



Fig. 3: Hanging up *løj*: the ritual specialist "blesses" the *løj* with palm wine before tying it to the top of the bamboo pole.

the top of a long raffia pole, which he sticks into the ground next to the door of the twin mother's house. As payment the *taabi* has to give a fowl and a small calabash of palm wine. Explanations vary as to what the *løj* is supposed to do.

Some informants say that it is simply a device to prevent rain falling on the day of the ritual. I have been told that *løj* is used to "hold rain" in other contexts, too. When I asked whether the *løj* is hung up also in the dry season when there is no danger of rain, all informants emphatically stated that it was a must ("na law!"). From this we have to conclude that the *løj* is more than just a device to prevent rain from falling. Nsangong of Mfe said that the *løj* prevents strong winds from passing over the compound, that it makes the compound "cool." But most informants insist that the *løj* is hung up to protect the twins from airborne witches and "bad spirits" that want to harm the twins.

3.7 To "Cover" the Twins (*fo' mven*, *fopkə mua*)

As I have indicated already, it is widely believed that twins, including breech deliveries and children who cut the upper teeth first, are born with "two eyes" (*lis baa*). They are able to see things which ordinary people do not see. This puts them in great danger especially in their infancy. So the first task of the *nga ncəp fəs* is to "cover" the twins (*fo' mven*, *fopkə mua*), in other words, to "lock" their second sight. This ritual is not limited to twins. There are other children for whom "*fo' mven*" has to be performed besides those men-

tioned above. Children born with the umbilical cord wrapped around their neck or body (*lim toj*), or with a caul (*te tam*), must be treated in the same way. All these children are believed to have "two eyes" and they have their own ritual specialist to "cover" them. Some informants even told me that the ritual *fo' mven* is performed for any child as a matter of precaution. One never knows whether a child is born with "two eyes" or not.

The rite *fo' mven* takes place in the house where the twins are staying. Only the *taabi*, the *mabi*, the twins, and the ritual specialist with one or two attendants are allowed to be present. The twin father has to provide a spear, a fowl, and a small calabash of palm wine. The rite consists of five parts:

- the placing of barrier medicine across the threshold (*ntaamsə nzok*)
- the "covering" of the twins
- the administering of strengthening medicine to the twins and their parents
- an omen-taking ritual
- the drinking of worm-cast

The twin parents enter the house and the specialist closes the door on them. He places a number of plants across the threshold securing them on both sides with forked sticks stuck into the ground. In Mfe I saw two plants used, viz., *lilic* and *ngwei*. These plants placed across the threshold are believed to protect the twins and their mother inside the house. They are directed against witches and persons of evil intent. In Lower Yamba, in normal circumstances, that is with single children, the lineage head, who is also the head of its *ɣwantap* society, places the *ntaamsə* at the