

## Chapter 12: One Family<sup>1</sup>

Kombuk, the son of Tultul Tai and his oldest wife, Mai, married soon after he began to attend courting ceremonies. His bride, Mandigl, was a girl Tultul Tai had secured for him from his own brother-in-law, and the marriage had been his father's idea, not his own. He told me that he envied boys who were older than he and still unmarried, for his work had multiplied. He had to build a separate house for Mandigl at the ceremonial village and chop firewood for her every day, but his father expected him to continue to act as unpaid servant for him. Tai never tired of reminding him that he had found him a bride and provided the marriage payment, and Kombuk was constantly humiliated by having to depend on his father for the loan of plumes to wear in the dances of the Pig Ceremonial. Mai had no further children after Muru and later Kombuk, so the boy was never formally weaned. Even at fifteen, when he was already married, he sucked his mother's breasts occasionally for comfort. His father was aware of this and warned him that his association with his mother would weaken him. Tai urged him to have children, and laughed when his son told him he was impotent: that was what happened, he said, when a man associated closely with women and depended too long upon his mother. I suspect Tai himself may have impregnated Mandigl on his son's behalf, for Tai made several references to Kombuk's unmanliness and referred to his son still sleeping with his mother and leaving other men to sleep with his wife, making his father do things he himself should be doing. When the child arrived everyone accepted her as Kombuk's daughter.

When I met Kombuk again in 1963 he was a young man of consequence, no longer ineffectual, fearful, and effeminate as he had been earlier. Now he went confidently to Garu Wiro ceremonies at the opening of new houses, and at every public gathering a girl summoned him to carry leg. For the most important dances in a Wubalt food presentation he wore his father's *tultul* badge proudly on his forehead. His father had died in 1961 and although he had chafed at the old Tultul's autocratic ways he now remembered him with deep respect and was clearly proud of having been the son of an important man.

Kombuk had acquired a second wife, Waiya, a girl of Konumberga Pipikanim Kumngakanim. She had summoned him several times to carry leg with her and eventually she had arrived at his house saying that she intended to marry him. He gave her family the marriage payment they demanded. He was pleased with his new wife, his only complaint being that she was continuing to associate with her unmarried Konumberga age-mates instead of settling down to finding friends among the married women in the Kugika Penkup group.

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter is incomplete.

In early 1964 Kombuk's sister, Omngar, disappeared and was rumoured to be staying with the Ngeni-Muruka. A girl goes away secretly only when she is intending to marry against her relatives' wishes, and Wamdi and Kombuk soon discovered that the man Omngar was intending to marry was a young man with the same name as the old Tultul. Tai II was Kugika Penkup by descent. His father, Tabindam, had gone to live with maternal relatives many years ago, taking his whole family with him, and Tai II had grown up as a Ngeni-Muruka man. Wamdi and Kombuk were shocked at Omngar wanting to marry her 'brother'. Wamdi declared that if Omngar married Tai II she would never be able to visit the Kugika again and if she had children these would be without the useful mothers' brothers all other people had.

Wamdi and Kombuk had a further objection to Omngar marrying a man of her own choice, for they had been hoping to give her to the Konumbuga Taukanim. Wamdi had planned to give Omngar's sister, Kommun, to the Konumbuga Taukanim, but she had rebelliously insisted on marrying a Konumbuga Tausekanim man. A young man of Konumbuga Pipikanim Kumngakanim had given a betrothal payment for Omngar, but the young man had died and Wamdi was proposing to give Omngar to the Taukanim to take the place of her sister. The Taukanim had given Wamdi his two senior wives, and although he had secured brides for the Taukanim from other divisions of his subclan he wished to ...

[Chapter ends here.]

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