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## **WATER IN PLACE: THE HAGEN AND DUNA PEOPLE OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA**

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### **Abstract**

We will discuss here some of the ideological conceptions of water among the people with whom we work in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea. In both the Hagen and Duna areas of the Highlands various ritual responses to environmental pressures such as drought have arisen over time. The aim of these rituals was to renew the fertility of the ground so that crops would grow well and people would be healthy. In our conclusion we will point out some ways in which the data we give relate to Paul Sillitoe's paper on Wola hunting spells in this issue of the *Journal of Ritual Studies*.

### **Hagen**

In the Hagen area there were a variety of ritual cults which would be performed at particular intervals of time that were determined by environmental conditions. These cults were underpinned by magical activity and carried out by ritual specialists. They were organized by leaders who would encourage the people to construct a cult site and persuade them to raise the pigs and obtain the shells (both forms of wealth) needed for the event to successfully take place.

The two main cults in the Hagen area were referred to as the Female Spirit cult (*Amb Kor*) and the Male Spirit cult (*Kor Wöp*). We have discussed the *Amb Kor* in a number of publications previously (A. Strathern and P. J. Stewart 1997, 1998, 1999a, 2000: 79-99; P.J. Stewart and A. Strathern 1999a). We will discuss the *Wöp* cult here since its main symbolism is on water imagery (see also A. Strathern 1970; Strauss 1962; Vicedom 1943-8; Stewart and Strathern 2001: 99-112).

The *Wöp* cult performance was thought to make men more virile and able to impregnate their wives with male children (Strathern and Stewart n.d.). Men drank the spring water associated with the *Wöp* spirit and this was said to revive their virility. Women were not allowed to drink the water of the Spirit but were allowed to eat parts of the pork cooked as sacrifices and to take part in the final celebratory dance. In addition to human fertility the cult was directed at restoring the fertility of the ground so that crops would grow well and people would be healthier. A *Wöp* cult performance might be organized after the Spirit showed itself to the people by sending sickness to them. The first signs of the Spirit's presence would be noted in spring water that had bubbled up from the ground at a place previously unnoticed. Ritual experts who were hired from the rainy, high-altitude Tambul area and who participated in the cult were charged with regulating the flow of the Spirit's water by channeling its flow in particular ways. The chief expert would direct the building of a cult enclosure around the Spirit's spring. In addition to other buildings inside of the enclosure a tall tower house (*manga tamand*) was constructed with long poles and roofed with bark. This structure was circular with enough room for an earth-oven within it that would be used for cooking pork. In addition to the seemingly phallic symbolism of the tower house a large upright post, *kor porembil*, was set up next to a cooking pit that would be used to cook some of the pork at the final ceremony of the performance. The *porembil*, a mark of the

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Spirit, was explicitly contrasted with *tumb*, a much shorter, moss-covered, post at which old men sacrificed separately. If young men went near the *tumb*, men said, their penises would be short and slack.

The earth opening through which the Spirit's water bubbled up was referred to as the 'eye of the spirit' (*kor mong*). The experts decorated this with ferns and it was later fed with decorating oil (*kopong mambokla*) which the ritual experts would pour into the opening. This oil was used to smear onto the human body as a form of self-decoration and it was closely associated with fertility in general. It is derived from a tree (*Camptosperma brevipetiolata*) and was traded in long bamboo containers over large parts of the Highlands region of Papua New Guinea.

The ritual experts killed pigs and chanted a spell over them before they were taken to be cooked in the final ceremony. In the spell the expert closed the eyes and ears of the pigs with mountain moss steeped in pig blood, calling on everything to 'stick' i.e. stay fertile, to 'make grease (*kopong*)' (the word for grease is the same as for semen and breast milk). Shortly before this the experts stood with their helpers, facing each other and their feet pressed onto two long logs laid down to mark the spot for the earth ovens. These logs were cut from the *wantep* tree which is a fast-growing secondary regrowth tree belonging to old fallow areas. The experts called out the names of a large number of places both in the Hagen area and in the Enga area to the west of Hagen where groves of this tree were said to exist and to fertilize the ground with their fruits. The aim of the spell was to make the local ground partake of the fertility expressed in this huge imaginative transect of soft, damp, fertile sites.

The theme of fertility was pursued further in the construction of a 'magic garden' (Strauss 1962:419) which served to represent a concentrated form of crop growth for all the groups taking part in the performance. The ritual expert would plant the garden with sugar cane, taro, bananas, and vegetable greens. The participants, holding on to a long thick *keunga* vine, would encircle this magic garden, and then, at the experts' command, descend upon it, tearing it to pieces. The fragments of plants from the garden would then be pushed down into the eye of the Spirit's spring. This would be done before the final closure of the water opening with bark that had come from the tower house. The ritual experts (*mön wuö*) directed all of these movements in meticulous detail, choreographing the end of the performance, after which the cult area was closed up so that the water source would be protected. The men performed the vine dance to enhance their longevity and solidarity with one another. This ritual sequence was called *peng mumuk*, 'holding the head together'. Cult stones were also buried deep in the ground so as to bring it long-term fertility and keep it from becoming 'dry' (i.e. without grease). The experts also inserted into the earth ovens little packets containing sprigs of *kengena* or *yara*, a high forest plant that 'likes' water and 'draws rain' to itself. The whole cult from a certain viewpoint is in praise of water as the source of fertility, linking it to male procreative vigor also. It was not just water as such that was sacralised, but 'living', spontaneous spring water, seen as both pure and as linked to rain and the sky. The chief expert at the performance observed, in 1965, (Raklpa or Kaemb of the Mundika tribe) declared that when he drank this water it made his heart open up and feel at peace, conveying a sense of cosmic ease as well as potency.

It is moving water that is thought to have powers of purifying and of washing away sources of sickness. A striking feature of Hagen spells in general is their geographical reference, as just illustrated with the *wantep* spell from the *Wöp* cult. Ritual experts (either male or female) who operated in everyday contexts out of cult settings used spells to remove sources of danger to the body. These sources could include, for males, menstrual blood ingested inadvertently with food or through their penises during sexual intercourse. One spell collected in 1964 from the ritual

expert Moka among the Kawelka Kundmbo people at the place Kiltpana dramatically inscribes a westward movement of river waters from the clan territory. The blood that is the source of sickness is sent away in a 'downward' direction from the expert's notional high mountain location:

Down to the Mökö river,

Down to the banks of the Eimbö river,

Down to the junction with the Aninga river,

Down to the junction with the Ruruk river,

Down to the junction with the Ikik river,

Down to the junction with the Kuni river,

Down to the junction with the Pöyö river,

Down to the junction with the Waki river,

Down to the junction with the Oktökin river,

There where the two spirit women

Mak and Piltik stand,

There where the two spirit women

Pakop and Makop stand,

Where the cassowary stands on one leg,

I send it down there,

The cassowary kicks it, and

It tumbles away, it closes up, and

There it stays.

Note: The spirit women's names can be parsed as follows. Mak = a hook (so she could be called Catcher); Piltik = a kick (so she could be Kicker); Pakop = covering (= Closer) and Makop = binding (= Binder). 'The cassowary' is a synonym for 'wild spirit'. It has a powerful kick, useful for getting rid of undesirable elements, such as dangerous blood that is 'out of place.'

Quite striking in this spell is that its verbal 'reach' extends to the Tekin river in the Ok area (*Oktökin* in the spell text) which lies away to the west far beyond any practical knowledge or experience of the expert, but is encapsulated in the knowledge structure of the spell itself, a map of the movement of waters seen as a cosmic flow. Striking also is the fact that the powerful spirits at the edge of the spell's envisioned cosmos are females, identified with the boundary-marking wild creature, the cassowary bird.

## **Duna**

In the Duna area in the Southern Highlands Province a category of Female Spirit, *Payame Ima*, brings special knowledge to men. The *Payame Ima* is associated with pools of water, rivers, and rain and thunder. She is a transformer figure who in folklore is described as being able to turn into a variety of creatures. One story tells of how she is captured against her will by a human man who takes her as his wife. She agrees to live with him on condition that he should never refer to her extra-human origins. The man lives with her and they have several children together but one day he becomes angry with her and in the heat of the moment refers to her 'wild' origins. This enrages her and she flees back to the place where she had originally come from, the high mountain forest, taking their children with her. When the husband pursues her into the forest she escapes him by turning into a wild nut pandanus tree.

The nut pandanus tree grows in the high cool forest areas where the *Payame Ima* is thought to exist within lakes. She is believed to give curing and healing powers to chosen people, as well as the knowledge of how to contact the dead and the souls of the sick. Spells derived from her reflect the place names associated with water, the earth, and the forest pandanus nut tree. An example from a Bogaia (neighboring area to the Duna) woman (given by her son K.) follows:

Mother place, water place, Payeku,

The Wape stream,

The Urape stream . . .

The place Urane where pigs root,

Light shines on the ground,

The sick will be healed.

Pandanus nuts take . . .

Mother place, water place, Payeku.

Now the dry season must come

And all have died

But these ones must live.

Ura hill,

Wape hill. (A. Strathern 1996:133)

The association of the Female Spirit with water is continued in the following narrative which tells of how the Female Spirit came to one Duna man and how she tragically died when she returned to the water that marks one of her other transformative states of being (A. Strathern and P.J. Stewart 1999a):

"A woman came to Kanepa . . . saying that she wanted to be with him and to be his wife. Her name was *Hoyape Ima* [a variant form of *Payame Ima*]. She gave Kanepa the power to divine for witches by presenting him with a divination stick (*ndele rowa*). With the stick held in his hand he could determine the house in which a person responsible for the death of a member of the community lived. . . She also taught Kanepa how to decorate the boys in the growth hut (*palena anda*). [This was a practice in which boys spent ritual time in isolation from the married women and men of the community and underwent a number of rituals in order to mature in preparation for adult life which included marriage and warfare in the past]"

"His [Kanepa's] spirit wife died in the Nale river when she was crossing it and fell in after hitting herself against an overhanging tree branch. Her sister Tiwako went to look for her body and collected it. Kanepa had also gone along and they cried and cried. Kanepa couldn't sit down properly, he just cried and cried and the other men felt sorry and cried too. . ." [Narrative of M., 1991]

As mentioned here, the *Payame Ima* gave to humans a means to detect witches. Those who are most often accused of being witches are women and even in the community today, in which most of the traditional ritual practices have been abandoned for Christianity, witches are still thought to be the cause of various forms of sickness, misfortune, and death (P.J. Stewart and A. Strathern 1997, 1999b). Interestingly, one of the places where witches are thought to conceal their activities is under pools of water that are mythically associated with a variety of spirit beings including the *tsiri*, a male spirit who sometimes seizes human victims but in myth is said to have given back to humans both pigs and cowries from its watery home (see below).

A narrative from 1996 describes how a ritual expert used the divination stick (*ndele rowa*) to detect where witches had taken the bodies of those that they killed in order to eat their flesh (A. Strathern and P.J. Stewart 1999b:70-92):

"We all [the ritual expert and a group of community leaders] walked on in the direction indicated by the *ndele rowa* until we got to the Alu lake. It was revealed to the diviner that at the time the witches killed A. and O. [two local young men who died in a bush fire] they took the victims' bodies into the water of this lake. We people are afraid of this water and don't swim in it but this diviner went into the water and discovered underneath the surface stones that had been used to build an earth oven to cook the two victims and bones of the victims. He even found vegetable greens that had been used as side-dishes to the human meat meal. He brought these things out of the Alu lake and showed them to us as proof." [Narrative of W., 1998]

The origin story of the Alu lake is as follows:

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"There was a mountain cave where flying foxes [fruit-bats] lived. Two Aluni [a village in the Duna area] men went up to this cave to hunt the flying foxes there. The two men got to the cave and they sat down on a stone. One man told the other, 'Sit carefully there is some dust there where you are seated' [this may refer to ashes which are sometimes thrown in the faces of people by tsiri spirit beings as a challenge]. This man then went inside of the cave and found a pool of water there. He fell into this water and died. The water ate him and carried his head down to the place of the Alu lake where it came up. Another course of the water went into the river Bokolia. This water carried the jaw bone of the dead man. The jaw bone was caught on a piece of wood in the river and it traveled to another pool of water called Bolesara. Likewise, the skull of the dead man was caught on a branch where the Alu lake came into being.

"One day a man told his wife and child to sit down near to Alu lake while he went up into the forest to hunt marsupials. The woman and child stayed near the lake on a rock. Then they heard a big noise. The lake flooded and they climbed up a black-palm tree to escape from the water. They sat on a branch until the husband returned. But when the daughter cried out, 'Father, I'm here', the water swelled up and took both the daughter and her mother. The man had brought back from his hunting much marsupial, cassowary, and pig meat. He cast these aside and began to dig a drainage channel. He worked until nighttime. Then he stood by and waited. In the morning he saw at the drainage area he had constructed that cowrie shells were laid out [a form of wealth object used in the area before the colonial introduction of coin and paper money in the 1960s] and pigs [another form of wealth] were tied up. So he took these. This was in the time of Buli Rete Rete (ancestral time).

"In those days then if some one wanted a pig they submerged a stick (made of black-palm) into the water and pigs would come up. Once Buli Rete Rete went to sacrifice a pig as an offering at the pool-side and he took a stick to put into the water but a man from Haiyuwi [an enemy village] came along. A white pig had been killed for the sacrifice and the heads of pigs were just beginning to emerge from the lake but when the Haiyuwi man spied on this activity the pigs went back into the water.

"The pigs and cowrie shells that had appeared were from the tsiri (spirit being)

who had taken the human woman to be his wife and he was giving these items as brideprice to the humans" (Narrative collected from M. in 1991 and translated in 1999).

In the beginning of this narrative we see how watercourses are thought to be connected throughout the landscape of the region by underground channels. These connections are arenas through which flows of spirit power move as well as wealth items. The actual landscape is full of limestone sinkholes and fissures and water does flow both underground and above ground through it, creating an aura of both mystery and hidden connection.

Some of the other beneficial powers of water are expressed in the spells that were sung by experts as chants to the boys when they were in seclusion in the *palena anda*. These spells were intended to enhance the ritual actions of the boys during their time in the *palena anda* so as to make them grow properly into handsome, mature men. One of the signs of maturity was a fine and well grown hairdo.

A few examples of these follow (A. Strathern and P. J. Stewart 1999a).

Spell 1: [The expert, a ritual bachelor like Kanepa described above, is combing out boys' hair, applying water, pig-fat, and vines to reinforce it.]

He teases out the long hair

Like a cloud, he anoints it with fat and water drops

Whistling and singing

Whistling and singing of kidney fat

Whistling and singing at ease

He combs the hair at ease

He applies pig-fat at ease

Combs it with a bamboo comb

The comb is sharp

He combs the hair at ease

Looking for the hair, he prods and prods

He says 'I will get the hair [and pull it out]

With the sharp comb.

I make the *malu* wig, I make it with water.

I make it with water and a vine from the forest

I make the *peipa* wig with water and a vine

I make the *alupa* wig with water and a vine

Now morning comes

Morning comes and I sprinkle water on the hair

I sprinkle water with a red cordyline leaf

Give me this in the morning

Give me this at dawn.'

Spell 2: [Rubbing hair with pig-fat and sprinkling it with water]

Rub the pig fat

Rub the pig fat

Rub the pig fat

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At the place *Himi Sanda* rub it

At the place *Wani* rub it

Pull it and rub it

Rub the pig fat

Come, come! [to the hair]

Be straight! Rub it with fat

Rub it with fat.

The *Payame Ima* does it this way,

Take it and pull at it now!

Hold it and pull

Hold it and pull

Tip water from the bamboo on the hair

Tip it up

Pull the hair

Pull the hair

Pull it now,

This is the *Kombe Kombe* spell.

[The expert says he is following the *Payame Ima*'s (Female Spirit's) directions on how to tease out the boys' hair as she does herself.]

Spell 3: [Invoking clouds and water to make the hair damp and large]

Fair weather clouds come,

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They come to Alungi.

Misty clouds come,

Mist comes to Etarene hill

To Apetarene hill

To Lungirane hill

To Alungirane hill

At either side water falls down

At either side water falls down

At Apolene water falls down

At Alupeine water falls down

At Peine water falls down

-

Spell 4: [The boys are exhorted to drink water as parakeets do]

Red parrakeet

Water, water drink

Red parrakeet

Water, water drink

Green parrakeet

Water, water drink

Red parakeet

Water, water drink

Red and green parakeet

Water, water drink

...

Sit in the house and drink

Water, water drink

Sit in the house and drink

Water, water, drink

Spell 5: [An exhortation to drink water (and grow)]

Red parrot, *kele*,

Give water

Red parrot, *ekele*,

Give water

Red parrot, *yama*,

Give water

Red parrot, *ekele*,

Give water

Parakeet, *kiliangoso*,

Give water

Parakeet, *kiliangolo*,

Give water . . .

Tip water in your mouth and drink . . .

(Strathern and Stewart 1999a: 85-87)

These spells are no longer used because the *palena nane* (boy's growth cult) as well as most of the other ritual complexes of the past are no longer practiced. These changes were prompted when Christianity came into the Duna area in the 1960s. Apera, an old expert, sang the spells on request during fieldwork at Hagu in 1994. The spells record many local names, encoding significant places that stand out on the huge slopes of the Muller mountain range around Hagu and remarking on the parakeets that flash in brilliant sudden displays of color from one locality to another, instantaneously linking the places together. But it is water that is the fundamental symbol and cause of fertility and growth, water that drives the cosmos in Apera's songs.

In the past a number of rituals (*rindi kiniya*) were enacted at cyclical intervals to ensure the fertility of the earth and to ensure that enough water was available so that crops would grow well (A. Strathern and P. J. Stewart 1997, 1998). Often drought conditions would stimulate the people to perform these rituals. A serious drought in 1997 produced in conjunction with El Nino climatic shifts prompted the people of Hagu village to conduct a pig-kill sacrifice that took place in association with a prayer vigil held in the local Baptist church. The people thus turned to Christian rituals in replacement of their old rituals of renewal. Given the power of water as a symbolic element in the quest for fertility, it is easy to understand how the Baptist church, with its policy of full immersion at baptism, could have tapped into a deep well of meaning among the Duna. At Hagu the people had constructed a special area as their baptismal pool near to the church and they carefully pointed it out to us. Water was still at the center of their lives.

Recently the Duna people have had to interact with companies that operate gold mines or oil drilling operations near to their land. One aspect of interacting with companies that has arisen in the Aluni Valley amongst the Duna people is that in negotiating issues of water and land use payments by landowners it is in the interest of the younger people as well as the older people to know their 'traditional' origin stories (*malu*) which include the mythical origins of a particular clan group and the group's movements through the landscape (see P.J. Stewart and A. Strathern 2002 for an in-depth discussion of this). These *malu* record the sacred places of the clans which include water pools where beneficent and/or malicious spirits live who are said to sustain the environment; limestone caves, in which hunting magic was made and ancestral bones were placed; and specific trees that demarcated the routes of the original ancestral beings (Stewart and Strathern 2000).

*Malu* knowledge was recently (in the 1990s) used as a means of determining water use payments mandated by the National government that the Porgera Joint Venture Gold Mining Company gave to landowners in the Strickland River area because of mine tailings deposited in the river. In another instance, the *malu* of several clans also determined the distribution of payments to landowners by an oil company that had been drilling along the Strickland Gorge across from the Egali airstrip in the Aluni Vally. Interestingly, the oil rig was placed on the Oksapmin side of the Strickland River opposite the Duna area but the Duna landowners from several clans trace their *malu* journey under the river itself across to the Oksapmin side. Payments were reported to have been made by the oil company for the use of the land to put in their oil rig and associated buildings but when their oil drill hit a rock core that it was unable to penetrate and the drill shattered the company broke camp and removed its equipment, perhaps to return at some later time period. The local Duna people told us that a lake of oil did actually exist under the Strickland River and that the company would have found this but it had placed its rig in the wrong location. The correct location was said to be on the Duna side of the Strickland River, not the Oksapmin side. We were told that a Duna boy of the Yangone clan had been stung by a bee near to the rig site and that a spirit female, *Payame Ima*, [in some versions two of these women worked together] took the boy down deep into the earth where he saw a city in which everything was constructed out of money. A very large man was said to be seated there. The story continued that, "The man had gaping holes in his body and called out to the boy to help him in exchange for some goods. The boy took an iron pipe given to him by the giant man, *tindi auwene* ('ground owning spirit'), and began hitting the oil rig's drill bit which was approaching the heart of the *tindi auwene*. Eventually after the boy had been hitting the drill bit repeatedly it broke and was thus unable to pierce *tindi auwene's* chest. Pleased with the work of the boy the spirit man asked what gifts he would like and these were given: these included a large tee-shirt, big enough to fit three or four men simultaneously; several six packs of beer; freezer chickens; and 120 Kina (the Papua New Guinea currency). The boy was told to take his presents and to give 20 Kina of the cash to his mother."

Our Duna informants explained that the holes in *tindi auwene's* body were caused from the mining and drilling ventures which had previously removed parts of his body, which is said to extend outwards under the ground into all parts of Papua New Guinea where there are mines. The reason given for the oil company's failure to drill down to the oil in the Strickland area was that they were positioned over the heart of this earth spirit and would have killed him and thus by extension the vitality, fertility, and wealth of the land of PNG. Given the importance in their *malu* stories of the Strickland River, the people were also concerned that the mining companies were somehow spoiling the river and its water, associated also with the *Payame Ima*.

Companies in PNG are seen as both givers and takers. They provide local benefits and services, but they take wealth from Papua New Guinea's ground. The *tindi auwene* in the Duna *malu* was said to resist this process of wealth removal. In one image he (she, in this image) was said to be like a giant python that lay on top of the oil (or gold, gas, copper) seen as its eggs; and that if the oil were removed, the earth would indeed become 'dry' and its fertility impaired.

### **Conclusion: Water in Place**

'Water in place' has been our theme here, standing in counterpoint to Mary Douglas's well-known formulation that dirt is 'matter out of place' (Douglas 1966). In the ideas and values expressed in the materials from the two Highland areas of Papua New Guinea that we have discussed certain particularities about water have been prominent. First, what is valued is water that moves from a source. Second, such water is also valued because it is pure. Third, it is in fact life-giving and life-preserving, a source of fertility. Finally, it is always imaged as belonging to a particular place, yet also moving through places. References to water in spells map minute spots but also wide-ranging landscapes. The spells configure alterations in scale that nevertheless preserve an essential sense of power and of the origins of power. Water as source is the mark of such origins in specific places, and as river it is the mark of the movement of power through places. Both ideas are conveyed in the phrase 'water in place'.

In ethnographic terms we have highlighted the significance of water here because doing so may give pointers to other writings on cult themes in the Highlands and elsewhere. Alfred Gell, for example, records that in the first phase of the rites for the Ida fertility performance among the Umeda of West Sepik Province in Papua New Guinea the men who will make masks for the dancing retire into a *prob* or ritual enclosure in the secondary bush. Females cannot enter the *prob*. Here the men begin by planting perfume plants such as ginger, and Gell remarks that this suggests a symbolic fertilization of the site in a mimesis of copulation. The term *prob* means 'a spring, water source', and the men also make a fence, with a small opening, around the area, calling this the *popaw* or 'dam' (Gell 1975:173). While an actual spring does not seem to have been involved here, the imagery of spring water linked to fertility and the act of holding it in during a stage of preparation or potentiality appears to partake of the same pattern logic of signs involved in the Hagen Wöp practices. Commentators on Gell's work (Juillerat 1990) have expended immense ingenuity on reanalyzing the complex tropes that may underly the Ida rituals he first depicted. The aspect of water, however, tends not to figure in these reanalyzes. We suggest it might be worthwhile to pay more attention to it. 'Place' has also quite recently come to attract a good deal of interest as a category in anthropological analyses of senses of identity (e.g. Casey 1993, Feld and Basso 1996). Place evokes land, but land and water are intimately tied together as landscape, as our Hagen and Duna spells show.

The observations we have made here are further pertinent to the overall background of spells formerly used in Highlands areas of Papua New Guinea to deal with both bodily sickness and

environmental perturbations, which can most profitably be seen as linked to wider indigenous concepts of the cosmos. "Our present selection of data has been designed to show the pervasive importance of ideas about water in these contexts and in particular the significance of notions about forest pools, rivers, and the landscape at large. In Hagen, as "magical spells" are referred to by the same linguistic term as "sacred invocations" in cult contexts. This term is *mön*. "Ritual experts" were experts in *mön*, which were used both to deal with sicknesses and as invocations in cult contexts. *Mön* is therefore a category that relates equally to contexts of great practicality associated with problems of sickness and crop failure and to contexts of the sacred invocation of spirit powers. There is no incompatibility here between analyses that discuss symbolism and the cosmic realm and those that discuss experience and the world of practice. The forms of indigenous knowledge encapsulated in spells can thus be seen in both pragmatic and expressive terms. Calling on elements of the natural environment in spells therefore automatically involves an appeal to the cosmos in some larger, if implicit, sense.

In the case of the hunting spells meticulously discussed by Sillitoe in his paper (this issue of *Journal of Ritual Studies*), the realm of activity involved appears to be predominantly male, and the venue is the forest and its creatures, which as Sillitoe points out are cautious and not necessarily easy to catch. The spells create mimetic images of how the animal should move into the trap and how the trap's components should function. The whole cosmic realm itself therefore is one in which men's skills are tested and their "strength", including their mental acuity, is put to the test. The same was true in the past with Hagen hunting practices, which therefore formed an experiential domain that ritual experts further drew on in order to create powerful images to deal with sickness in contexts 'outside of' the forest. In this sense, Hagen spells did in fact draw on a "male" domain of imagery for their own further metaphorical purposes. However, this does not mean in any way that a nature/culture dichotomy was implied. The dichotomy was rather one between the wild and the cultivated domains. In a broader set of senses, each of these domains is in fact associated with aspects of both male and female powers. The Female Spirit, for example, has the forest and its water sources as her primary domain. Male agency is associated with ceremonial grounds in cultivated areas. Both females and males are associated with the dancing for festivals that takes place on these ceremonial grounds. These remarks may help to recontextualize the earlier analysis that has previously been published on this topic. Our main point here is that while analytical views of symbolic classifications in these societies have moved on since the 1960s, the interconnections between the expressive and pragmatic realms of experience are still seen to be important.

As we have also pointed out above in relation to a Hagen spell by the ritual expert Moka, spells encapsulate a wider view of the landscape as a region of forces. Rivers and mountains are important as significant elements of this regional landscape. In one of the spells Sillitoe cites, which he says came from neighboring Huli speakers of the Wola, a mountain name is given as Kiliyaely. In the same spell text Kiliyaway is given as the name of Mt. Giluwe, a notable peak near the divide between the Western and Southern Highlands Provinces. The /Kili/ part of Kiliyaely therefore seems to refer to Mt. Giluwe. In the mythology of this part of the Highlands the mountains Giluwe and Ialibu are paired together as two significant sources of ancestral strength. The mountains are thought to have agency and sometimes to act in concert. The /yaely/ part of the expression in the spell therefore probably refers to Mt. Ialibu. The pairing of the two mountains is known to speakers of the Hagen Melpa language; indeed the two peaks loom visibly to the south and south-west of Mt. Hagen township on clear days. It is less likely that this knowledge would be held in earlier times by Huli speakers far west of Hagen; so that the encapsulation of the term in the Wola spell may record the historical passage of spell symbolism itself, without the immediate experiential background that generated it. The appeal of the image, however, lies in a regional convergence of expressive ideas about mountains in landscapes.

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Adventitiously, the spell also refers to /kiliy/ in another sense, referring to the lorikeet or parakeet, a bird that features importantly in Duna myth and narrative as associated with the *Payame Ima*, the Female Spirit, there. As Sillitoe notes, the Wola also associate a female sky spirit with the origin myth of cassowaries, and he concludes that the idea of getting this spirit's assistance in catching cassowaries "might plausibly enter the minds of some men". The notion that game animals and birds belong to the sky people, especially the female spirit, is widespread in Hagen also. Pursuing his discussion within the framework of indigenous knowledge studies, Sillitoe foregrounds the experience and skills of the hunters and how spells reflect these skills, or mimetically recreate them. Attention to aspects of the spells as texts also, however, reveals a narrative about the symbolic worlds drawn upon by the ritual experts who created these spells and passed them on to others, both within and across language boundaries. People's respect for animals is in fact based both on their appreciation of the animal's own nimble senses and on the ritualized attitude towards them as creatures belonging to the domain of the spirits.

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### **Biographical Sketch**

Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern are a husband and wife team working primarily in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea and the Lowlands of Scotland. Their most recent books are *The Python's Back: Pathways of Comparison between Indonesia and Melanesia* (Strathern and Stewart, 2000, Bergin and Garvey Press), *Humors and Substances: Ideas of the Body in New Guinea* (Stewart and Strathern, 2001, Bergin and Garvey Press), *Stories, Strength, and Self-Narration: Western Highlands, Papua New Guinea* (Strathern and Stewart, 2000, Crawford House Publishing), *Minorities and Memories: Survivals and Extinctions in Scotland and Western Europe* (Strathern and Stewart, 2001, Carolina Academic Press) and *Re-Making the World* (Stewart and Strathern, 2002, Smithsonian Institution Press).

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