man who was about to slaughter the pig lifted up the wooden club and said: “Koipa and Dimba! Help me find good stones!”—When we had found good stones, we said to Koipa and Dimba: “*Na enem numan ka mondunt*”, i.e., “I thank you.” (Yei, another old Mug-man, called the first man Doimba.)

The spirit's cave.—Three young men went with their wives into the forest. The women carried sweet-potatoes and followed the road, while their husbands with their dogs roamed the bush, shooting marsupials. The women went into a cave in the rocks and roasted potatoes. When the men arrived, they gave the marsupials to the women, who took out the intestines after having cut open the belly of the animals. Then the animals' necks were tied with a liana to a stick and hung outside the cave. The women washed the intestines and cooked them in an earth-oven. During the night one of the men dreamed: A giant powerful man entered the cave and said: “Go home tomorrow! Do not sleep here! I forbid it!” Next morning the men were not willing to obey the command they had received in the dream. They went again hunting. Only the dreamer and his wife remained in the cave. Now the giant man came along, carrying a huge rock. He laid this rock against the entrance of the cave closing it by doing so. The man and his wife trembled with fear. After a while the giant removed the rock. When later

the other members of the party came back, the two related their adventure to them, but they did not believe them. They remained in the cave, while the couple who had seen the giant spirit, slept outside the cave. While they all were asleep, the giant came and closed the entrance of the cave with the large rock. The people who were caught in the cave died from hunger. The two who had slept outside, went home and told the people all about the incident. All the relatives of the unfortunate prisoners went to the cave and tried to remove the huge rock with poles, but it was quite impossible. Weeping they went home again. They prepared a big funeral dinner. They slaughtered many pigs and gave them to the souls of the deceased. The giant man was a *gui*-spirit.

The spirits of the dead come, according to Mendape, only during the night. They try to kill the living. When somebody is sick, we slaughter and steam a pig at the graveside. Having the club in his hand a man speaks to the deceased person (who has caused the sickness): "You come always into our house. Now we give you this pig. All our pigs are finished already, and we are weeping. Do not make us sick any more!"

The hand-net of the Mengge is of a peculiar shape. The middle part of the net leads into a hose, into which the fish dash, trying to escape from the net. This hose, which is really a part of the net, is about three feet long. The term for this net is *oma kon*. It is round and about 1,20 m wide.

Poisoning fish.—The Mengge cut during the night *bilingan* lianas and throw them early in the morning into the water. The so poisoned fish are caught and strung on a liana, the end of which is drawn through their mouth.

Superstition.—If a woman finds a twin banana, she will give one of them to another woman. If she ate both of them, she would give birth to twins.

Children's games.—Hide and seek. Some children hide themselves. Then some others do the seeking. If they find one, they hit him (or her) and sometimes they pull laughing his hair. The name of this game is *kuru pai*.

Beam-riding.—Two posts are rammed into the ground, about

one yard apart from one another. Into the forks of these posts the boys lay a crosspole. Now one of the boys rides on this pole, which is about 6 feet above the ground. Now the other boys will pull his legs in order to draw him down. If they succeed, they will deride him and say "Oh, you are a woman! (That means: You are a weakling. You are as weak as a woman.) Go to bed!" Then another one will try.

Spear throwing.—The boys form two parties and throw blunt spears at one another. These spears consist of the stalks of the *gumei* or of the *nggogl* plant. The boys try to avoid being hit, but sometimes one or the other is hit. Usually it will not be of a serious consequence, but all the same it will cause him severe pain and tears will flow. The term for this game is *nggogl koipa*. (There is a possibility, that *nggogl koipa* has something to do with the first ancestor of the Mengge people, but I was not able to get any information on that point.)

The "konts ond mong" game. The boys collect some fruits of the *konts* tree, which have a very hard shell. (The *konts* tree grows to a very large size; *ond* means wood or tree; *mong* means fruit.) The boys form two parties and hit the *konts* fruit with sticks towards one another. The party, which is driven back, loses the game.

The cat's-cradle, called '*timagl*' is used mainly by children, but sometimes men and women join in also. It is only a game and has no further purpose.

The spirit game.—Grown-ups and children turn their eyelids upwards. On their fingers they stick long pipes. On their heads they lay netbags and from tree-leaves they make masks for their faces. Then they expand their arms and so they frighten other people, representing ghosts or spirits.

Another way of representing a spirit is the following: A boy cuts a mouth and eyes into one half of a calabash. On the outside of this "face" he smears the sap of the *kilt* tree. Then he will glue hair of men and women on it. In the evening he will put this mask on his face and go to the houses of the people. Suddenly he will stick his head through the open door. When the people see this ugly hairy face, on which the red glow of the fire falls, they get terribly frightened. They think a spirit

came (to kill them).

The swing is termed *mugunggup*. Both ends of a strong liana are tied to the branch of a tree. A child sits in the so manufactured swing, holding itself at the two ropes. Now another child pushes the swing to and fro. There does not seem to exist a special swing-song.

The spinning top.—This toy is called *mburu mbara*. It consists of the *ond ketigl mong*, i.e., the *ketigl* tree fruit, through which a long thin stick has been stuck.—Two boys sit a little distance apart, facing one another. One after the other twirls the upper part of the little stick which pierces the top between their palms, and throw now the spinning top on the flat ground. The player who makes the top dance longest, is the victor. The other one is teased by his opponent and by the bystanders: “You are a clumsy fellow.” (The fruit which is used for the top is very hard. It is not edible. With a splinter of a stone-axe a hole is bored on the top and at the bottom part of the fruit. Through these holes the thin stick is pushed.) Only boys use the spinning top for a pastime.

Festivals.—One of the main festivals is termed *kung kwiya-men*, i.e., “we steam (in the earth-ovens) pigs.” During the night the above mentioned *pugumbo* tun is put up and the life-tree is planted on it. A small pig is slaughtered in the *ngei rape* house behind the dance-ground. The grease of this animal is rubbed on the wall of the *pugumbo* tun. This is done by a magician, who also bespells the tun.—In the morning women and children come and admire this mysterious work. Then the pigs are slaughtered and the bristles are singed from the carcasses. The animals are cut open and the meat is laid on platforms. Next morning the pork is placed in rows, cut into pieces and given to the visitors. The head and the breast part of the pigs are taken home and eaten there.

Showing of the keimber-flutes to the young boys.—The Mengge people’s area lies between the Hagen- and the Middle-Wagi-district. So we see, that their culture shows parts of the Hagen and also of the Middle Wagi customs. The Middle Wagi population does not use the *pugumbo* tun and the Hagen people do not have the spirit flutes. Both of these culture elements

are found with the Mengge.

The Mengge show great respect for the spirit flutes. They hide them carefully, lest children should see them. They say: "If a child sees the flutes, it will become skinny and might even die."

On the night, following the giving of the pigs to all the guests, at the *kung mogeramen* festival, the young men go into the *kung por ngei*, i.e., the long pig house. This house has been specially built formerly for the occasion of this festival. There show the men, who have seen the *keimber* spirit flutes, these to the young candidates. The latter learn to blow them and may use them from now on.

All these ceremonies are more or less on the verge of dying out. Since I was in the Mug area for a short time only—from the 22nd of November to the 1st of December, 1964.—I had no opportunity to see all these ceremonies and have to depend on the reports of the local natives.

Planting of a good banana.—Before planting a very highly estimated banana, called *embin*, the man will hold it in his hands and say "Grow as tall and quick as the N.N. banana." (This is a wild banana. It grows very fast and to a large size.)

Fowls.—Fowls are well known to the Mengge, but the people who live on the left bank of the Tuman-River do not possess any fowls. People told me: "Where there are dogs, you cannot have fowls, because the dogs would kill them all. That is why the Mengge, who live on the right bank of the Tuman, have fowls, but no dogs and the people on the other side of the river have dogs, but no fowls.—The owners of fowls can sell their fowls for a good price, but the owners of dogs are much efficient at hunting marsupials. Fowls and their eggs are eaten and so are dogs.

Dogs.—In order to make dogs keen on hunting, people kill a bee, hide it in a cooked potato, and give it the dog to eat.

An exceptional man.—The Mengge people's houses have no chimneys. The smoke has to find a way out through the grass roof or through the crevices in the walls. But I saw one house which had a design that differed from the other houses: The man who had built it, had made a hole in the middle of the

highest part of the roof. Some sticks were protruding above the ridge-pole and on these he had laid a layer of grass. So the smoke could escape through that hole in the roof and the rain could not enter the house. Here is a case, in which a man had shown that he was a thinking individual, who rose above the usual rules and planned for himself.—*If a woman had stepped over some food*, the men would no longer eat it. (This custom is observed with the Gende people also.)

At Mug *cooking drums*, made from wood, can be found for cooking the food. The size of these drums is varying from small ones to very large ones. They may be with or also without a bottom.

Marriage.—Before the bride is bought, she is lead to her future husband's settlement. In preparation for that big event. men and women assemble in the bride's mother's house. A man collects 4 different plants in the bush, 1. *kungdagl*, 2. *ningigl mong*, 3. *mbar tsimp el tsimp*, 4. leaves of the ginger plant. These plants are cut into small pieces and laid into a woman's netbag. In the evening a *menua amp*, i.e., a female magician, oints the girl with pig's grease. Later on she rubs this grease off again. Then she pours some liquid grease on the bride's head and allows it to flow over her forehead, nose and mouth. Then the magician wipes it off. After that the entrance of the house is closed and men and women sing all night until the morning dawns. Then all go outside, and a pig is slaughtered. In the house a huge fire is kindled. Now the bride is greased from head to foot, which is again the female magician's job. She lays a large white *duma* shell on the bride's forehead. About four mother-of-pearl-shells, one above the other, she hangs on the bride's chest. Stripes of various colours are painted on the girl's face. A beautifully plaited girdle is laid around her loins. A brand new string dress interwoven with marsupials' hair she is given to wear. Red Cordyline leaves are stuck behind the girdle on her back. Bird-of-paradise feathers decorate her head. So beautifully decked out the bride sits down on a mat on the ground. After a while the pork is taken out of the earth-oven. The above mentioned plants are put into a banana-leaf and this hung over a fire. Banana-leaves are placed on the ground, on which for every guest a heap of food is served. When all, including the bride, have eaten, they all start on their way to the bridegroom's house. The bride goes on in front. A

man and a woman carry cooked pork after her. The mother of the bride weeps sobs. I saw a bride, who was in the above described manner on her way to her future husband's home. She seemed to be about 18 or 19 years old. She was very slender and her whole body was shining with pig's grease.

The term for "buying a bride" is '*amp topun konpun tsiven.*' It was explained to me, that the original meaning of this sentence is: "We hit, she dies, we take the woman." Now it means only, that the bride price is delivered in exchange of a bride. But it probably meant, that from now on the woman belongs to the buying people really and irrevocably, as if she had been killed.

In order to buy a bride the future husband kills and steams about 10 pigs, while the bride's father kills and steams about 5 pigs. The bridegroom gives about 20 mother-of-pearl-shells—and his father-in-law gives him 10 mother-of-pearl-shells back.—Four stone-axes and 2 stone-axes are given back.—About 4 steel-axes—and one steel axe is given back.—About 25 Australian Pounds—and about 10 Pounds go back to the bridegroom.—About 10 living pigs—and five living pigs are given back.—The bride is present at the buying and fully decorated.—After two days the bridegroom kills and steams a pig. He, his mother and his young bride carry the pork to the bride's mother's house. The bride collects all her decorations she had left in her mother's house, and they all go back to bridegrooms settlement.—After a week's time another pig is brought to the bride's mother's settlement.—After that the young couple prepare and plant a garden. After two to three months the groom builds a new house for his bride, and gives her a sow to rear. From now on the two are regarded as husband and wife.—After the birth of the first child the young couple have to give again some valuable things to the parents of the bride.—During the time the young bride does not yet have a house of her own, she sleeps in the house of her groom's mother.—It seems, that the building and occupying of the new house is the last stage of the marriage ceremonies.—Very important is also that the young man gives a pig to his bride. It seems, that she would not regard the wedding to be complete, without having been given a pig to rear.

Forbidden is the calling of certain names. A = the husband, may not call the name of his wife's mother. A is not allowed to call the name of his wife's father's brother. A may

not call the name of his wife's mother's sister.—If the young man pronounced one of these names, the so treated people would demand a pig from him for atonement.—Some time after the marriage the young husband will break a banana into two halves. One half he will give to his father in law. From now on the two will call one another *urowa*, i.e., Banana.—The young wife may call her parents-in-law by their names. (Since my notes are not complete on this point, I am not sure, whether the young man may pronounce the name of his father-in-law.)