

According to the Ankave mythology, it is the *ombo* that humans also have to thank for the *songen* ceremonies, as well as for the masks worn by the drummers and the songs sung during the drumming. It is they who, from the depths of a pond, brought humans the hourglass drums, beaten night after night when it is time to definitively despatch a *pisingen siwi* spirit, and to forget the deceased to whom the ghost belonged. The origin myth of the drums also contains an extraordinary spoken operational sequence, providing a step-by-step explanation of how to make the instrument while underscoring the key aspects of the imaginary device whereby the Ankave dispose of their dead: the origin of the drum skin, made from the skin of a snake-man; and the importance of the 'throat' or middle part of the object (Lemonnier 2005).

p. 310 The myths also explain that the *ombo* make endless circuits to the sound of the drumbeat, after men have kept them chained up night after night in our world. ↳ The hourglass drum plays a crucial role in dismissing the spirits of those who have died recently. Drawn in by the arms of the *nowimboxo* mask, the *pisingen siwi* spirit is driven towards the other world by the racket produced by the drum skin, the selfsame din that resounded on either side of the water when the Ankave ancestor discovered this wonderful object. At this point, the spirit of the deceased travels through the two pieces of the instrument. The myths recounting the origin of the *songen* ceremonies have much to say about this: the narrow piece that connects the two chambers of the drum and the python-skin membrane which acts as a gateway to eternity. In other words, an Ankave mortuary hourglass drum is not only a musical instrument, it is primarily a funnel-shaped psychopomp, that is to say the narrow canal whereby the ghost travels from the world of the living to that of the *ombo*.

Shamans say that these cannibal monsters feed on corpses, killing their victims by inserting objects into their veins or by cutting them, as well as by slashing their liver. Those Ankave people who have had the horrible surprise of identifying an *ombo* have recognized maternal kinsmen who looked exactly like their uncles or cousins, except for their red eyes and dog-like ears. For the Ankave, a foetus is believed to feed on maternal blood, and everyone agrees that a brother has given to his sister's children the life-giving blood he shares with her. This is one reason why maternal kin always claim they have not received enough gifts to compensate the birth of children who are 'one blood' with them. In the Ankave world-view there is no way to compensate for the blood-life one receives from his maternal kin. And this is the reason why the *ombo* are like mothers who eat their own children.

But this is not yet the end of the story, as revealed by a contextualizing anthropology of technology. An Ankave mortuary drum is more than a double funnel linking the two sides of the same entity—the Ankave society—with its living and its dead. On the one hand, this artefact does what art or 'images' do, according to various anthropologists. For Wagner, '[a]n image has the power of synthesis: it condenses whole realms of possible ideas and interpretations and allows complex relationships to be perceived and grasped in an instant...the power of eliciting [causing to perceive] all sorts of meanings in those who use and hear it' (Wagner 1987: 56). On the other hand, an Ankave drum is neither a piece of art nor merely an image.

To understand an object according to the theory and methods of the anthropology of techniques, one has to consider it within the full complexity of the operational sequences in which it appears, as well as in the systems of thought that refer to it. In the present case, if one considers the drum together with the night ceremony, and with the making of the drums, and with the operational sequence given in myths, one realizes that it is not the object alone that has what Gell (1996: 37) called 'objectification of complex intentionalities'.

p. 311 In my view, while using the drums the Ankave are mixing together thoughts and actions belonging to various domains of Ankave culture, social organization, and ↳ imagination. Collectively beating the drums is a unique way of putting together myth, ritual action, and material actions, by doing things, and not by simply looking at them (as for an image) or talking about them (as when evaluating art objects). It is because of the drums on which they are focused, and through the material actions by which they are