SETTLEMENT PATTERNS AND HOUSING OF CENTRAL NEW GUINEA

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In central New Guinea,[2] housing provided for a separation of men from women and children. Over most of the area, settlements consisted of hamlets or villages comprising at least one men's house and one or more family houses. Larger settlements included additional houses for men's ritual activities and the storage of ancestral and other relics; these were strictly prohibited to women and uninitiated males. There were usually one or more small huts on the periphery of the settlement for menstruation and birthing, which men carefully avoided. However, men slept with their families in the houses built in gardens that were inconveniently distant from their community settlements. This also provided relief from the pressures of community living (Jorgensen 1981: 188-9).

The basic house plan was rectangular (rounded corners in the west), with one or two hearths and a gable roof. Usually the floor was raised above the ground. There was a small doorway requiring people entering to stoop. Among the Telefolmin, a skeleton of vertical posts supported the two eaves-poles and the ridge-pole, several rafters and the major floor beams (**Fig. 1**). The floor was then fastened to the beams as multiple layers of smaller diameter poles (**Figs 2, 3**). It is likely there were individual and regional variations of these construction details.

The walls were formed by filling in between the support posts with many poles or split timber fastened vertically and lined on the inside with sheets of palm bark (sometimes vertically, sometimes horizontally), which were used also for the final flooring covering. The components were fastened with rattan. Roofing was a thatch of grass, or of leaves of the pandanus or sago palm. The hearth was a clay dish moulded on a foundation of stones set in a box or 'basket' at floor level, with a drying rack above, supported by vertical poles at the four corners (**Figs 4, 5**).

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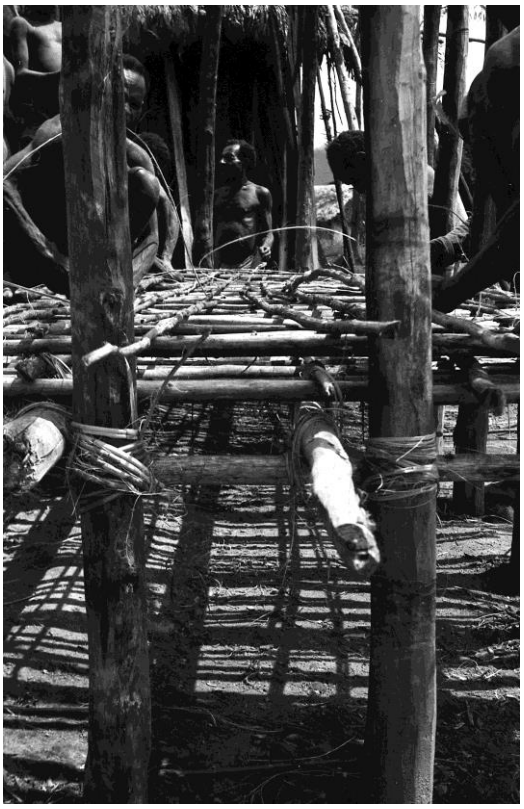
2 The people of this region have been termed the Mountain-Ok as the languages of the region belong to the Mountain-Ok sub-family of the Trans-New Guinea Phylum. Ok is the word for water, stream or river.

Figures 1-3. House construction at Oksivip village, Kubrenmin parish, Ifitaman Telefolmin, 1964 (BC M11:22, 20, 16)



Figures 4, 5. Basket of stones and the clay hearth, Tikiyim's house, Din Valley, near Busilmin, Atbalmin (ASME 1965 M13: 9, 11)

Settlement patterns and house types are described in detail below, commencing in the east with the Oksapmin (see **Fig. 6**), moving west and north to the Dulanmin (Asabano) and Mianmin, then south and west of the Oksapmin to the Bimin, Kwermin, the Faiwol-speaking Baktamanmin, Angkeiakmin, and Fegolmin. West of Oksapmin are the Telefol-speaking Falamin at the source of the Sepik (Tekin) River and the Telefolmin of the Ifi and Elip valleys. Further west are the Tifal-speaking Ulapmin, Tifalmin, Wopkeimin and Atbalmin. West of them are the Kauwol[3] and Ngalum of the Star Mountains, and beyond them the Mek and the Yali and other non-Mountain-Ok groups located east of the Baliem Valley.

The **Oksapmin**, inhabiting a series of valleys to the west of the Strickland Gorge, lived in settlements with no formal pattern. Jackson (1981: 37) described them as 'scattered hamlets with occasional large clusterings of small villages'; Moylan (1981: 66) described the Oksapmin as 'dispersed in homesteads and small hamlets spread more or less evenly through each parish territory' (**Fig. 7**). Each homestead had a small menstruation hut nearby.

3 It is not entirely certain whether Kauwol is a separate language or a dialect of Tifal.

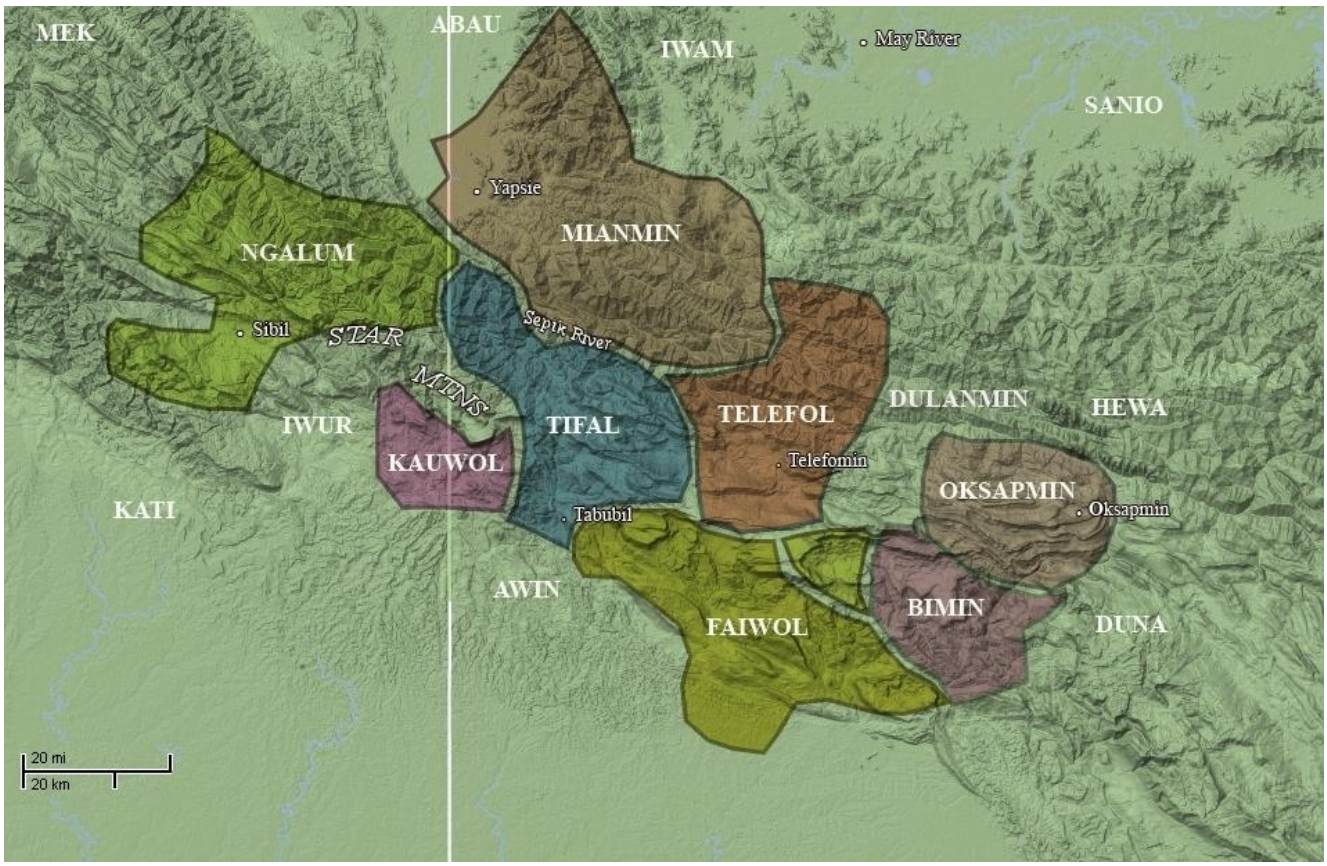


Figure 6. Language groups of Central New Guinea

Perey describes a typical Oksapmin family house during his period of fieldwork as a rectangular structure about three metres wide and five metres long, divided by a pandanus mat partition equally into two rooms, one for men and one for women, each with a separate entrance and a separate hearth about a half-metre square with a drying rack above. The gable roof was covered with pandanus leaf shingles and there was usually a floor of palm bark about half a metre above the ground (**Fig. 8**; Perey 1973: 35-36, 176-182 and Fig. 27; Craig & Hyndman 1990, Fig.32).

Men had a house (*kanap*) in each settlement for storing sacred relics and for activities relating to male initiation.[4] A regional sacred house (*ap-awam/awam-apa* or *apyowal*) built for initiations was located apart from, but close to, a settlement's houses. It seems that there were about six sites for *apyowal,* one in each of the principal valleys of the Oksapmin. The outside façade of such a house was decorated with carved and painted boards (Craig 1984, 13th unnumbered Plate). These houses were left to disintegrate after the initiation rituals were concluded (**Fig. 9**).

4 Most of the following information is contained in my unpublished 1964 field notes on Oksapmin male initiation.

Figure 7. Imbapgena hamlet (left of centre) in Kanganap gardens, north side of Tekin valley, Oksapmin, 1965 (BC M12:72-3)

Figure 8. Imbapgena hamlet, Kanganap, north side of Tekin valley, Oksapmin, 1965 (BC M13:10)

Figure 9. Disintegrated *apyowal* at Kanganap, Oksapmin 1965 (BC M13:18)

The 'supreme' cult house (*Yuwan-ap* – Yuwan's house) was considered permanent and reputed never to have been moved. It was located in the upper Tekin Valley and was shared by all Oksapmin (Perey 1973: 123-4, 134-5). It was quite small and had a closed-in hallway or veranda around its walls which led to an internal doorway that was never closed. Its roof and walls were made of pandanus leaves and it was kept very dark inside to give the initiators control over how and when the sacred relics were shown to the initiands.

Temporary structures for various stages of male initiation included the large *kumaptem*, around 10 x 30 x 5 metres high with several hearths, and the *kanaptem*, both built away from the hamlets. The former was used primarily by the initiands for sleeping; the latter was used mainly for initiatory rituals and meals. Another structure called the *kogarap*, was used to house, and show to the initiands, the teeth and skeletal relics of pigs, cassowaries and cuscus during the *sagaminte* ritual. Another temporary structure, built away from the hamlets, was the *latkakbenap*; it consisted of two long narrow skillion-roofed sleeping shelters either side of a clearing used for singing and dancing around a large central fire.

The Oksapmin built a large community house (*telap*) for singing and dancing, to celebrate the end of the *kusbai* (equivalent to the Telefol *mafum*) stage of male initiation. It was used by men and women for several months and then left to rot. Large community dance houses were also built by the Dulanmin (Asabano) and by the Mianmin.

The **Dulanmin** (Asabano), who live in the Om River valley north-west of the Oksapmin and east of the Elip valley Telefolmin, lived in widely scattered hamlets of a few houses, generally located in a cultivated area, handy to water (Lohmann 2000: 48). 'Generally, houses were constructed high off the ground for defence and ventilation, supported by posts and tree trunks. All were roughly square in shape, with hewn planks serving as internal wall coverings in the front and back . . . Side walls were covered with bark' (ibid.: 49). The roof was thatched with leaves of bamboo or sago palm and the floor was covered with sheets of pandanus or black palm bark. Hearths were of clay laid over flat stones on a wood framework.

Each hamlet (**Fig. 10**), constructed among the stumps of trees felled for a new garden, consisted of one or at most two large community houses (*nu imadebu* - **Fig. 11**), in which women, children and married men slept around four hearths; this was also the place for drum dances. There were three doors at the front, providing entrances for women and children on either side of a central entrance for men; the internal space was correspondingly allocated to men at the centre and to women and children on either side (ibid.: 50, Fig. 2). In addition there was a men's sleeping house (*sane nubu*) with two hearths that was out of bounds for women and uninitiated boys. Its entrance was decorated with a carved and painted door board (ibid.: 52, Photo 16) like the *amitung* of the Telefolmin. In the hamlet but located out of the way of men was a menstruation hut (*nu sisianebu*).

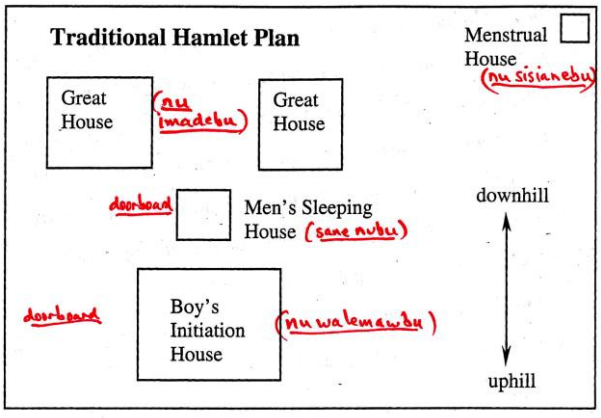


Figure 1: Traditional Hamlet Plan

Figure 10. Source: Lohmann 2000: 49, Fig. 1

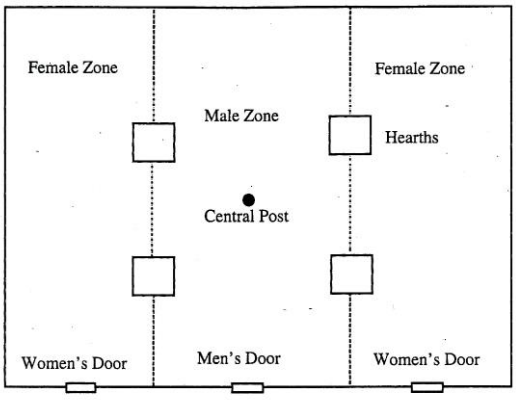


Figure 2: Traditional Floorplan of a Great House

Figure 11. Source: Lohmann 2000: 50, Fig. 2

Also within the hamlet, a house for male initiation (*nu walemawbu* - **Fig. 12**) was built as needed. This had two hearths, one for the initiated men and one for the novices; it too was decorated with a carved and painted door board (ibid.: 53-4, Figure 4). Near some hamlets there was a small sacred house, also called *nu walemawbu*, in which ancestral skulls and other relics were stored. It had a single hearth, no door board, and was strictly taboo for women. Only the most senior cult specialists

would sleep there. The ancestral relics were transferred from the small sacred house to the initiation house for the necessary rituals, then returned for storage.

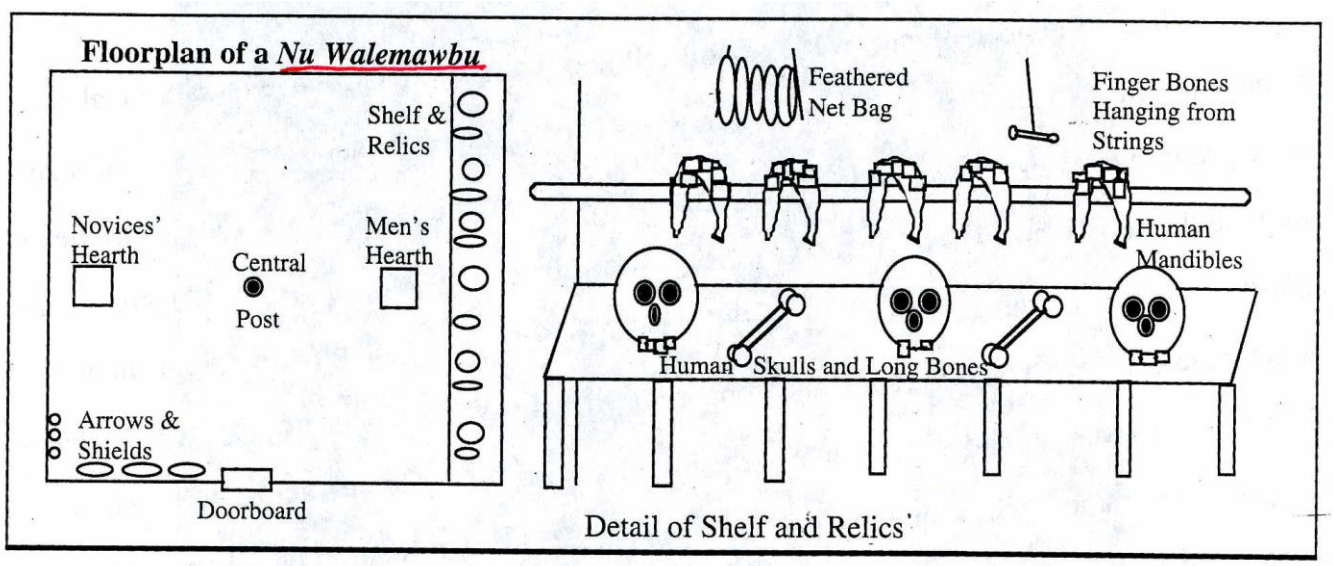


Figure 4: Plan of a Sacred House as Described by Sumole

Figure 12. Source: Lohmann 2000: 54, Fig. 4

Mianmin (Miyanmin) settlements, in the valleys to the north of the Telefolmin and west of the Asabano, were affected by the cyclic nature of their horticultural activities. Morren reports (1986: 200; see also Maps 4-10) that settlements (*bip*):

> varied in size from two or three family houses (*unangam*, literally 'woman house') and a men's house (*timam*), to a single long house (*itam*) with 15 hearths,[5] or a large centralized village with 12 or more family houses and a men's house. . . . The average size of hamlets changes with the phase of the settlement cycle, with larger, more centralized villages, a tight cluster of smaller hamlets, or a long house, associated with the early phase of the cycle, and numerous smaller, more dispersed hamlets in the later phases.

The dance floor of the *itam* (**Fig. 13**) was lower than the surrounding hearths and sitting platform. There was no central post; the roof was held up by a central beam supported at and near its ends. The springy palm wood joists were covered by a relatively smooth bark flooring. The palm wood joists were supported from below by posts of appropriate length (depending on how the building sat on the slope) only around the edges where the floor met the platform, to provide a trampoline effect. It had no verandas (George Morren, pers. com. 10 June 2009; cf. Schwartz 1965: 18).

5 The *itam* was used for singing and dancing and was similar in design to the Oksapmin and Dulanmin community houses.

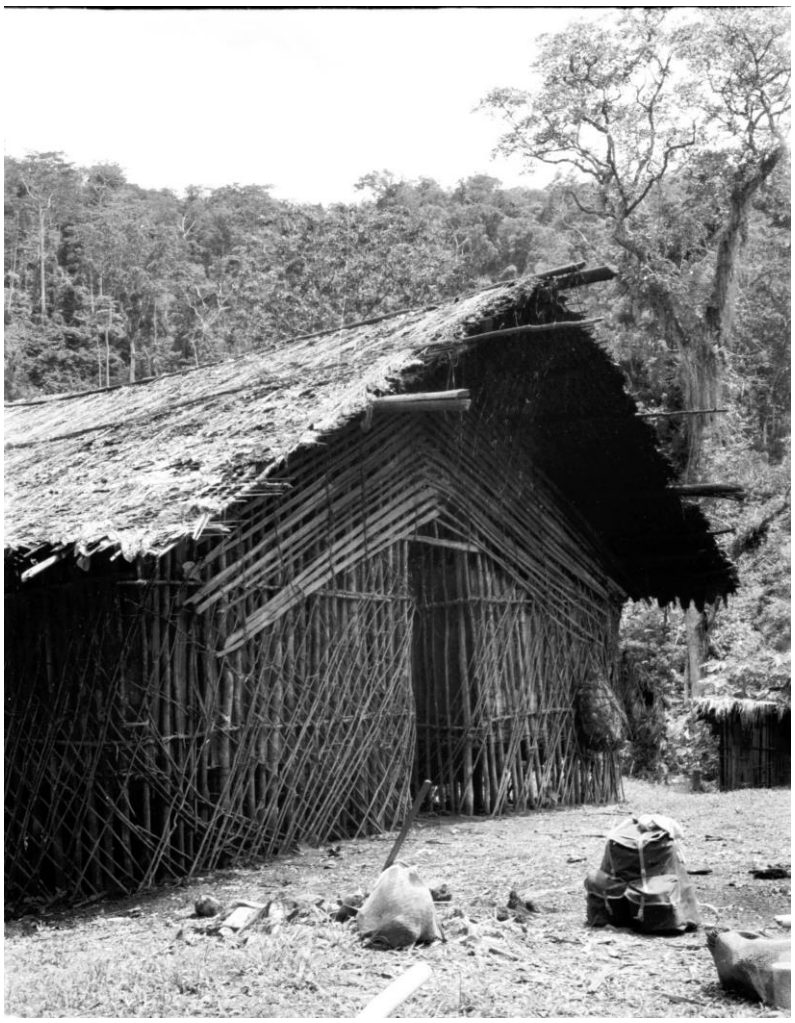


Figure 13. Mianmin *itam*. Photo courtesy George Morren

Among the East Miyanmin, a women's house sheltering co-wives had separate entrances at the front of the house for each wife, though the inside space was not physically partitioned (George Morren, pers. com. 1990). There was also the *kwoisam* (ancestral shrine), 'similar in appearance to a village men's house ─ but located in a separate compound. It [was] the normal repository of ancestral relics, hunting trophies and other ritual and magic paraphernalia. It [was] also the site of many ceremonies in the ritual cycle' (Morren 1986: 220-1).

Another building was the *yominam*, a large house with a central room having four hearths. A second wall under the eaves created a narrow corridor on three sides (similar in design to the Oksapmin *yuwanap*). It was built for the Yomin ceremony, after which it was left to rot. Another structure, the *fofolam*, was built for the seclusion of the Yomin initiates for a period of two to four weeks. This building was about 20 metres long and three metres wide, with fireplaces every two metres. After seclusion was completed, the *fofolam* was demolished using the cooked legs of pigs as clubs. The *yominam* and *fofolam* were separated from their associated residential hamlet, either in the *kwoisam* compound or in a precinct of their own (ibid.).

The **Bimin-Kuskusmin**, to the south of the Oksapmin, lived in clustered hamlets of parish communities located 'on defensible ridges close in under the cold, wet mountain walls, below the male taro gardens and above the valley floors where the heavily fenced sweet potato gardens of women are located' (Poole 1976: 262). Poole does not explicitly describe or illustrate how the settlements were distributed through the valley inhabited by the Bimin and Kuskusmin moieties,[6] but it appears that each hamlet consisted of several women's houses (*wanengam*), at least one menstruation hut (*singam*), and a men's dormitory (*kunumam*) (ibid.: 264 and Appendix 1: Glossary). He states (n.d.: 10) that the men's dormitory, located up-slope from the women's houses, contained 'the drums, sacred net bags of relics and other ritual objects of those who dwell within them' but few rituals were performed within them. He elaborates (ibid.: 10-11):

> In every clan parish cluster of hamlets, there is one hamlet that is special. In this hamlet, the clan cult house (*katiam*) . . . is located . . . This hamlet has two distinct nuclei: the usual arrangement of a men's house (sometimes two) and women's houses; and the cult house surrounded by special men's and women's houses for ritual experts. Lesser male ritual leaders often occupy [together] a single dwelling, but the paramount male ritual leader of the clan lives alone. The two paramount female ritual leaders of the clan also reside in separate houses by themselves. This ritual complex is generally encircled by red Cordyline plants and nut pandanus trees, and it is forbidden to women and children.

The *katiam* had two hearths: the *yemen miit* for taro rituals and the *nuuk miit* for rituals associated with the totemic marsupial ancestor of the clan. It contained skulls, mandibles and other relics of the hunt, ancestral and prehistoric artefacts, and natural curiosities such as fossils and crystals. It also housed the decorated skulls of former clan male ritual experts and an undecorated skull of a former paramount female ritual leader of the clan (ibid.: 11).

Bimin-Kuskusmin males were initiated in ten stages of ritual activity. All rituals, except those for the fifth and seventh stages, were conducted in temporary structures (eg. the *ais am*) called *am yaoor*. Rituals for the fifth stage were conducted in the *katiam* and for the seventh stage in the *on am* (arrow house), which contained 'special drums, war shields, sanctified ancient weapons, and other *sacrae* that are associated with . . . warfare-related rites' (ibid.: 9). Both these kinds of houses were permanent structures. Poole provides only a sketch of the *ais am* constructions (1976: 806-9, **Fig. 14**) and is unclear whether men's cult houses were decorated with carved and painted boards.[7]

6 Poole provides no map of the valley and its settlements in his doctoral thesis. There is such a map, however, in Weeks 1981: 179, but this shows the location of only three 'population centres': Taginstigin, Akaru near the airstrip, and Kuskusmin.

7 Poole states enigmatically that 'the cult houses are sealed with carved slats across the elevated doorway' (n.d.: 12).

FIGURE XV: Structure of the Kiimkiim Am and the Ais Am

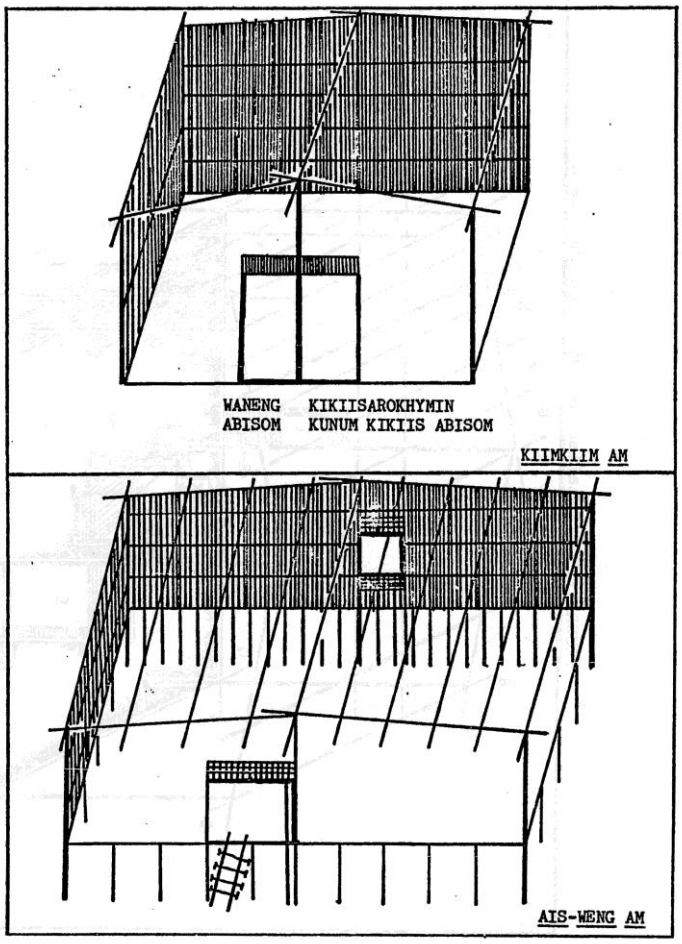


FIGURE XVI: Detailed Structure of the Ais Am

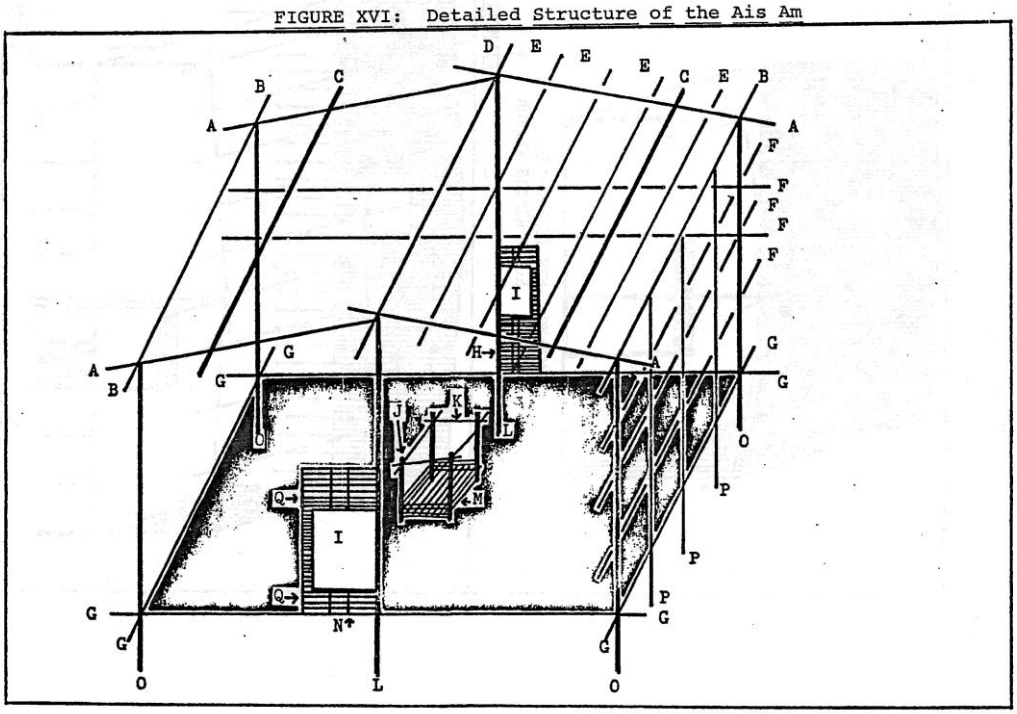


Figure 14. Sketches of ritual houses constructed for the *ais am* stage of initiation among the Bimin-Kuskusmin. Source: Poole 1976, Figs XV, XVI (pp. 806-7).

The **Kwermin**, south of the Bimin, lived in loose clusters of hamlets, each cluster being several hours walk from the others (Eggertsson 2003: 17 and maps 2, 3). The hamlet cluster, of which there were four in the 1990s, was known by the same name as that of the principal hamlet of the cluster. Each hamlet had several women's houses (*wonengam*), at least one menstrual hut (*sakam kebirip*), a men's dormitory (*kunumam*), and usually a senior men's cult house (*katiam*) containing clan ancestral relics, in which the fourth stage of male initiation took place. Houses were rectangular, gable-roofed structures. The major hamlet of the Seganabip cluster had 22 women's houses during Eggertsson's fieldwork (pers. com. 12 May 2009), and would qualify for description as a village. Large temporary houses with many fireplaces were built, called *yolam*, or *aukam* ('mother house'). These *yolam* were specifically named *wonam* ('arrow house') or *yemen aukam* ('taro mother house') in which, respectively, the sixth and seventh stages of the male initiation rituals took place (ibid.: 75, 106, 109, 117). The *yemen aukam* was decorated with carved and painted boards (ibid.: 124). Sometimes a *singam* ('high house') was built in or near a settlement for defensive purposes. Eggertsson provides an account of the building of the *yolam* (ibid.: Chapter 4) but most of the details relate to the accompanying rituals rather than to the architecture.

The Faiwol-speaking **Baktamanmin,**[8] west of the Kwermin, lived in settlements like those of most of the Faiwol-speaking groups west of them (**Fig. 15**):

> Women's huts . . . are built low but with their floor off the ground; they are located in a circle or semi-circle around the central plaza . . . Men's houses, forbidden to women and children, are generally larger and built on higher posts well off the ground at one or another end of the plaza circle or oval. The men's cult houses are located 'straight across from the men's house and somewhat withdrawn from the immediate neighbourhood of women's houses, surrounded by a sanctified area of ground' (Barth 1975: 20-21 and Plates 1, 2).

Barth (1975: 50) reports four types of men's houses of the Baktamanmin:

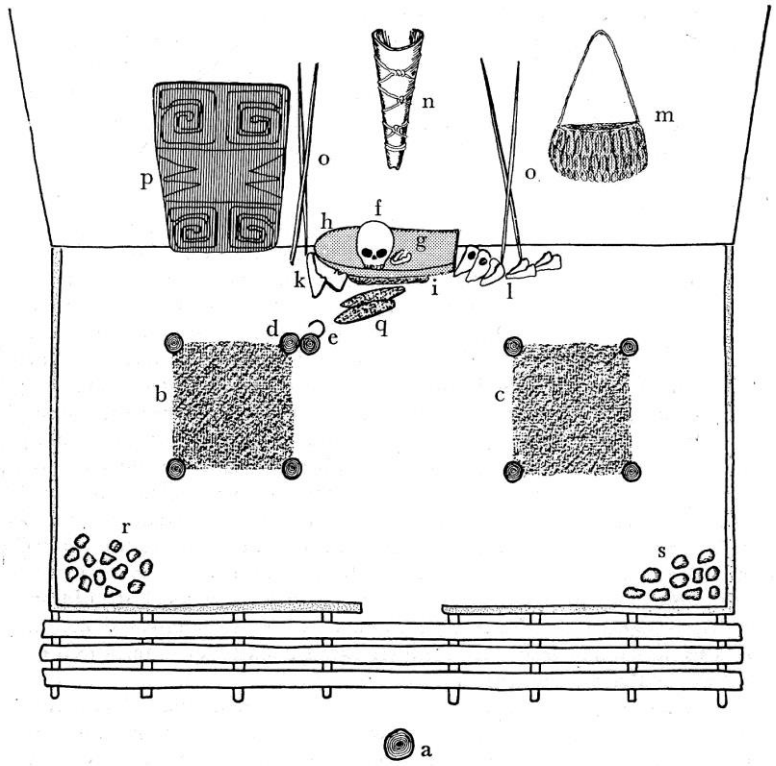
> In order of sacredness, these are (1) the men's house (*Kawēram*) with minimal ritual activity (2) the *Katiam*: the clan cult house for taro and hunting, (3) the *Yolam*: the communal cult house for taro and warfare, (4) the *Amowkam*: the communal cult house for taro.

8 Fredrik Barth calls these people Baktaman but this is a misnomer. Bak is the name of the river in whose valley (*taman*) the people live; -min should be added to mean 'the people' of the valley of the Bak.

Figure 15. Feisabip, the main Baktaman hamlet in 1968. From left: *yolam*, *katiam*, two men's houses, and the rest are women's houses (source: Barth 1975, Plate 1)

Barth describes the *yolam* as 'a single temple as the focus of a communal cult to which all of the Baktaman are defined as the congregation' (ibid.: 112). Certain initiation rites and warfare ritual were performed there. Sacred relics were kept along the rear wall (**Fig. 16** - see Barth 1975: 114).

The *amowkam* was distinguished by the carved and painted boards fixed to its façade which the men said was a recent introduction from the west (see Barth 1975: 95 and Plate 14, reproduced here as **Fig. 17,** for an example among the Seltamanmin to the north-west).



a) Housepost before door, carrying roof-beam b) the more sacred fire c) the less sacred fire d) the sacred fire post e) the long bone sacra f) the ancestral skull g) the ancestor's mandible h) the insect-nest sheet (*Gāim*) i) stone slab k) male pig mandible l) skulls and mandibles of female pigs m) quill bag for ancestral jaw n) pandanus container for bones o) sacred arrow (*bogyōn*) for sacrifices p) fighting shield q) black stones (adzes) for 3rd degree initiation r) cooking stones for pig, marsupial and man s) cooking stones for cassowary and pandanus d) strut for hanging parts of sacrifice

Figure 16. Sketch of the interior of a Baktamanmin *yolam* (source: Barth 1975: 114)

Figure 17. The *amowkam* of the Seltamanmin (Faiwol speakers) in 1968 (source: Barth 1975, Plate 14)

The Faiwol-speaking **Angkeiakmin** and **Fegolmin** on the south side of the central range and west of the Baktamanmin, lived in settlements similar to those of the Telefolmin, Falamin and Ulapmin to the north of them (see below), with minor differences in the naming and function of the men's and cult houses.[9]

The primary Angkeiakmin village was Bolovip with its *amok* as its supreme cult house (Champion 1966: 77). In 1967, Bolobip was a cluster of three hamlets, two of which included a *yolam* (cult house), a *katiwam* (older men's house), a *kawelam* (younger men's house) and family houses; the third hamlet lacked only the *yolam*. The *amok* (**Fig. 18**) was becoming derelict. Along the back wall of the *yolam* in one of the hamlets were hundreds of domestic pig jawbones, old shields, ancestral relics and hunting trophies (see Craig 1988, Illust. 40).

Figure 18. Left, the Bolovip 'amawk' as photographed by Ivan Champion in 1927 (source: Champion 1966, Plate oppos. p.66); right, the centre house board photographed in 1967 (BC 1967:C34)

9 The main difference was the use of the term *amok* for the supreme cult house, equivalent to theTelefol term *amogeng* which was often used as a synonym for *yolam*.

The primary Fegolmin village was Imigabip, also with its *amok* derelict in 1967, a *yolam/nongam* with a decorated façade (**Fig. 19**) and an array of shields inside, a *katiam*, a *kawelam*, and family houses. Smaller Fegolmin villages usually had at least a *yolam*, often a *kawelam* and sometimes a *katiam*, in addition to family houses. Barbara Jones did research among the Fegolmin during 1973-75. She states (1980: 22, 24):

> The one room houses (*am*), about 20 feet square, are built on short stilts. The floors are constructed of layers of poles and slats, which are tied to a framework of sturdy poles. Upon this is laid house-long, broad, smooth slabs of bark of a pandanus tree (*gol*) which also form the interior walls. The outer walls are slats tied perpendicularly to the inner framework to which the *gol* inner walls are also tied. Sago leaves form the roofing material for the peaked [gable] roofs. . .

Figure 19. Façade of *yolam*/*nongam* at Imigabip, Fegolmin (BC 1967 M12:31)

> The houses have one or two central square fireplaces . . . The one center door is fastened at night with a piece of *gol* bark.
>
> In the main hamlets, women and children sleep in the woman's houses (*wanangam*) and the men in the men's (*kaweram*} or boys' (*tanam*) houses. The latter are built higher from the ground than the women's houses to keep out pigs. The cult houses are similar in structure though the *yolam* has a fence around it . . .

Most hamlets are built on ridges, probably for defensive purposes. Golgobip, because it was nearer to the border with the [enemy] Enkaiyakmin, had defensive houses (*elam*) built on tall stilts as protection against raiding parties.

Jones provides a rough plan of Imigabip and its neighbouring hamlet Kabetgubip [Kawedubip] (see **Fig. 20**) which is not significantly different to the plan I drew in 1967 except that in 1973-75, Kawedubip was in the process of shifting northwards.

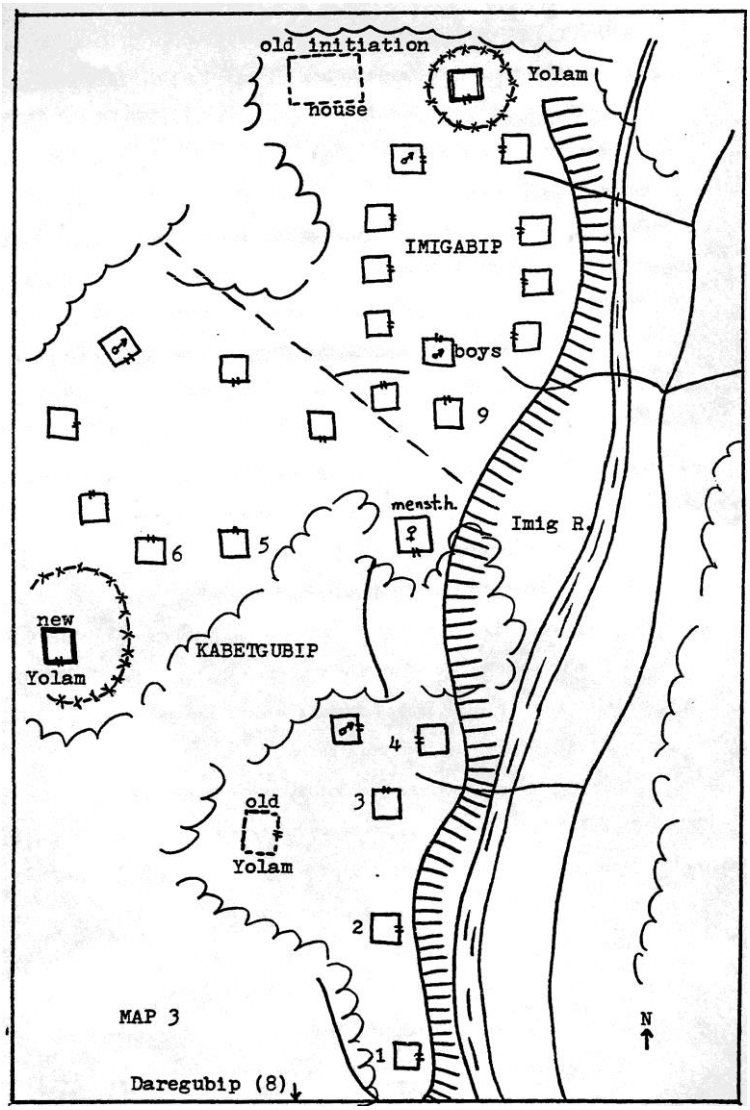


Figure 20. Imigabip (source: Jones 1980, Map 3)

At Wogembip and Imigabip (but not in the eastern Fegolmin village of Golgulbip) were examples of a particular way of tying the vertical wall poles to the half dozen or so horizontal straps of thick rattan that were fastened right around the house – thin rattan was bound vertically criss-cross (see **Figs 21**-**24**). This style of walling was used, except for Fegolmin *yolam* cult houses with decorated façades (see **Fig. 25**), all the way westwards from the central Fegolmin village of Wogembip, through the Wopkeimin area to Silinabip near the West Papua border, and on Tifalmin houses.

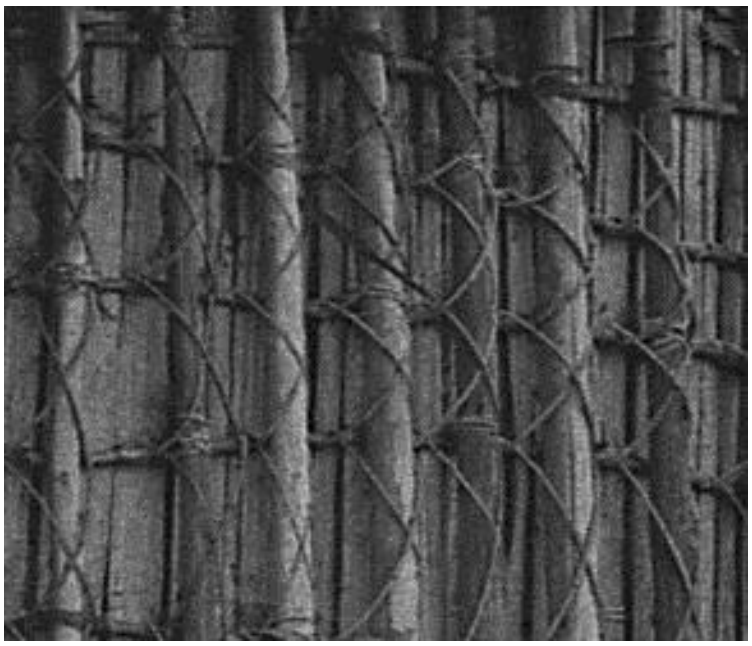


Figure 21. Detail of wall of Imigabip *kawelam*, Fegolmin, 1983 (see Fig. 19)

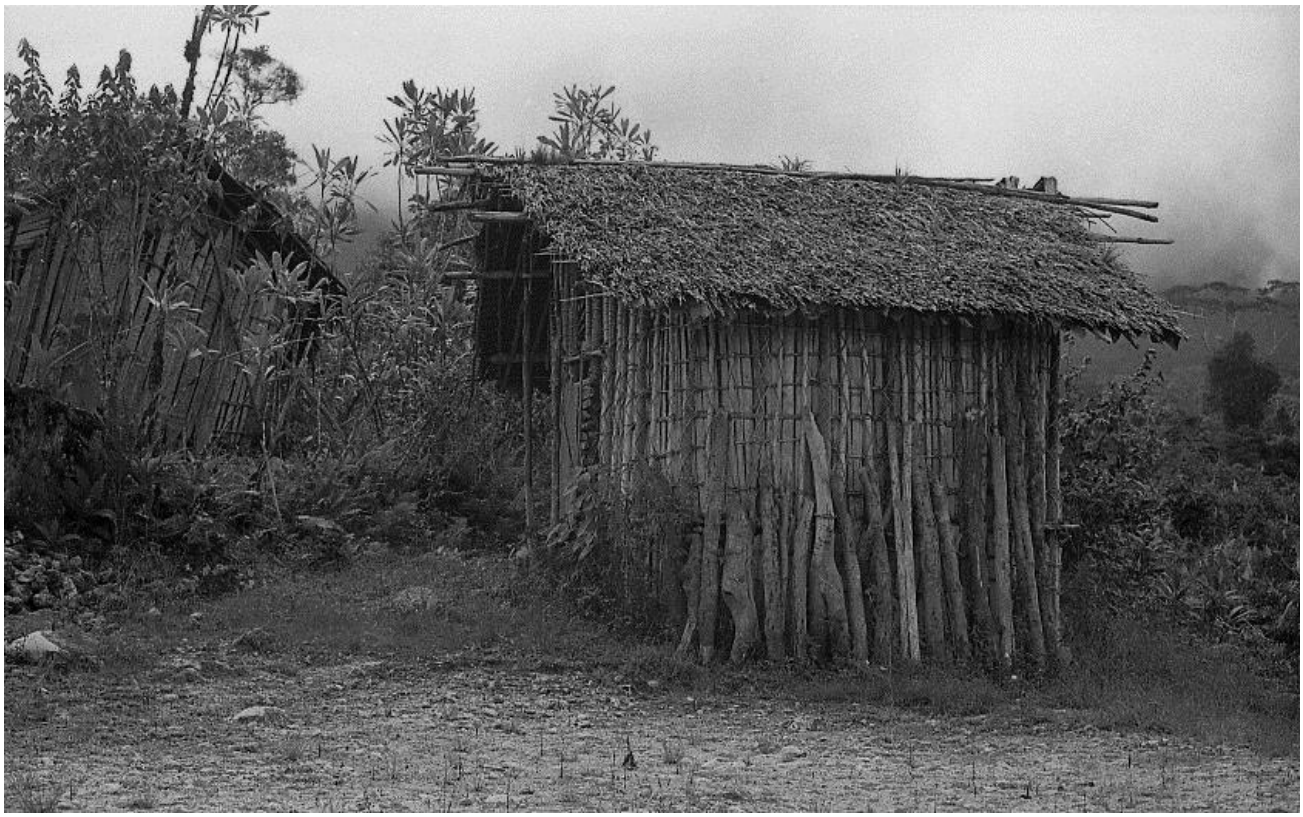


Figure 22. Imigabip *katiam* (collapsing *yolam* at left), Fegolmin (BC 1983 M3:20)

The presence of carved and painted boards on the façade of a men's house indicated the presence of ancestral relics inside (**Figs 25, 26**). The Faiwol sacred ancestral skulls were placed at the foot of the sacred shields that were leaning against the array of domestic pig jawbones along the rear wall. Hunting trophies also were displayed in the men's houses; the kinds of animals represented in the displays related to the ecosystems exploited by the community (Craig 1990).

Figure 23. Imigabip *kawelam*, Fegolmin (BC 1983 M3:21)

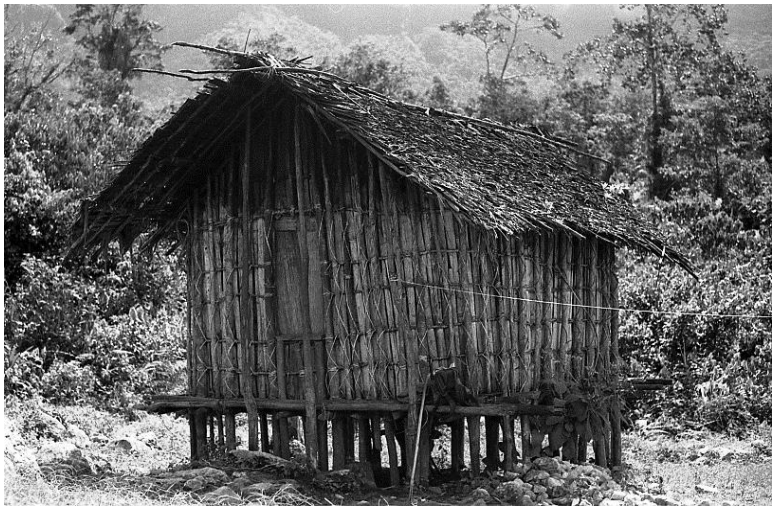


Figure 24. Imigabip *wanangam*, Fegolmin (BC 1983 M3:13)

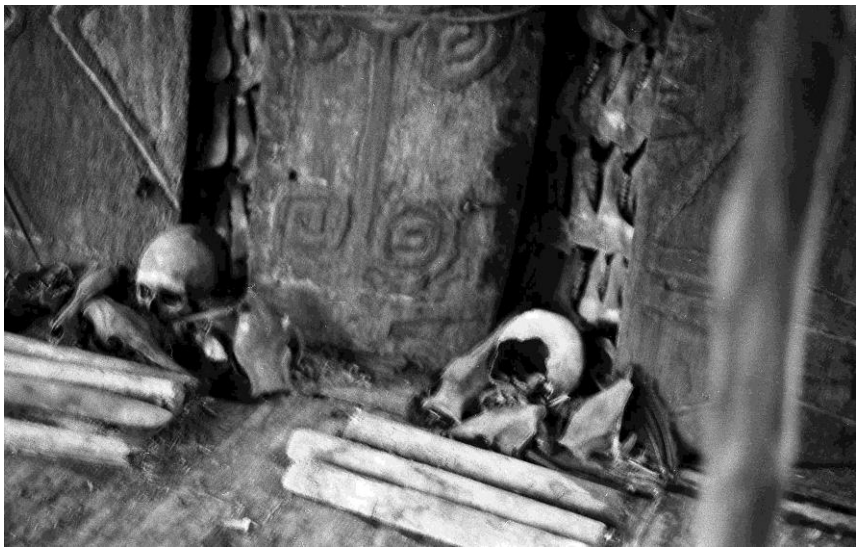
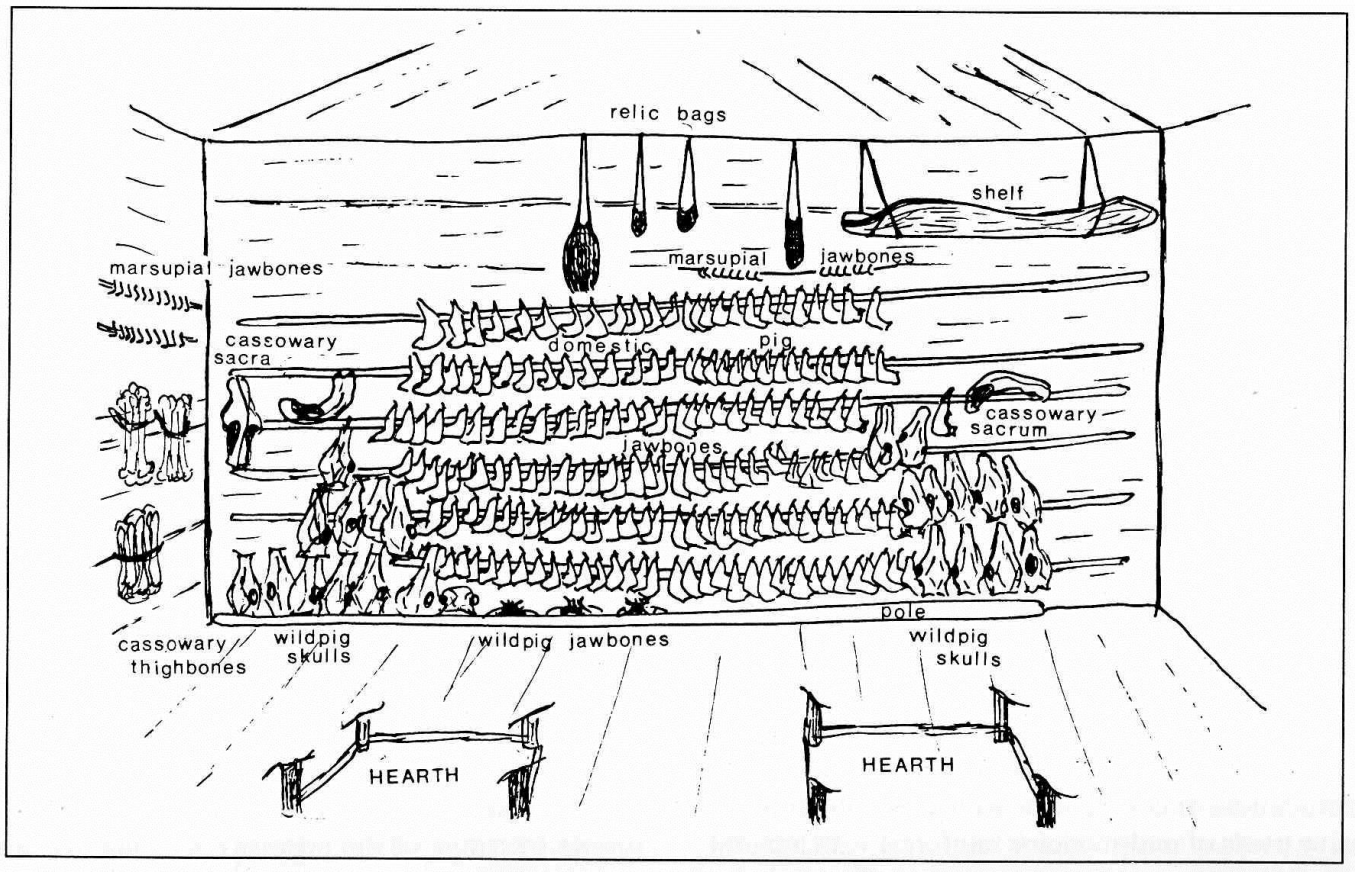


Figure 25. Kawedubip *yolam*, Fegolmin; and interior relics and shields (BC 1967 M12:19, 23)

Figure 26. Men's house (*kawelam*) sacra and hunting trophy array, Bolang (1972-3 BM5: 9A)



The **Telefolmin** inhabit the valley of the Ifi (where the administrative centre of Telefomin is located) and the valley of the Elip to the north. The Telefol-speaking **Falamin** (Feramin) live at the Sepik headwaters east of the Ifitaman Telefolmin; the Tifal-speaking **Ulapmin** live to the west of the Ifitaman Telefolmin.

The ideal settlement pattern for the more densely settled central Mountain-Ok tribes has been described and illustrated in Craig 1988: 24-6 and Jorgensen 1981: 181; the men's houses and cult house were clustered at one end of the village and had to be always higher (ie. upstream by reference to the nearest creek), and higher off the ground, than the women's houses, which were set in two parallel rows or a rough circle around a cleared space forming the village plaza (**Figs 27, 28**). The resulting pattern could be interpreted as anthropomorphic in that the cleared central space was called *abip-mat* ('village-belly'), with the cluster of men's and cult houses corresponding to the head.

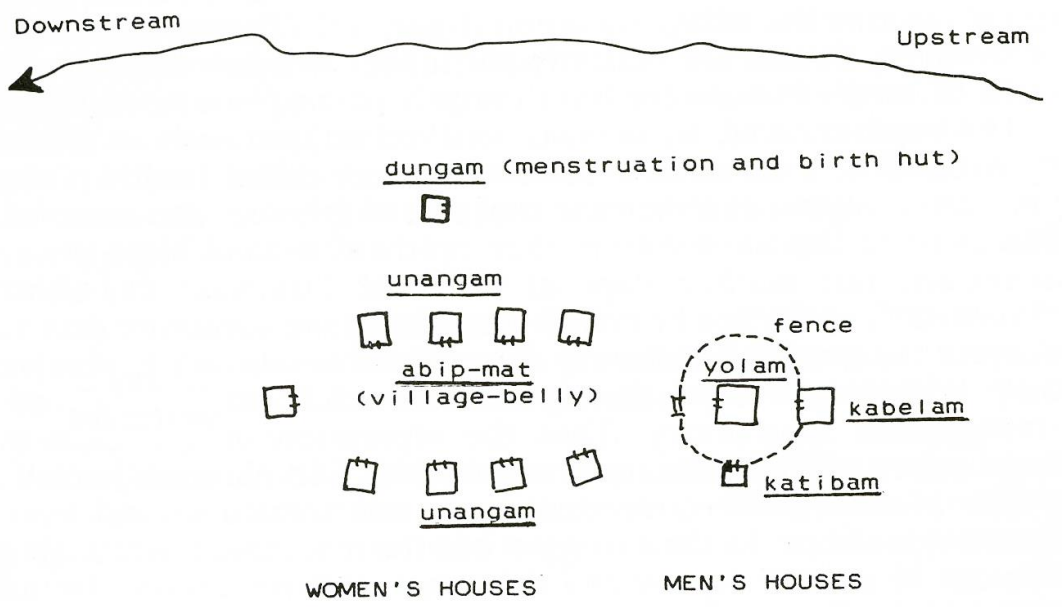


Figure 27. Ideal Telefol village plan

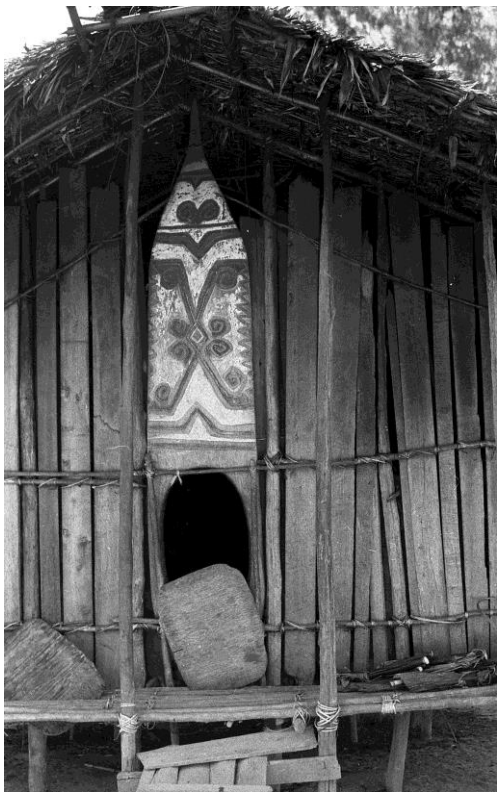
Houses were rectangular, around five by five metres, with a gable-roof and a floor elevated a half-metre to a metre off the ground. There was a small entrance at the front, often incorporating a carved and painted plank or houseboard (*amitung*).[10] Most houses had two hearths to accommodate extended family households but in the men's cult houses, the two hearths corresponded to the division of Taro and Arrow ─ gardening versus hunting and fighting, nurturing versus killing. Along the rear wall of all houses, even of the family houses, the jawbones of domestic pigs, trophies of the hunt, and ancestors' bones in sacred string bags (*menamem*) were placed.

10 For examples of houseboard designs, see Craig 1966, 1967, 1969, 1984, 1988; Cranstone 1965, 1967.

Figure 28. Dababip village (*yolam* closest), Eliptaman Telefolmin (1972-3 BM9:15)

Family houses (used mainly by the women and children, and pigs) were called *unangam* (woman-house); the menstruation hut was named the *dungam*; the house used by young initiands was the *kabelam* (hornbill-house); the house in which senior men slept was called the *katibam* (little-house); the house in which male cult rituals were performed and the most sacred relics were kept was called the *yolam*, *nongam* or *amogen* (house-mother). Large community houses, built for defence in border areas, were called *atalam*.

The Telefolmin, Falamin and Ulapmin distinguished between family houses and men's houses by differences in external wall construction: the family houses had vertical split timber walling and the men's houses had unsplit vertical poles for walling (**Figs 29, 30**).



Left: Figure 29. *Unangam*, Dalduvip #2, Ifitaman Telefolmin (1972-3 BM3:17)
Right: Figure 30. *Yolam*, Angkemavip, Ifitaman Telefolmin (1972-3 BM3:18)

The supreme cult house at Telefolip (**Fig. 31** - see also Craig 2010, Fig. 54a) had yet another form of cladding: the vertical poles characteristic of men's houses are sheathed with tens of thousands of short wood slats (*dolol* – hence the specific name for the house: *amdolol*) arranged in vertical series of chevrons, giving the appearance of vertical trimmed palm fronds. The only other building with such wall cladding was the cult house at Ubtemtigin in the Elip valley (**Fig. 32**; see also Craig 1988: 30 and Illusts 7, 15), first built on the site of the primary cult house of the vanquished Iligimin in the late 19th century.

The largest Mountain-Ok settlement (see Swadling 1983: 65 and Craig & Hyndman 1990: Figs 62, 63) was the contiguous villages of Telefolip and Bogalminavip of the Ifitaman Telefolmin, which (in 1967) had thirty-six family houses (*unangam*), one or two menstruation huts (*dungam*), and six men's houses: one large *kabelam*, also called the *kuyapkan*, in Telefolip, for initiation of boys; one *kabelam* for young men at Bogalminavip; two *katibam* for senior men; a *yolam/amogen* cult house for Bogalminavip; and the supreme cult house of the Telefolmin, called the *amogen*, *amdolol* or *telefolip* – Craig 1984, 9th unnumbered page; 1988: 19, Illust.7). This village also was remarkable in that the inhabitants believed it had never changed site since it was established by Afek, the Old Woman believed to be the founding ancestress of the Mountain-Ok 'tribes' (Brumbaugh 1990). An archaeological excavation in 1983 by Pamela Swadling and staff of the

Figure 31. Supreme cult house (*amdolol*), Telefolip, Ifitaman Telefol, 1964 (BC M7:27)

Figure 32. Cult house (*amdolol*), Ubtemtigin, Eliptaman Telefol (BC 1967 M2:34)

PNG National Museum (Swadling et al. 1990) yielded material that established the foundation of Telefolip at about 300 BP.[11]

The supreme cult house at Telefolip, in which tribal-wide rituals were conducted, was completely lined around all four internal walls with the jawbones of domestic pigs – some 6000 in 1964 (**Fig. 33**). Along the rear wall was a shield and string net bags, said to contain the skulls of Afek and her brother Umoim (or Olmoim; see Brumbaugh 1990: 65). At the foot of the wall were other relics, including about 60 skulls and jaws of feral boars.

Figure 33. The internal rear wall of the supreme cult house (*amdelol*) of Telefolip village, Ifitaman Telefolmin, August 1963 (duplicate of missing original image by B. Craig)

Among the Telefolmin and Ulapmin, all family houses and men's houses (except the *amdolol* at Telefolip and Ubtemtigin) were eligible for a carved and painted houseboard (*amitung*) to be attached at the entrance, and all houses were eligible for the storage and display of ancestral relics, as well as hunting trophies (Craig 1988: 58)

11 By 2002, the village of Telefolip-Bogalminavip had been almost abandoned. Christian evangelicals had burnt the *telefolip* (Craig 2010: 84-86) and several family houses, along with their sacred ancestral relics, and only a few family houses remained. Most of the villagers had moved to a new site about a kilometre away.

In 1983, the *yolam* at the Ifitaman Telefol village of Abatevip (Kubrenmin parish) had been rebuilt recently using the same houseboard and the relics neatly arranged along the rear wall (**Fig 34**). A family house in Bogalminavip also had neatly arranged relics and domestic pig jawbones on the rear wall (**Fig. 35**).

Figure 34. Cult house (*yolam*) at Abatevip, Ifitaman Telefolmin, with interior relic and trophy display (BC 1983 C12:3,4)

Figure 35. Interior relic and trophy display, family house, Bogalminavip (BC 1983 C11:27)

The settlements of the **Tifalmin**, in the Ilam Valley west of the Ulapmin, were smaller villages than those of the Telefolmin. They called the family house *unangam*, the youth's house *kawelam*, the senior men's house *katiwam*, and the Tifalmin supreme cult house *amawok, amogen* or *yowalam* (Craig fieldnotes 1964, 1967, 1972; Wheatcroft 1975: 391-3). As noted above, the criss-cross rattan binding was used on the external walling of most houses (**Fig. 36**). The supreme cult house, located at Bulolengabip, was distinguished by its façade of carved and painted boards (**Fig. 37 -** see also cover image of Craig 1988).

Figure 36. Family house (*unangam*) at Namindumavip, Tifalmin, 1964 (BC M5:4)

Figure 37. Cult house (*yowalam*), Bulolengabip, Tifalmin, 1964 (BC M5:8)

The interior rear wall of the Bulolengabip *yowalam* in 1965 had an impressive relic and trophy display along the back wall and extending to both side walls (**Fig. 38** - also Craig 1990, Fig. 15.5).

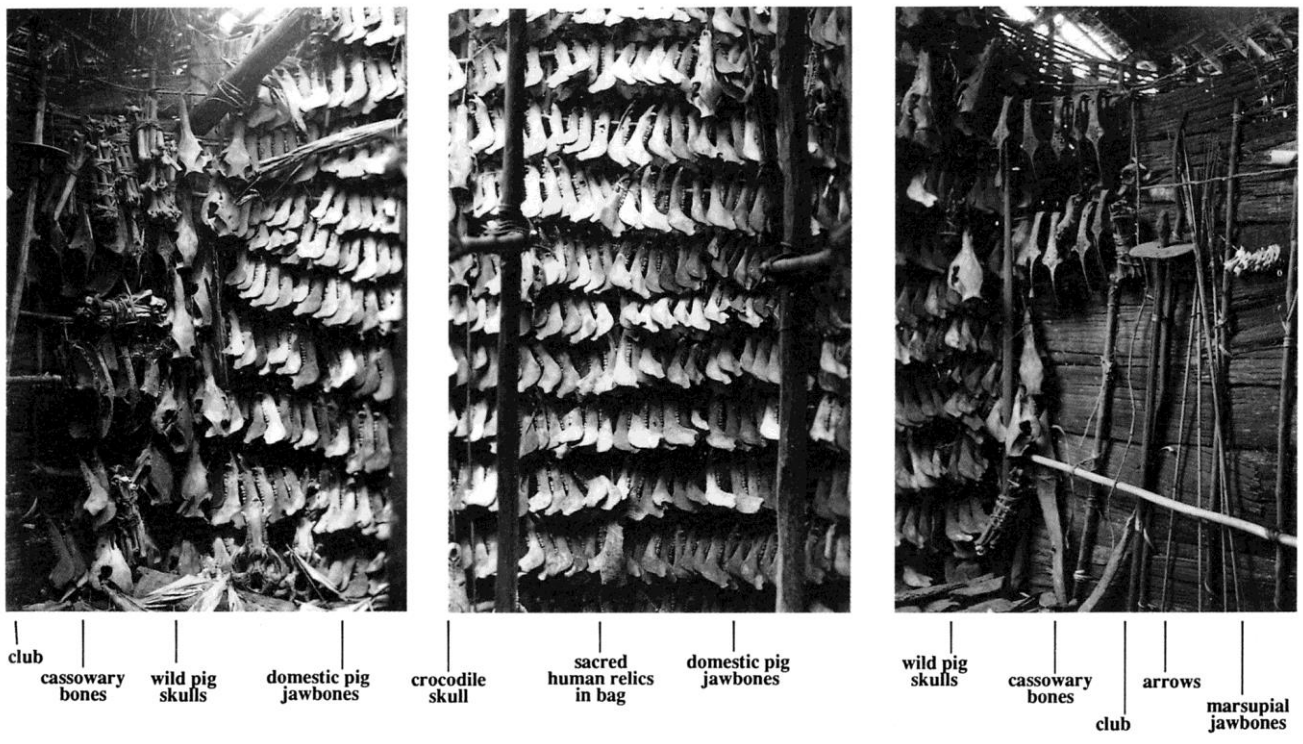


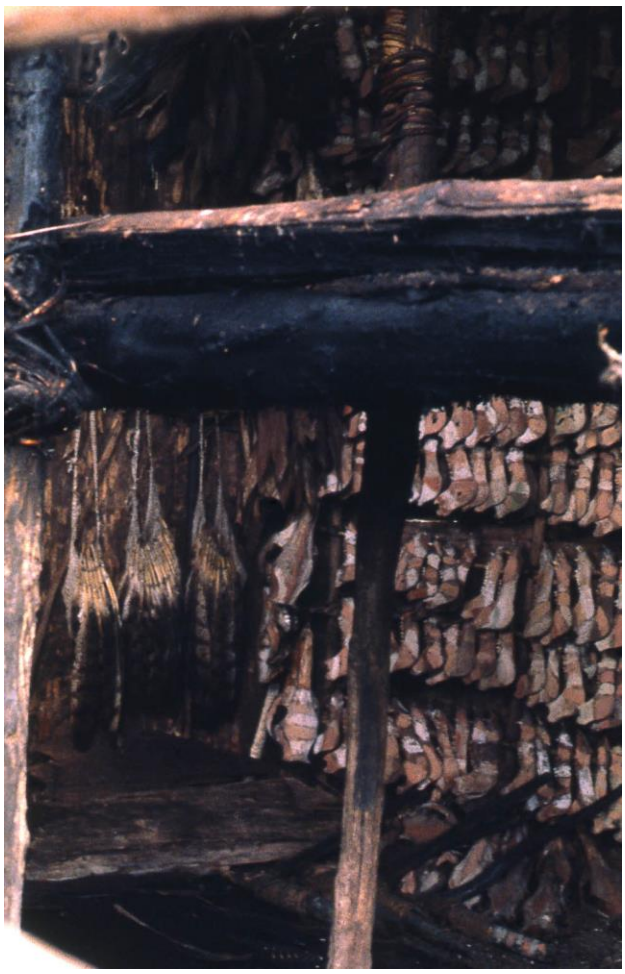
Figure 38. Interior of the cult house (*yowalam*), Bulolengabip, Tifalmin (ASME 1965 M1:4-6)

The Tifalmin did not keep ancestral skulls in their men's houses as they felt the power of such relics was too dangerous for the community. Instead, the skull and most of the skeleton were kept in limestone shelters (**Fig. 39**). Bryan Cranstone reported (1966:13): 'Formerly, bodies were taken to caves or shelters in the limestone outcrops of the valley sides and left there. . . In the case of notable men, a bone or some hair was recovered and kept in a men's house or in the cult house'.

Figure 39. Ancestral skulls and bones in a rock shelter on the south side of the Ilam Valley, Tifalmin (ASME 1965 C454).

The **Wopkeimin** live along the southern foothills of the Star Mountains, west of the Fegolmin. Their supreme cult house (*futmanam*) was located at the village of Bultemabip. It was decorated with carved and painted boards on both the front façade and rear external wall (**Figs 40, 41** - see also Craig 1984, 7th unnumbered plate). This cult house was second in pan-tribal significance only to the *amdolol/telefolip* at Telefolip (Hyndman 1990: 163, 166-7). Its relic and trophy array reflected that (**Figs 42, 43**). In addition, there was the *amok*, a small house for the senior men, and the *kawelam* (with a decorated façade) for the other men (**Fig. 44**).

Figures 40, 41. Supreme cult house (*futmanam*) of the Wopkeimin at Bultemabip (Front wall: BC 1967 M14:24; rear wall: BC 1967 C55)



Figures 42, 43. Interior of Bultemabip *futmanam*, showing sacred relic and trophy array (left: 1981 C4:30; right: 1981 C4:28)

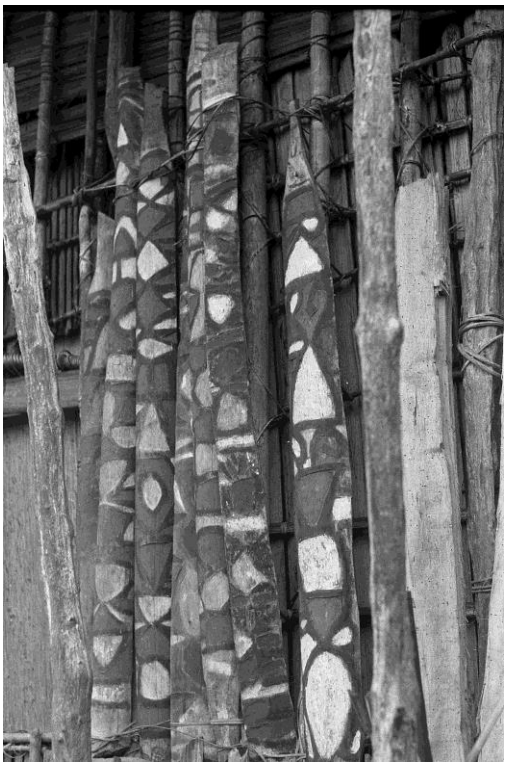


Figure 44. Part of the *kawelam* (men's house) façade, Bultem (BC 1967 M14:24)

The most western example of carved and painted boards on the façade of a men's house was the *yowolam* at Kawokabip, 13 kilometres east of the international border (**Figs 45, 46**). Further west, Silinabip was a hamlet of two houses, one for the men and one for the women; they were more round than rectangular in floor plan (**Fig. 47**).

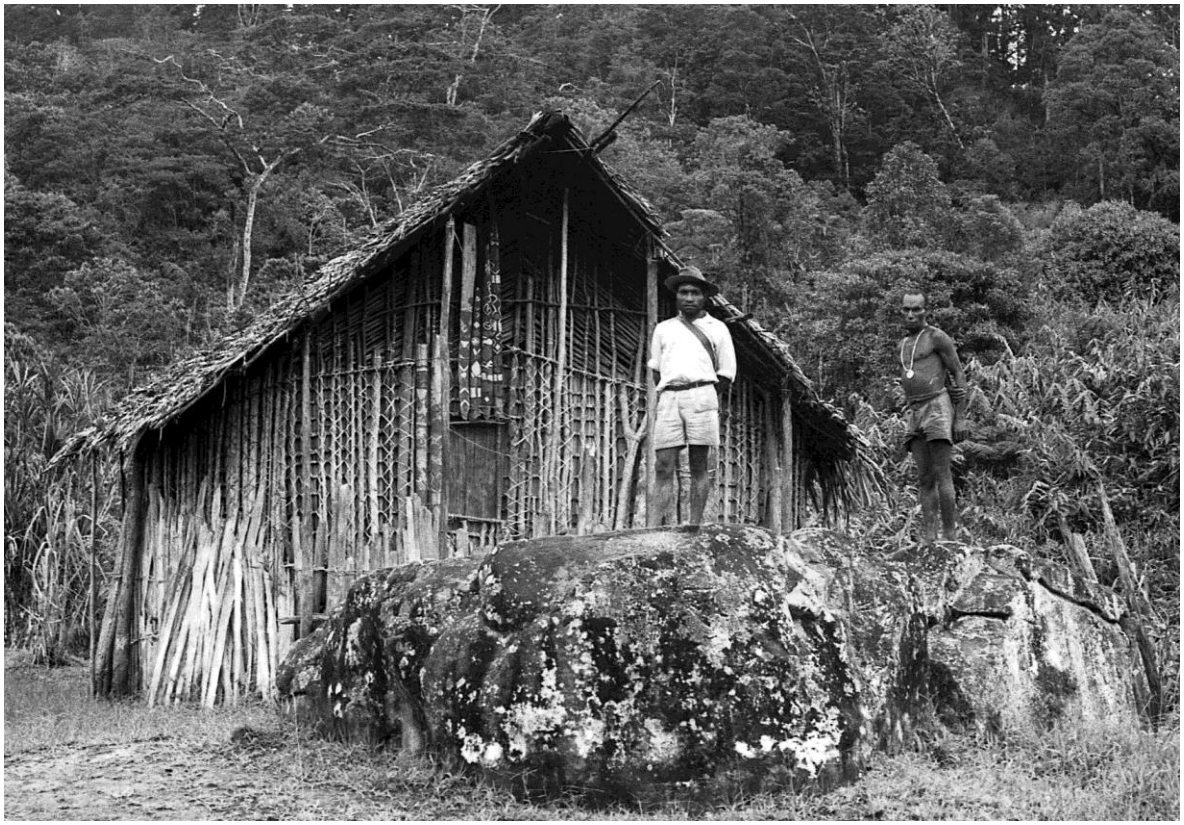


Figure 45. Cult house (*yowolam*) at Kawokabip, Wopkeimin/Kauwol (ASME 1965 M7:5)

Figure 46. Relic and trophy array inside *yowolam* at Kawokabip, Wopkeimin/Kauwol (ASME 1965A C28)

Figure 47. Rear of family house, Silinabip, Wopkeimin/Kauwol (ASME 1965 C150)

The **Atbalmin**, who live on the northern slopes of the Star Mountains and south of the Sepik River, north and north-west of the Tifalmin, lived in scattered hamlets or small villages that moved around within parish boundaries. 'The settlements range in size from one to ten houses and from ten to sixty inhabitants, averaging about four houses and thirty people' (Bercovitch 1989: 4 and Map 1). An Atbalmin settlement (*abip*) consisted of family houses (*wanangam*, 'woman house') arranged around a central plaza, a house (*bokam*) where the men usually slept, and sometimes a men's cult house (*am yawol)*, located a little distance from the main settlement and up-slope; a women's menstrual hut (*sayam*) also was located a little distance away and down-slope (ibid.: 58, Map 4).

Near the international border north and south respectively of the Star Mountains, western Atbalmin and western Wopkeimin houses were often not strictly rectangular, the corners being rounded off so that the floor plan was almost circular (**Fig. 48**). Bercovitch states that Atbalmin family houses were built of varying sizes, with one or two hearths (1989: 60), a single doorway (ibid., Fig. 1), and no interior partitions. The space forward of the centre of the hearth was reserved for women and children and the space to the rear of the hearth was reserved for men. If there were two hearths, one behind the other, the same allocation of space applied for each hearth.

Figure 48. Family house in a garden near Busilmin, Atbalmin (ASME 1965 M12:15)

The western Mountain-Ok (the **Ngalum**, including the Sibil valley people, of [West] Papua), like the central Mountain-Ok, lived in villages or in hamlets with a minimum of one men's house and one family house. Brongersma and Venema (1962: 88-9) described a typical Sibil village named Kigonmedip; cf. an aerial view of Betabib, reproduced here as **Fig. 49**; also ibid., Plates 11, 14):

> The actual village consisted of five houses which formed an almost complete ring around a small flat space; on the side facing towards the open space they were connected by a low

fence of tree-trunks laid horizontally . . . Inside the enclosure, on the side where the circle of dwelling houses was not complete, stood the ritual men's house: the *iwool*. Only the initiated men and boys are allowed to enter this building . . . Sometimes there is a second house on the open place, the *bogaam*, where men from other villages are allowed to enter. . . it seems to serve as a sort of men's 'smoking room'. . . women's houses also exist; here the women withdraw on special occasions, such as [for menstruation and] the birth of a child. This women's house, known as the *sogaam*, stands outside the village and is forbidden to the men.

Figure 49. Aerial view of Betabip, Sibil Valley, Ngalum. Centre: village with *iwool*; top right: adjunct settlement (source: Brongersma & Venema 1962, Plate 4).

The Ngalum built houses that were circular or oval in plan but with the sub-rectangular gable roof. Mountain-Ok houses in Papua New Guinea usually had only one small entrance but Sibil family houses had two entrances – a small one at the front for men and 'a large door[way] reaching to the whole height of the house, by which the women, children and pigs entered at the back' (ibid.). The *iwool* was built higher off the ground than were the family houses (**Fig. 50**). The Dutch 1959 expedition members were not permitted to enter the *iwool*, so the contents, such as sacred relics or shields, could not be reported.

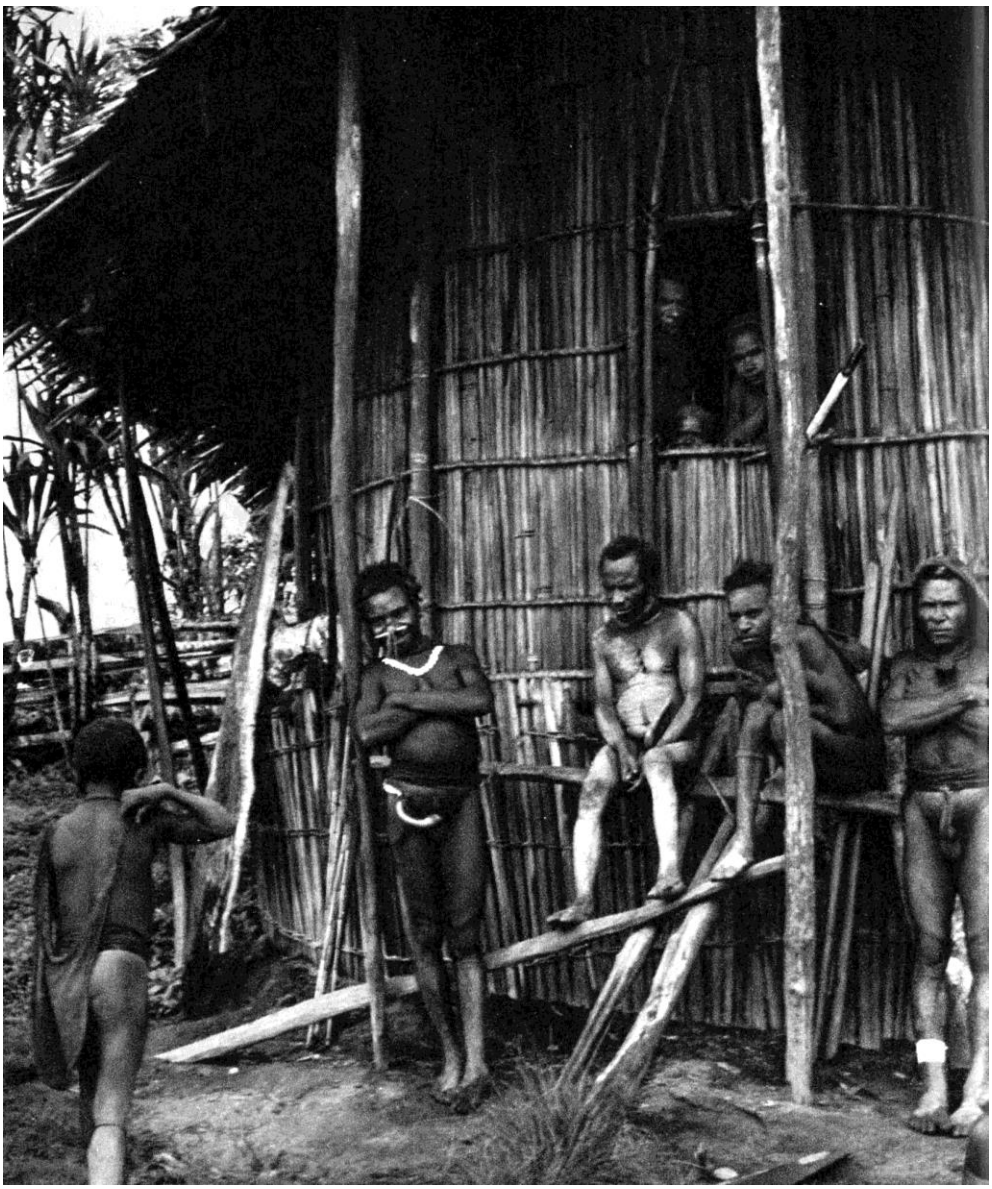


Figure 50. Men's house (*iwool*) at Tulo, Sibil Valley, Ngalum (source: Brongersma & Venema 1962, Plate 14).

Eipo-Mek settlements, west of the Ngalum, were like Mountain-Ok settlements in certain respects, with one or two men's houses (*yoek aik*), family houses (*dib aik*) and one women's house (*kelape aik*) for birthing and menstruation (Koch 1984: 17, 138), but they were a loose cluster of houses rather than the formal arrangement of the villages of the central Mountain-Ok (**Fig. 51** - see Koch 1984: 18, 19; Michel 1983: 22).

The Eipo-Mek built round houses, usually raised off the ground, but they had two roof types: conical and gable (**Figs 52, 53**). However, it was not these types of roof but size that distinguished between men's and family houses; the men's house usually was larger than the family house (Koch 1984, Abb. 15-17; Michel 1983, Abb. 13).

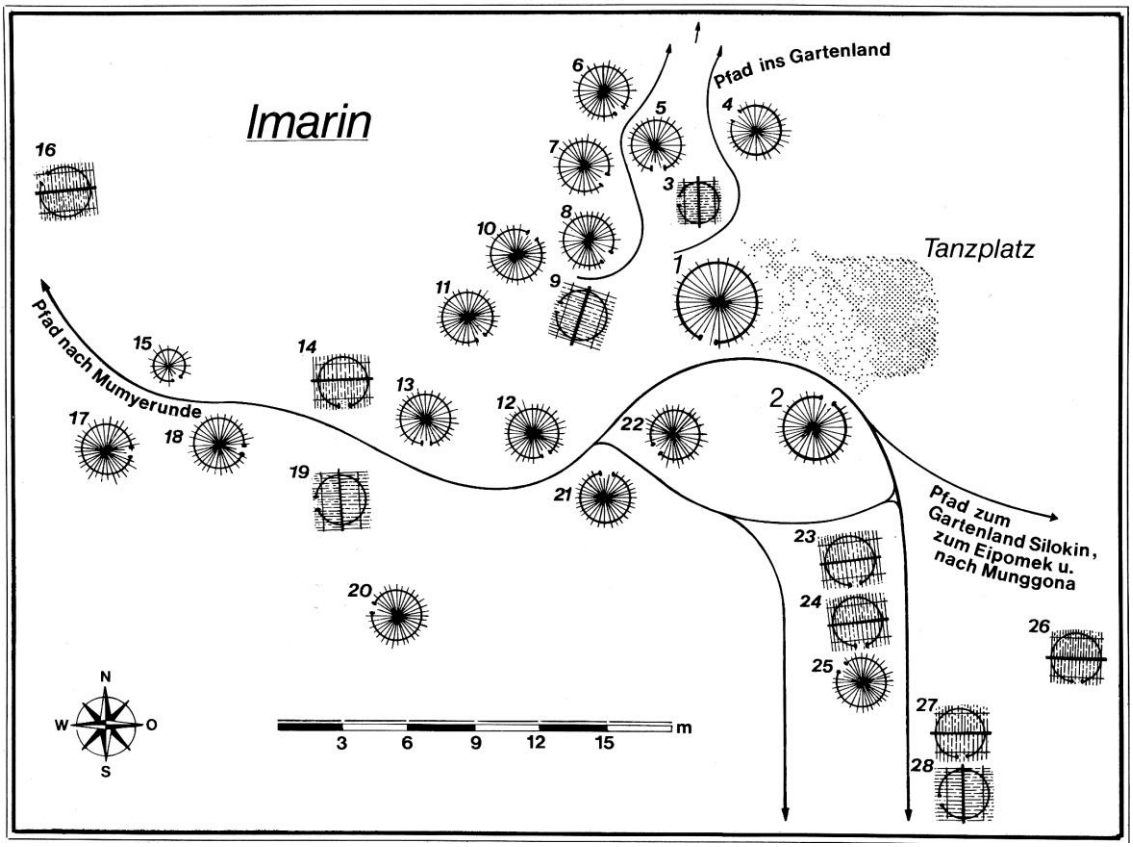


Figure 51. Imarin village, Eipo-Mek. 1, 2 Men's houses; 16, 26 Women's houses; all the rest are family houses (source: Koch 1984, Abb.16)

Figures 52, 53. Family houses (left) and men's house (right) in Imarin (source: Koch 1984, Abb.58, 59)

Eipo-Mek family houses (Koch 1984, Abb. 45-51, 55-65; Michel 1983, Abb. 14, reproduced here as **Fig. 54**) had a single central hearth with four hearth-posts supporting a drying rack above the fire for firewood, as among the Mountain-Ok, except that most central Mountain-Ok houses had two hearths. The Eipo-Mek distinguished between types of men's houses: the *yoek aik* for the younger men and the *salenaik* which Koch (1984: 38) translates as 'kleinem Mannerhaus' or little men's house. This may be the equivalent of the central Mountain-Ok *katibam* ('little house'); the *katibam* was where the old men slept and it was small because there were usually not many old men in the village.

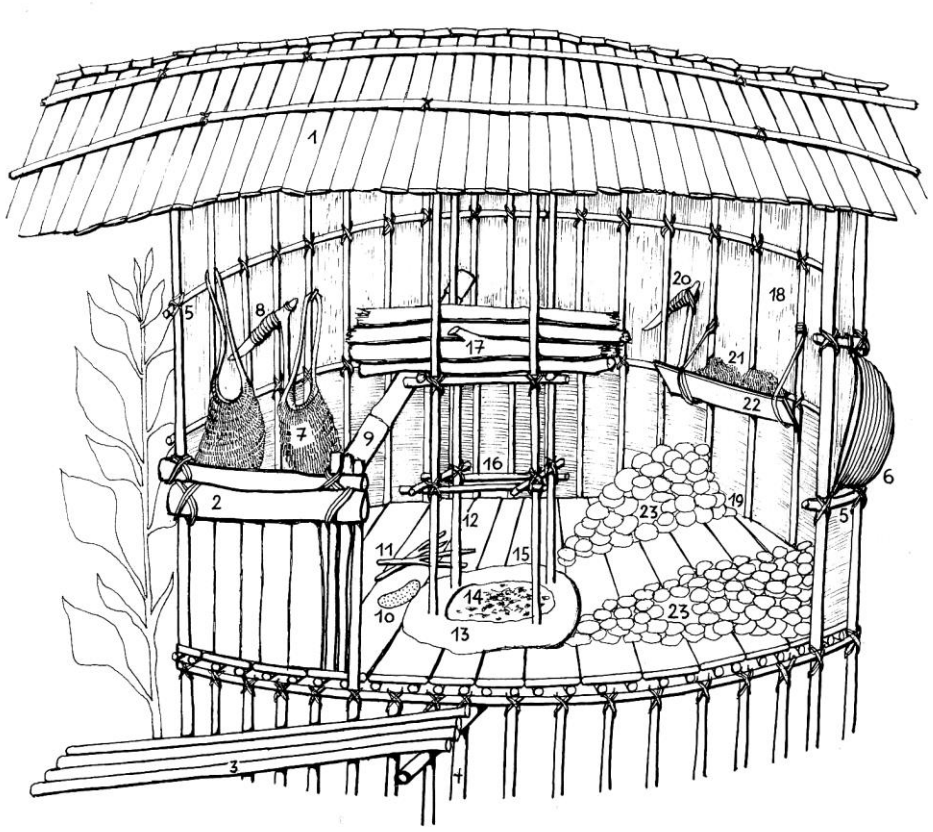


Figure 54. Family house in Moknerkon, Eipo-Mek (source: Michel 1983, Abb.14)

The '**Mount Goliath**' people (Una speakers, Mek Family), south-west of the Eipo-Mek, lived in villages of several houses in a rather loose cluster (Kock 1912, Fig.3). This was the case also for the Sela-Mek, the 'Yali' (Korupun speakers) of the upper Solo River further to the west (Mitton 1983: 123), and for the 'Yali' (Nipsan speakers) of the north side of the central range (ibid.: 116).[12]

Godschalk (1993: 15 and front cover photograph) reports that the **Sela-Mek** lived in villages, built defensively on ridges, consisting of from seven to over fifty households as a cluster of hamlets, each of which represented a ward with its men's house (*yuwi*) facing an open dancing ground, several family houses (*diba*) and a women's menstrual and birthing hut (*kìlabù ae* or *mali ae*). Normally, houses had a central hearth with the four hearth posts supporting a drying rack but he observed that sometimes a family house had two fireplaces with a wall between, separating the building into two households (ibid.: 14). All of the houses were round and most had a conical roof ─ gable roofs were for temporary structures (ibid.: 49). The men's houses were 3.5 to 4 metres diameter and the family houses 2 to 3.3 metres diameter. He states (ibid.: 48): 'There are two kinds of men's houses, the sacred (*mem yùwi*) and the regular men's house (*mali yùwi*). Every men's house carries a name. There were carved and painted boards on the men's house in Kwalamdua when I saw it for the first

12 There is a confusion of uses of the term 'Yali', as it has been applied to speakers of several languages, located on the north and south sides of the central range, and on both sides of the boundary between the Mek and Ngalik speakers.

time in 1981.' Sometimes a men's house had an earth floor with a sleeping space overhead. The men's house had a comparatively large doorway whereas the family house had a smaller entrance (**Figs. 55, 56**).

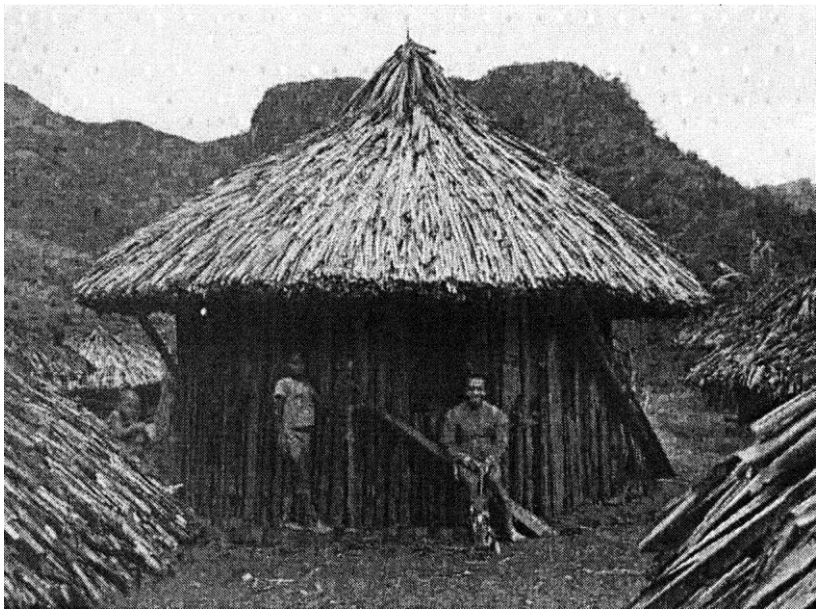


Figure 55. The men's house 'Pagaduwi' in Orisin, Sela-Mek 1987 (after Godschalk 1993, Plate 11).

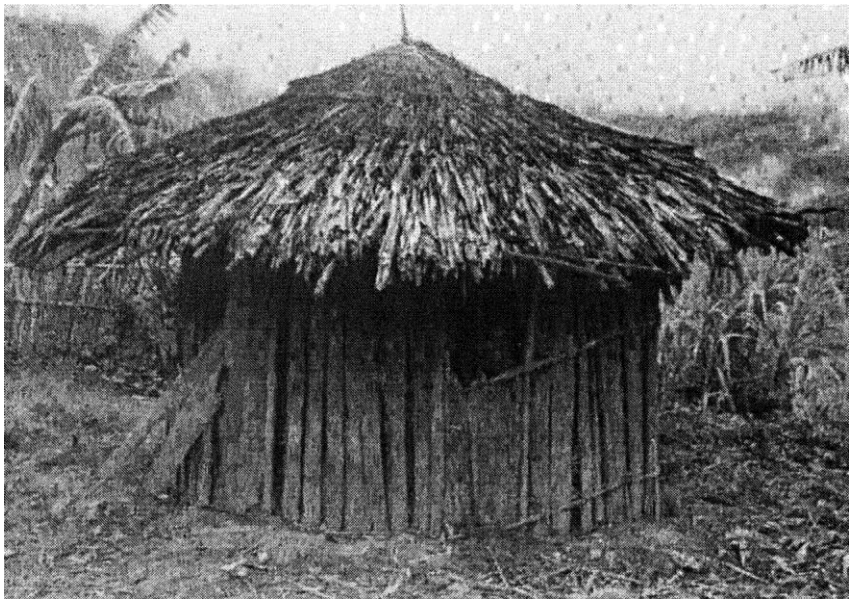


Figure 56. Family house in Mundon, Sela-Mek (after Godschalk 1993, Plate 12)

Godschalk says (ibid.: 106) that there are no longer any sacred men's houses (*mem yùwi*) in the Sela valley and that he never entered one. But he was informed that 'a number of sacred objects would be kept in the back, such as the skull (or thigh bone or jaw) of a *weik nang* 'big man', meant to help people, and possibly parts of animals with which clans would have a special relationship. Furthermore, the *whau* handdrum . . . [and] the *kìlabi* shield and a certain type of *yogaba* stones'.

Mitton (1983: 122-4) illustrates settlements and houses of Koropun speakers in the Solo Valley, west of the Sela-Mek. The painted panels of the men's houses are notable (**Fig. 57**).

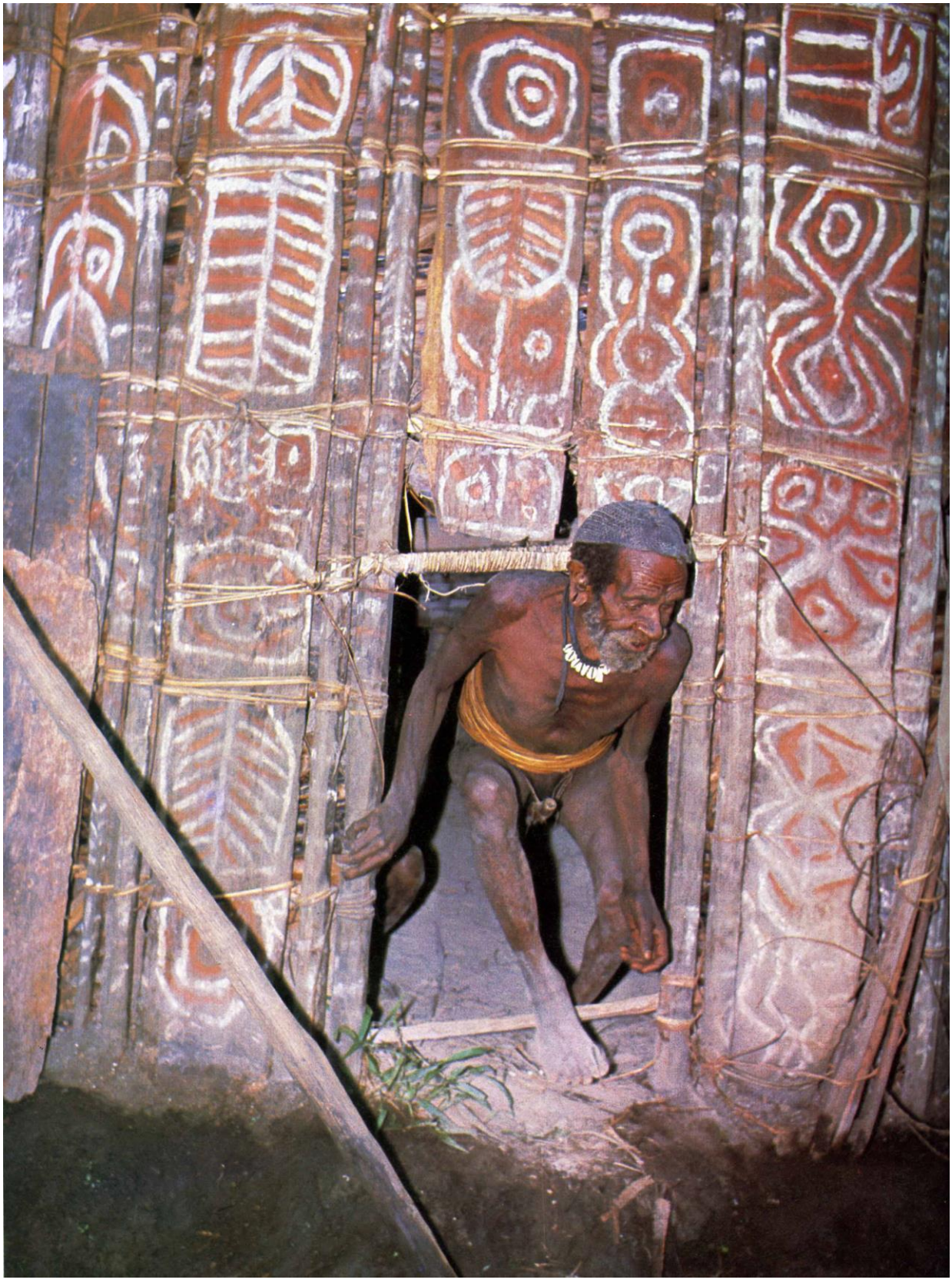


Figure 57. Painted panels on men's cult house, Banga village, Solo Valley (after Mitton 1983: 124)

Zöllner (1988: 5-6) describes the settlements of the **Yali** (also called Jali, Jalé or Jalimo) of the upper Yahuli in the vicinity of Angguruk (Ngalik-Nduga speakers), to the west of Nipsan, as follows:

> The men's house group is the smallest, yet most active, political unit. To this group belong ten to fifteen men . . . with their families. They live in a ward, which consists of one men's house (*yowi*), sometimes of an additional men's house (*yowi sema*), and of several family huts (*humia*) . . . Together gardens are prepared, huts built, feasts and ritual activities planned, and acts of war prepared . . . Two or more wards form a village (*o pumbuk*). The wards, which are compact units, are separated from one another by fences, gardens or paths. One of the men's houses of the village is the sacred centre (*usa ibam*); it is recognised as such by the paintings on the outside walls. Larger ritual activities are performed by the village as a whole . . . To a village may belong a satellite settlement . . . in the faraway gardens; such a settlement may become the nucleus of a new village.

He describes Yali houses (1988: 10):

> The Yali live in round huts. Walls consist of poles and boards. The conical roof is covered with casuarina bark, or pandanus or sago leaves. There is a single entrance . . . In the centre is a fireplace, marked off by four poles. An upper floor is made under the rafters. A small hatch gives access to it . . . Men's houses are basically larger than family houses. The latter often have sections to keep pigs, which often have their own entrance.

The external wall of the men's cult houses were painted with geometric and figurative designs (**Fig. 58**), not unlike those of the Solo valley south of the central range.

CONCLUSION

From east to west, the most obvious changes in settlement patterns were:

1. **Oksapmin**: scattered homesteads and small hamlets, with men's sacred houses set apart;
2. **Asabano, Bimin, Kwermin,** and **Baktaman**: small villages incorporating men's sacred houses;
3. Faiwol-speaking **Angkeiakmin** and **Fegolmin,** the Telefol-speaking **Falamin** and **Telefolmin,** and the Tifal-speaking **Ulapmin:** relatively large villages, incorporating men's sacred houses;
4. Tifal-speaking **Tifalmin, Wopkeimin,** and **Atbalmin,** and the **Ngalum** of [West] Papua**:** small villages or hamlets with a larger 'tribal' or parish centre in which the most significant men's house was located and used for the highest grades of initiation;
5. **Mek** and **Yali** of [West] Papua**:** hamlet or village conglomerates of no formal pattern, incorporating men's scared houses.

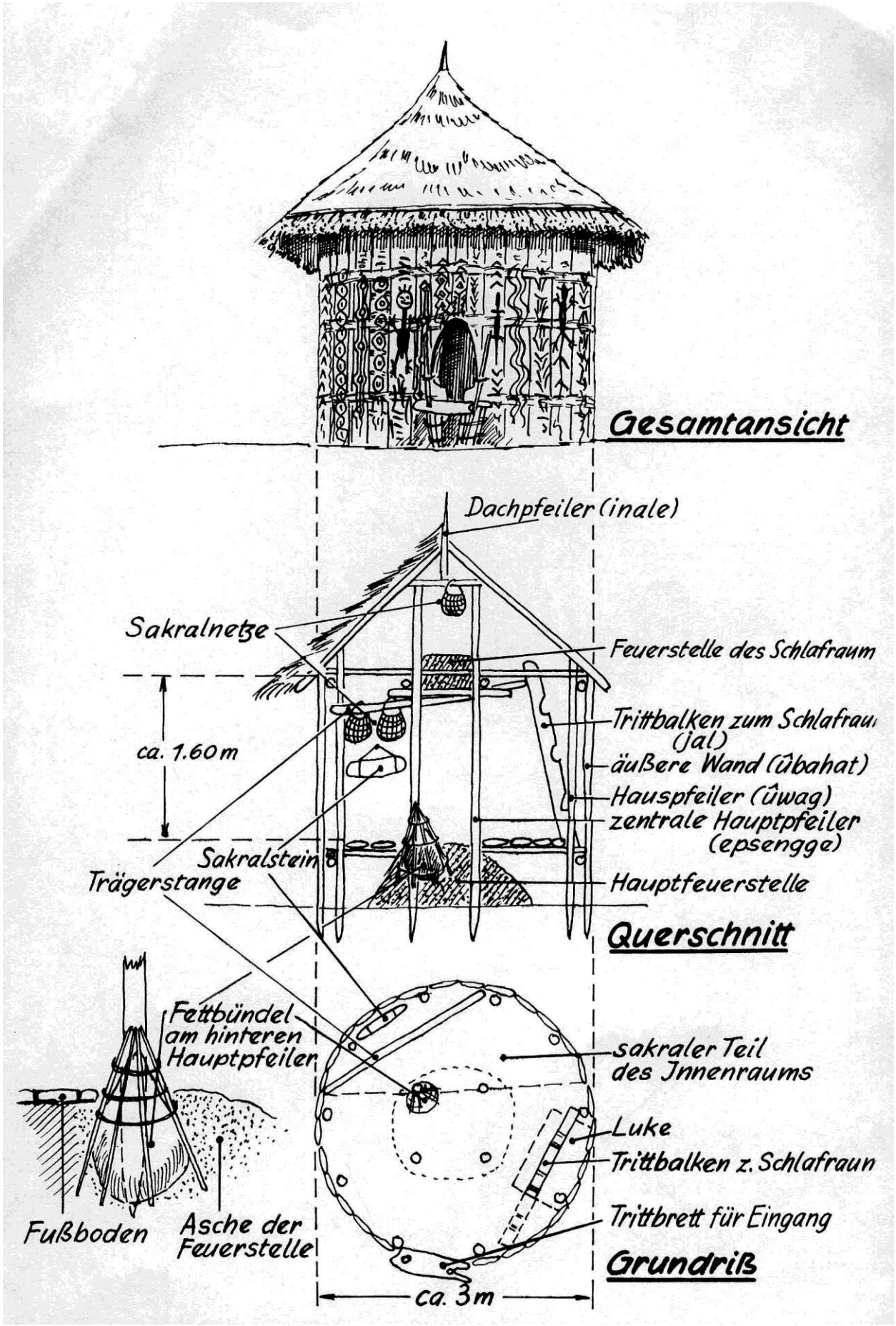


Figure 58. Men's cult house Yali, upper Yahuli River (source: Zöllner 1977: 456)

From east to west, the most obvious changes in house forms were:

Rectangular floor plans in the east, with a gradual change to circular floor plans commencing with the Tifal-speaking Wopkeimin and Atbalmin and becoming quite circular among the Mek and Yali in the west. Gable roofs were the norm all the way from east to west until the Mek, who constructed a mix of gable and conical roofs; all Yali houses had conical roofs.

In the east among the Oksapmin, only the most sacred men's house had a carved and painted façade. Among the Telefol-speaking villages and the Ulapmin, all houses, including women's houses but excepting the supreme cult houses at Telefolip and Ubtemtikin, could have a single large carved and painted board at the entrance. For the Asabano, only the men's houses could have a houseboard. Among the Tifalmin, the Faiwol-speaking groups along the headwaters of the Fly River, and among the Wopkeimin at the headwaters of the Ok Tedi, any sacred men's house could have a carved and painted façade. Among the Atbalmin, Ngalum and eastern Mek, there do not appear to have been carved and/or painted boards on any houses. However, further to the west, the Sela-Mek settlements and the settlements of Koropun speakers and the Yali distinguished their most sacred men's houses with painted boards on the external walls.

Everywhere in the study area, houses are generally raised off the ground with a central hearth, or pair of hearths, set into the floor with a drying rack above. There is at best only a small porch at the entrance, just deep enough to accommodate a seated or standing person.

In areas bordering lowland groups, in addition to their normal housing, people sometimes built large communal structures with multiple hearths, primarily used for dance festivals. Large communal houses were standard among lowland peoples north and south of the central ranges. These will be surveyed in another paper.

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