A COLLAGE OF CULTS

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During recent years, research in the western Highlands of New Guinea has yielded a wealth of new information on circulating cults of the pre-contact era. The result has been a maze of ritual tracks left by wandering women, snakes, or pigs extending from the Mountain Ok to the Melpa and beyond (Poole 1994, Strathern 1994). These tracks are tantalising for the partial correspondence of the cults they link (see Clark this issue), but frustrating for their inconsistencies. It is as if the ritual landscape had been cut into pieces and repasted into a collage, with pieces off-centre, inverted, or missing. During the first few years of our research in Enga history, we strove to find ever more pieces and to put them in place, but with little success. After some time, we realised that the collage effect which emerged was not the product of information lost or distorted, as we had initially thought, but of active historical processes — the import and export of cults in their entirety, or in part, into the existing ritual repertoire where they were altered experimentally to meet ideological, political, social, and economic ends.

In this paper we will try to reconstruct the formation of one ritual collage which developed in association with the tea ceremonial exchange cycle of Enga.1 Our source will be information contained in Enga historical traditions of the past 250-400 years, beginning around the time of the introduction of the sweet potato. Current theory attributes the substantial changes which took place after the arrival of the sweet potato to escalation of production resulting from competition among pig producers for limited goods and benefits (Watson 1965, 1977) or ‘a new and more economic version of social control and social order’ permitted by intensified pig production (Modjeska 1982:55-7). Here we will argue that such economic ends could not have been realised by the manipulation of wealth alone. In a transegalitarian society like Enga more complex groundwork was necessary to change the rules of the game so that competition could unfold and production accelerate. To wit, Enga leaders had to set new parameters governing competition and devise new ways of dealing with the contradictions generated by competition in the rapidly growing economy. These tasks were, in part, accomplished through the manipulation of ritual.

Canberra Anthropology 22(1) 1999:34-65
ENGA HISTORICAL TRADITIONS

The Enga are a Highland horticultural population numbering approximately 220,000 today. As the largest single language group in Papua New Guinea, they have been the subject of several major ethnographic studies (Bulmer 1965; Meggitt 1958, 1965a, 1965b, 1974, 1977; Feil 1984; Lacey 1975; Wohlt 1978; Talyaga 1982; Waddell 1972) and numerous investigations of more specific focus. The works of Brennan (1977), Gibbs (1975, 1978), Lacey (1975) and Meggitt (1965b) provide good descriptions of Enga cults and cosmology. However, with the exception of some preliminary steps made by Lacey (1975), they do not place the cults in the social, economic, and political context from which they vanished shortly after contact in the 1930s. To understand these, we must turn to history.

Fortunately, the Enga have a rich body of historical traditions, atome piti, which make it possible to recover aspects of social, economic, and ritual life over the past 250-400 years, a period which is beyond the reach of the ethnographic record and difficult to access archaeologically. Each tribe (phratry)² and clan of Enga has its own historical traditions, said to have originated in eyewitness accounts, that have been passed on in men’s houses over generations (Lacey 1975; Wiessner and Tumu 1998). They contain information on such matters as: tribal ‘origins’ some 300 years ago, tribal founders, former areas of residence and past lifestyle, relations with neighbouring groups, wars and migrations, the origin and diffusion of cults, trade, ceremonial exchange, agricultural techniques, environmental failure, and developments in song and dress. In other words, they cover events that men thought would be of significance to future generations.

All clan histories include a genealogy that links each member to the tribal founder by patrilineal descent (or through marriage and adoption when applicable) and provides a framework within which to date or sequence events. This can be subdivided into two parts: (1) the founding generations which include the non-human ancestors, tribal, and clan founders who constitute the model for corporate group structure, and (2) a genealogy extending from the generation of sub-clan founders until present that appears to record actual people and events. Events in the founding generations (ca. 250-400 BP) can neither be dated nor sequenced. Those from the generation of sub-clan founders (usually six to eight generations BP) until approximately the fourth generation BP can be sequenced by genealogy. From the fourth generation
(ca. 1885) on, events can be roughly dated in relation to known occurrences, for example, severe frosts or time of first contact with Europeans.

The material presented here is drawn from historical traditions of over 100 tribes that we collected between 1985 and 1995 from several different elders in each tribe. Working on such a broad scale allowed us to look for internal consistency, to check narratives at both ends, and to evaluate specific traditions within a regional perspective. Through the course of our research we found that Enga historical traditions exhibited a high degree of consistency and strong regional trends. Comparison of relations described in past historical traditions with more recent politics indicated that history was not rewritten to justify present relations — ‘brother’ groups in the past were often bitter enemies today and vice versa. Rather, new traditions were included as additional chapters, allowing people to draw selectively from the broad array of relations recorded throughout their history to justify current actions. The most pronounced and frustrating bias was loss of information over time.

STARTING POINTS

Enga historical traditions begin around the time of the introduction of the sweet potato and the ‘time of darkness’ following the eruption of a volcano off the coast of Madang. The latter event has been dated by Blong (1982) to the mid-seventeenth century. For these early generations oral traditions give the following picture: the major valleys of central Enga were inhabited by a sparse population which we have estimated to number between 10,000 and 20,000 people. Marked differences in subsistence base, organisation, and ritual existed between different dialect groups: the Layapo-Saka Enga of the east, the Mai-Yandapo of the centre, Tayato of the west and Atone-Katinja of Kandep. In eastern Enga (1500–1900m above sea level), sedentary horticulturalists cultivated taro, yams, and other crops on the flat terraces of the valley floors, reserving the mid-slopes for pig forage, and the high forest for hunting and gathering. For areas of central Enga where people lived at altitudes between 1900m and 2100m and had access to fertile agricultural land on the valley floors, roughly equal emphasis was placed on gardening, hunting, and gathering. The situation in western Enga was somewhat different. Here in the high country (above approximately 2100m) mobile groups, who depended heavily on hunting and gathering, lived. They were attributed with great physical strength and the possession of powerful ritual and magic. Shifting horticulturalists, who subsisted on taro and other garden products,
supplemented by game meat and pork, inhabited the steep, narrow valleys below. Myths and early historical narratives depict culturally recognised distinctions between ‘horticulturalists’ and ‘hunters’ accompanied by ambiguous relationships of tension and misunderstanding, on the one hand, and marriage and exchange on the other.

Two axes of kinship embedded each person in a network of supportive relationships. Inherited clan membership furnished a pool of people who cooperated in agricultural enterprises, defence of land, procurement of spouses, and appeasement of the ancestors. Clan membership was ideally patrilineal and patrilocal, though in practice new members were frequently recruited through affinal ties. A second axis of kinship was established by exogamous marriage and maintained by exchange. It provided the only significant path to resources and assistance outside the clan; successful manipulation of affinal relationships was the key to furthering the prosperity of the family.

Tribal structure was more weakly developed in mobile groups of the west than amongst the sedentary horticulturalists of the east. Leaders in all areas are said to have wielded much less power than in later generations, nonetheless, big-men (kamongo) are mentioned in early historical traditions in the context of warfare, hunting, and above all, organising the trade. A strong ethic of potential equality prevailed within the sexes, but not between them. Beliefs concerning menstrual ‘pollution’ and dangers of sexual intercourse, rigid in western Enga and relaxed in eastern Enga, were prevalent from the beginning of the time span considered, barring women from taking part in public political events and religious ritual. Warfare was endemic, drawing allies from outside the group. Initially warfare succeeded in solving problems by spacing groups. However, as the land filled and dispersal became more difficult, war reparations were extended to enemies so that clans could make peace and stay put after fighting.

Historical traditions make it clear that the large networks of ceremonial exchange found in Enga at first contact developed over approximately the past seven generations and flourished within the last four. Prior to the sweet potato and shortly after its introduction, the largest exchange events were said to be funeral feasts provisioned with marsupials and pork, or war reparations to allies composed of the spoils of war, including land, and food for feasting. Pigs receive little attention in early historical traditions, however, a surplus economy thrived in the trade of non-agricultural products: axe stone, salt, black palm wood, strings of bark fibre and foodstuffs, plumes, shells, cosmetic oil, and so
on. Trade paths on which these goods and valuables circulated crisscrossed Enga, drawing people to the centre where the renowned salt springs were located. At the heart of the network was a well-developed salt-axe-stone trade alliance extending from Tambul in the Western Highlands to the Saka valley and on into the Lai valley. From the early generations, historical traditions describe Enga society as extremely open — one of long-distance travellers, traders, importers, exporters, innovators, and experimenters travelling on the paths laid down by marriage ties — by contrast to the more closed societies of the Eastern Highlands of Papua New Guinea (see Godder 1991).

THE COSMOLOGY AND CULTS IN THE EARLY GENERATIONS

Two sets of supernatural beings were at the centre of the Enga spiritual world: the immortal sky people (yalyakali), who dominated Enga cosmology but were not linked to specific clans or tribes; and their mortal descendants the ancestors (yumbange), who were considered to be more directly responsible for the welfare of their own living descendants. Aitawe, symbolised by the sun, with the help of the female moon, created the sky people (yalyakali) who were believed to live a life similar to that of Enga on earth but in a richer and more perfect sky world (Brennan 1977; Meggitt 1965b). Enga find it difficult to articulate the role of the sky people, though it is felt that they were the protectors of humans who conformed to certain morals, though little could be done to directly influence their decisions. Sky people were thought to be present in the Yalyu and Gote rites of divination; specific sky women were believed to assist in the growth and maturation of young men during bachelors’ cults and the mote initiation of the kepele cult. By contrast, the spirits of the ancestors, composed of all deceased male (and perhaps female) tribe members, were thought to be able to directly influence the fertility of soil, pigs, and humans. Whether the ancestors exhibited good or bad will towards their descendants depended primarily on the performance of cults to communicate with them.

In eastern Enga, the only major pre-sweet-potato ancestral cult described for the early generations was the yainanda (Wiessner and Tumu 1998). For the yainanda, clansmen assembled, hunted marsupials, killed a few pigs, steamed the food, conducted sacred rites, and feasted together with invited relatives from other clans. The sacred component involving the ceremonial feeding of ancestral stones and their burial at the centre of clan territory was a
matter for clan elders only. Other issues of concern, such as sickness, were dealt with by personal healing rituals conducted by ritual experts.

The sphere of yainanda cults came to an end in the high country that separates the Lai and Lagaip valleys. To the west, ritual is oriented more towards the Huli and Ipili. Prior to the seventh generation, the only rituals held at the clan or sub-clan level that crossed this boundary were those for the sky people. Environmental problems of western regions were addressed in family-based rituals held to improve hunting, pandanus, and gardens. A precursor of the kepele ancestral cult, which will be discussed later, was performed by groups of the high country south of the Lagaip to assemble tribes for male initiation. The cult most commonly practised by entire clans, the kaima, was not primarily aimed at promoting fertility but at warding off sickness, particularly leprosy. It was a composite cult incorporating overlaid systems of belief — its rites and spells were directed to various inhabitants of the spirit world: the kaima spirit, the sun and sky people, and the spirits of the ancestors.

The principal cults of eastern and western Enga thus differed considerably: the yainanda was a festive, positive, and open cult and was held to communicate with the ancestors and thereby secure balance, harmony, and fertility. The kaima combined rites for the kaima spirit, sky people, and sun with propitiation of the ancestors, offering sacrifices of pork to pools of water in place of another human victim. The yainanda rites for ancestral stones fixed clans to a central location, while the kaima pools were believed to follow mobile groups to their new locations. The yainanda was male-oriented, while the kaima incorporated male and female components. Primary ritual foods of the yainanda and kaima varied inversely with subsistence base, marsupials being essential for the yainanda and pigs for the kaima. Finally, the kaima required ritual experts while the yainanda could be conducted by elders. Beyond common belief that the spiritual world could affect the fate of humans and the fact both were communal responses to pressing problems, each was moulded by different histories, cosmologies, and systems of production.

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE SWEET POTATO

Enga historical traditions attribute the introduction of the sweet potato to two women who made their way up from the Sepik into the Nete area, where they met an Enga hunter and eventually moved to his place near Walya. There they planted the sweet potato vines they had brought with them, and when the vines had multiplied, they held a distribution, handing vines out to people from far
and wide. This event was commemorated in a ritual called 'the bridge of the sweet potato vines' held by groups in the Lagaip and upper Lai in association with the kepele cult. Because the new crop arrived in the 'founding generations', we cannot pinpoint a date for its introduction though this was certainly no later than 250 and probably not before 400 years ago. The initial acceptance and use of the new crop depended on the conditions of each region — it was rapid in the west and gradual in the east (Wiessner and Tumu 1998).

The impact of the sweet potato, as described in historical traditions, came in two waves. The first involved population shifts and migrations as people sought to take advantage of the riches opened. These, in turn, disrupted relations to land, resources, and surrounding groups, posing new problems. Solutions varied: some were militant, solving new problems by an old formula, that is, aggressively spacing and displacing unwanted neighbours. Others built on pre-existing institutions of ritual and exchange to channel, divert, or contain conflict and competition. The latter stimulated pig production beginning around the fifth generation BP, and here the sweet potato had its second major impact. It is within the context of problems caused by population shifts and the possibility to produce a surplus through agricultural production to solve problems or reach new goals that the great ceremonial exchange networks of Enga arose and flourished.

THE RISE OF CEREMONIAL EXCHANGE: THE TEE CYCLE

Though the tee cycle was to become the greatest economic institution of Enga (Bus 1951, Meggitt 1972, 1974, Feil 1984; Lacey 1979), it had subtle beginnings. As the story goes, big-men of the Yambatane tribe in the Saka valley devised a new method of finance to provide wealth to expand their networks and thereby maintain regional influence, when their hold on the salt-axe-stone trade was threatened by immigrants from the southeast (Wiessner and Tumu 1998). They concatenated maternal and affinal relationships along trade routes into chains of finance, so that wealth could be received from those who would not be related by ordinary kinship reckoning. Subsequent public distributions of wealth in tee festivals assured all creditors along tee chains that they had received just reciprocation. Skilful manipulation of chains of finance maximised the amount of wealth that arrived at one place at one time; thus the Saka valley, where the tee was initiated, became a magnet for wealth. The introduction of this new system of finance and repayment, appropriately called
tee lengo, 'to ask for', is noted not only in the historical traditions of Yambatane, but also in those of neighbouring groups as well.

Over the next two generations the tee cycle is said to have clung to a few clans along the trade routes, from the Saka valley to Tambul, from the Saka valley west to Yanaitini Kia at Tetemanda (central Enga), and from the Saka northwards down the lower Lai (Map 1). While Tambul and Tetemanda were to remain the eastern and western termini of the tee for some four to five generations to come, the northern branch continued to expand into the Kompian region. In these early stages, the tee cycle did not involve more than twenty to forty clans directly on the trade routes. Only a few enterprising men in each clan participated, stepping up pig production to secure the flow of highly valued non-agricultural products.

Around the fifth generation BP, clans of eastern Enga, who were adjacent to clans involved in the tee cycle, saw that this system of finance provided their neighbours with the wealth necessary to pay bridewealth, obligations to maternal kin, and war reparations. They sought to join, realising that otherwise they could not compete with clans involved in the tee for brides and allies in warfare. Historical narratives concerning their first participation in the tee cycle are straightforward records of marriages arranged with those along tee routes through which their major exchanges were phased into tee's flow of wealth. And so the tee cycle grew, though historical narratives mention that early participation was limited to the enterprising in each clan — it was said that most people were just not interested in the work of producing extra pigs for the tee.

THE GREAT CEREMONIAL WARS

While the tee was forming in the east, quite a different network of ceremonial exchange was developing in central Enga: the Great Ceremonial Wars, yanda andake (Wiessner and Tumu 1998). These were spectacular semi-ritualised 'tournament wars' between entire tribes or pairs of tribes fought in repeated episodes over generations to forge alliances, display strength, and carve out spheres of exchange. Their roots lay in the dual nature of Enga warfare: fighting to defeat or space the enemy, followed by exchanges with allies. Where they differed from conventional wars was that much larger forces were mobilised, effort was placed on display rather than defeat, no land could be gained or lost, and the subsequent exchanges took precedence over fighting.
As the Enga say, the Great Wars were ‘planted like a garden’, that is, planned and fought primarily for the harvest from the exchanges that followed.

In the Great Wars, owners of the fight were hosted by intermediary tribes or clans who provided them with food, water, housing, entertainment, and allied warriors. They were organised as follows: individual families in the hosting groups received close and distant relatives in their own houses and provisioned these guests for the duration of the war. Weeks before battle began, warriors gathered to make physical preparations, sing, dance, and brew the fighting spirit. Meanwhile watange, big-men who were chosen as fight leaders, drew up plans for battle and the exchanges to follow.

When both sides had assembled their fighting forces, warriors appeared on the battlefield in full ceremonial dress and a formal beginning was called. By day they fought in front of hundreds or thousands of spectators, while the women sang and danced on the sidelines. By night they ate, drank, talked with their hosts, and courted their daughters. The battles continued for weeks or months until fight leaders decided to hold a closing ceremony, casting their arms into the river. In these ‘fights without anger’, no land could be gained or lost, no damage was inflicted on property, and the men who died were said to have given their lives for a worthy cause. Their deaths were not avenged.

Next, a series of large, festive exchanges was initiated which would continue for two to four years. Essentially, they transformed the close relationships between hosts and hosted that had formed during their weeks or months together into exchange partnerships. First the hosts paid war reparations for allied deaths and then held a feast to mark the end of the war and initiate host payments from the ‘owners of the fight’. At the closing feast pigs were dramatically and ceremoniously presented. The owners of the fight reciprocated with a distribution of raw pork, each man giving to the families that had hosted him. During the months which followed, hosting families gave another round of initiatory gifts which were reciprocated by the hosted in the form of live pigs decorated for the occasion, marsupials, cassowary, goods, and valuables. The courtship parties that had been held by night culminated in numerous post-war marriages, and so new affinal ties were forged.

The Great Wars were fought in repeated episodes held at ten to twenty year intervals from at least the sixth generation BP until the early 1940s, peaking early in this century. The exchange networks and cooperative units they created were vast, linking the Lagaip, Lai, Ambun, and Sau valleys (see Map 1). The most recent Great Wars involved up to 3000 warriors, the exchange of some 6000 to 10,000 pigs, and many trade goods, by contrast to
most smaller wars which drew a couple of hundred warriors and the exchange of 60 to 300 pigs.

**THE MERGING OF THE TEE CYCLE AND THE GREAT WARS**

By all accounts, the *tee* cycle and the Great Wars were well independent of one another in their initial stages, each geared to different political landscapes. The Great Wars were the larger and more prominent of the two. Though in earlier episodes marsupials were an important component of the exchanges, as their popularity grew, only pigs could be produced in quantities large enough to fuel the exchanges. And so by the fourth generation (around the turn of the century), the Great Wars put heavy demands on pig production. Powerful big-men and war leaders in three tribes of central Enga who participated in both the Great Wars and the *tee* cycle sought new pathways through which to finance the Great Wars and to invest the wealth that flowed out of them. Historical traditions tell of how big-men from these tribes travelled to eastern Enga and campaigned to lengthen *tee* chains and time the wealth distributions to fit the needs of the Great Wars. They succeeded, and gradually east and west were drawn together in one exchange network: the exchanges of the Great Wars prospered with finance from the *tee* cycle and the formerly small stream of *tee* was flooded with the wealth that flowed out of the Great Wars. Big-men of eastern Enga who received wealth from the Great Wars began to invest it in pearl shells imported from the south. These valuables, unlike pigs, had great potential for the consolidation of power because they could not be obtained by everybody, did not require upkeep, and could be kept indefinitely.

The effort involved in coordinating the *tee* and the Great Wars was enormous, for big-men had to travel the length of their *tee* chains and convince those along the way that if they invested, they would be winners. Furthermore, the sheer size of both networks made it difficult to keep the two systems apart. Participants in the Great Wars began to see the benefits of the *tee* cycle — its long chains of finance could bring more wealth into their hands at one time with lower costs than the Great Wars in terms of time invested, manpower assembled, and lives lost. One by one the Great Wars were phased out as the clans involved joined the *tee* cycle, and exchange networks formed by the Great Wars were replaced by routes of the *tee* cycle (Map 1). The last Great War was fought in the late 1930s or early 1940s, just after, but not owing to, first contact.
The result of the merging of the Great Wars with the *nee* cycle was a vast network of over 355 clans, formidable to coordinate, particularly at the western end where many new routes were added. The cycle of the *nee* went as follows: (1) a phase of initiatory gifts that started in the east and moved westwards from clan to clan until it reached the western-most clan in the cycle; followed by (2) a phase of main gifts — pigs, goods, and valuables that moved in the opposite direction; and concluded by (3) large pigs killed and the distribution of cooked pork that retraced the steps of the main gifts, from east to west. The completion of one cycle compelled a subsequent cycle which would send main gifts in the opposite direction.

THE ROLE OF CULTS

The period of some six to seven generations after the introduction of the sweet potato thus saw the development of a ceremonial exchange network involving some 40,000 to 70,000 people, and with it a shift from a subsistence economy with a heavy emphasis on hunting and the trade of non-agricultural products to a surplus economy based on agricultural production. Testimonies from the oral record make it clear that many problems were generated by such rapid growth that could not be solved by ‘a new more economic version of social control and social order’ (Modjeska 1982:55-7). These include: setting new values and parameters to govern competition — for example, who competes with whom in a society where all men are defined as potential equals, over what, how, and with what outcome; achieving integration between different areas so that exchange could flow smoothly; timing and organising vast exchange networks; and, very importantly, mediating the effects of accelerating competition and emerging social inequalities.

It was in seeking solutions to these problems that the Enga leaders turned to import, export, and innovation in ritual life. Here we will concentrate on three of the central cults circulated through Enga within the span of historical traditions — the *sangai* and *sandai* bachelors’ cults; the *kepeleleateee* ancestral cults; and the female spirit cult — and discuss how, in the process of tuning them to meet the needs of ceremonial exchange, the collage of cults seen at first contact was crafted. Further information on cult procedures and history can be found in Wiessner and Tumu 1998: Chapters 7, 8 and 11.

All of these cults were circulating ones, that is to say, they could be purchased and sold. Purchase, whether between allies or enemy, involved the
transfer of wealth in exchange for sacred objects, rites, spells, and services of a ritual expert. This was in keeping with Enga belief that if sacred objects and incantations were given freely, their power would be transmitted to the receiver, but if they were sold, that power would be retained by both parties. Cults were sold following the Enga logic that prosperity comes to those who distribute rather than retain. And this logic was borne out, for the flourish of exchange networks often hinged on the homogeneity of beliefs and values laid down by the cults.

Enga leaders who travelled widely were well aware of ritual developments in other areas, consequently their decisions to initiate the purchase of a specific cult at a certain point in time corresponded to their perception that it could set important new directions to improve individual and clan fortune. The triggering incident for the purchase was usually a dream, vision, or discovery interpreted as a sign from the spirit world. Leaders then discussed the plan with fellow clansmen and assembled wealth for its purchase. When the transaction was complete, the sellers sent ritual experts to preside over initial performances until the buyers gained ritual competence. Thereafter they could alter the cult as they pleased or sell it to other groups. The acceptance of a new cult did not require the discontinuation of former ones — cults were incorporated cumulatively within the ritual repertoire. Imported cults underwent few alterations in some groups and were significantly altered in others. In some instances, imported cults did not catch on in their entirety, rather, desired rites were extracted from them and incorporated into other cults in the repertoire. Upon acquiring ancestral cults, purchasers entered a community without centre or hierarchy which exchanged ritual experts.

It is easy to attribute too much intentionality and planning to the import and export of cults. Motives for import were usually the desire to emulate those who appeared successful in certain aspects of life. Men who achieved goals by manipulating cults were not only those who planned well but experts at after-the-fact tactics — men who could glean credit for successes whether or not these stemmed from their own efforts, who could wrest benefit from unforeseen outcomes, or turn failure to advantage. There was much experimenting in the circulation of cults.

SANGAI BACHELORS' CULTS

Sangai/sandalu bachelors' cults were perhaps the cults closest to the pulse of change, because of their role in shaping the protagonists of upcoming
generations. The actual origin of sangai in Enga remains an enigma, though it is said to be relatively new, and its spread from founding clans in central Enga well documented in oral traditions. Prior to the sangai, small-scale rituals of growth called sauipi and yomondi were held during which boys went to the forest to perform rites for growth and for dream interpretation. Subsequently, sauipi rituals were replaced in most Enga, but not all, clans by more complex performances of bachelors’ cults by young men of a corporate group. Precisely where these began is unclear — our studies revealed only three ‘centres’ with origin myths for bachelors’ cults among the Enga or their immediate neighbours — among the Mai-Yandapo of central Enga, the Ipili of the Porgera valley (Gibbs 1975), and the Huli of the Tari area (Frankel 1986; Goldman 1983). Though these areas are widely separated in space and their inhabitants speak different dialects or languages, bachelors’ cults from all three share similar beliefs, rites, and the following themes in their origin myths: a young bachelor encounters a beautiful sky woman who seduces him, and through her power as a supernatural being transforms him into an attractive, socially competent, mature man. He unintentionally betrays her or does her harm resulting in her death. Upon or after her death, he is instructed to fill a bamboo container (penge) with her blood and/or to pluck the bog iris plant (lepe) from her grave to pass on with the appropriate spells, so that all young men in future generations can be similarly transformed.

Origin myths from central Enga and Porgera (Gibbs 1975) depict the woman as one of the mythical sky people. This detaches the sangai from specific tribal ancestry and issues concerning land, by stark contrast to ancestral cults. Huli oral traditions collected by Frankel (1986:99-100) and Goldman (1983:325-6) also attribute the origin of bachelors’ cults to a spirit woman with supernatural powers, but do not specify her relation to Huli deities or ancestors. What is most puzzling about origin traditions is that we could find no direct links between those of the central Enga and the Ipili, though historical ties in other areas of ritual life are well established and details of bachelors’ cults are remarkably similar in many respects (see Biersack 1999). The Huli attribute the origin of the lepe and penge used in their ibagiya to the Ipili, and in some cases the Laiagam Enga (Chris Ballard, pers. comm., 1991); correspondingly, we found no Enga clan that claims to have received them from the Huli. On the basis of these patterns of distribution and diffusion, it seems most likely that the core idea of the sangai involving a spirit woman who transforms men did not originate in Enga, but came from the south, reaching Yandapo of central Enga and the Ipili independently through
different pathways. What does appear to be an innovation of Enga, however, is the idea of communal bachelors’ cults held in a cult house with seniors presiding. Both the Huli and Duna bachelors’ cults, though similar, are individual apprenticeships. The Huli do indeed have a final group phase in the cult house after a year or more of individual isolation, but they claim that this was imported from Enga.

When the sangai was first practised by the central Enga is also difficult to discern, but since Enga historical traditions trace its diffusion out from a core of clans in central Enga within the past seven generations, it is probably fair to assume it is a post-sweet-potato cult in Enga. The sangai introduced some very new elements to former private rites of growth. The first was the concept of first marriage to a spirit woman from the community of sky people, a bride shared by all young men. Should they remain chaste and thereby faithful to her until they reached maturity, she would transform them — the handsome and the ugly alike — into mature, socially competent men able to withstand the dangers of female ‘pollution’. The concept of transformation was critical, for it meant that leaders could define ‘socially competent’ men according to the needs of time and place. The second was the institution of communal rites in which a cohort of fellow clansmen shared the means of their own transformation. A cult house was built, young men were purified prior to their entrance, and plots of communally owned sacred iris and/or the bamboo containers representing the spirit woman were tended. The welfare of the sacred objects depended on the behaviour of every bachelor — the sexual transgressions on the part of one could lead to the destruction of the sacred objects belonging to all. The third was the institution of a hierarchy based on age and distinguished by dress styles, with those at the top being responsible for the well-being of the sacred objects and spells.

For the early generations, unlike later ones, history is not detailed enough to ascertain precisely why the bachelors’ cults were adopted shortly after the introduction of the sweet potato. It is only possible to make suggestions by linking their origin to certain areas and events. One is that bachelors’ cults appear to have been first practised around the time that clans of central Enga were reorganising to form larger fighting forces prior to and during the post-sweet-potato Ambum valley wars and subsequent Great Wars. Certainly the clans to whom ‘origin’ is attributed are ones who were pivotal in these battles. By placing the young men of a clan firmly in the grips of their elders for education, discipline, and time of first marriage, they could be restrained from causing trouble within alliances and bonded into a unified
fighting force. The second is that the *sangai* began around the time that
groups from the high country were settling lower valleys and the time during
which broader trade alliances were being constructed between east and west.
Both migration and trade depended on successful marriages. Through
prescribing a ‘safe’ road to marriage, the *sangai* may have helped facilitate
and mediate different attitudes regarding relations between the sexes which
varied in rigidity from area to area.

Once established in central Enga, the *sangai* was imported by clans to
the west and southwest. Prosperous clans with strong and handsome men were
identified and the purchase of sacred objects and spells negotiated by leaders.
Chosen bachelors were sent on missions to purchase the sacred objects in
secret and bring them home under the cover of night. Lengthy praise poems
recorded the details of voyages to purchase the sacred objects of another clan
and detailed their subsequent transformation of men. Herein lay the power of
the *sangai* to steer change — leaders could add verses that laid down new
ideals for the transformation of younger clansmen, one which could justify
personal ambitions for themselves and their groups. In many parts of western
Enga which were well outside the sphere of the large exchange networks,
*sangai* poetry concerned primarily physical transformation, though physical
appearance in most Western Highland societies signals social competence and
inner worth as well (see also Biersack 1982; Strathern 1975).14 The *sangai*
poetry of Yomondaka, a remote clan at Karekare in western Enga with
important middlemen in the Enga-fluli trade, cites the effects of the sacred
objects for transforming each body part. It then goes on to call young men
and future traders of clans in central, eastern, and southern Enga to come to
the *sangai*, giving the bachelors a sense that they can belong to a broader
community.

By contrast, the praise poem for the Potealini Anae clan of central Enga,
which was heavily involved in the Great Wars and *tee* cycle portrays heroes as
those competent in self-presentation on ceremonial occasions, energetic in
agricultural production, keen in intellect, and skilled managing wealth in *tee*
exchange (see Wiessner and Tumu 1998: Appendix 9). Interestingly, prowess
in warfare is not mentioned (see also Lacey 1975:199). Other praise poems
from neighbouring clans elaborate on the Enga concept of a wealthy,
influential man as one who not only produces and receives prolifically, but
also gives generously. One verse tells of two men going to a *tee* festival where
the power and teachings of the *sangai* are fulfilled. They receive large
quantities of wealth from a network extending south to Kandep and west to
Porgera, given with 'open heart and sincere words'. They eat their fill, but then return home to distribute what they received to others, without keeping a scrap for themselves. Thus, participation in the sangai conferred potential equality on all young men but also challenged them to compete with others and break with that equality through achievement. Its poetry, adjusted to time and place, defined which achievement would make them 'winners' later in life.

Initially when bachelors had completed sangai rites, the young men returned to men’s houses where they were evaluated by their elders with regard to readiness for marriage. Around the fourth to fifth generation BP, when the Great Wars and the tee cycle were becoming linked in central Enga, two new elements were added. One was the practice of love magic within the cult house, and the other, emergence festivals which transformed a cult of seclusion into one with a public phase. The bachelors left the cult house in a formal parade, proceeded majestically to the ceremonial ground in full ceremonial attire, danced, and presented predictions of political import derived from dreams in song before large crowds. These performances drew spectators from many surrounding clans who wished to evaluate the young men and to glean information from the predictions. The practice of love magic by young men on the night before their emergence wove the issue of future marriage into the cult.

Until approximately the fourth generation BP, the sangai had hardly penetrated eastern Enga though it was imported by a few clans in the Saka valley who where pivotal groups in the salt-axe-stone trade. However, with the addition of love magic and emergence festivals, the opportunity to demonstrate the strength of the upcoming generation, arrange marriages, and assemble a captive audience to plan tee exchanges did not escape big-men of the east. The sangai swept eastwards in the fourth generation, and by the third it had been acquired by all Layapo clans. Layapo men altered the sangai to fit the beliefs and needs of the eastern Enga and renamed it 'sandalu'. Sandalu cult houses were built more elaborately and closer to settlements, the recitation of praise poems for the sacred objects was either omitted or greatly abbreviated. Origin traditions were transmitted rarely, if at all. Marriage to a spirit woman was replaced by concerns with marriage to human women. Emergence sing-sings became closely tied to the planning of the tee cycle, and accordingly, dream interpretation, so very relevant to political events, received great attention. The few clans in the Saka valley who had imported the sangai at an earlier date held both sangai and sandalu bachelors’ cults.
Women were responsible for the final addition to bachelors' cults. Apparently ideas regarding relations between the sexes exported in the *sangai* were antithetical to the relaxed attitudes and more independent stance of Layapo women. And so, when a spontaneous act of female protest took place in the context of the *sandalu*, it grew into tradition. Around 1910 to 1920 two Layapo women, overcome by jealousy, pulled an Itokone man, Tuingi, out of the dance line and fought over him, stripping him of dignity and finery. Tuingi was obliged to marry both. The news spread fast, other Layapo women followed suit, and before long the disruption of emergence festivals by bawdy songs and catfights of women became common practice (*enda akoko nyingi*). Older men tolerated this female competition grudgingly because it drew crowds of unprecedented magnitude. The *enda akoko nyingi* spread rapidly westwards to reach some, but not all, clans in the Lagaip and Porgera valleys between about 1950 and 1970. In its western rebound it yielded unintended benefits of relaxing relations between the sexes just as the economics of eastern and central Enga became inextricably tied to one another.

By the period of contact, *sangai* and *sandalu* bachelors' cults in Enga thus exhibited considerable local variety in name, structure, content, poetic traditions, rites, and goals. This variation was generated by two processes — one was the intent of leaders to guide change in certain directions for the benefit of both individual and clan; the other occurred in the process of fitting a new cult to local cultural context. Had the Great Wars and *tee* cycle not had such an integrative effect, variation may have been much more pronounced.

**THE KEPELE CULT**

While the *sangai* was shaping young men for the future, the *kepele* might be said to be playing the conservative counterpoint. The *sangai* was a relatively new cult that reset goals and unleashed individual ambition. By contrast, the *kepele* was an older, established cult that underwrote more traditional principles — those of equality, group unity, and the application of individual gains to group welfare.

The *kepele* was a pre-sweet-potato cult whose origin tradition lies in mythical time. Most renditions of these origins go as follows: a 'gardener' from the southern part of Kandep comes to the Bipi Lenda in northern Kandep looking for somebody to help him trim the branches from the trees in his garden. In a clearing he encounters a snake man, Molopai (the rainbow python), the founding ancestor of the Bipi tribe. Molopai invites him to stay
for the night, and the gardener wonders where they will stay for there is no house in this strange place. As evening falls, Molopai’s sons return from the forest bearing packages of food — cassowary meat, possums, mushrooms and other wild foods. Then, as if by magic, they form a house, some becoming the rafters, others beams and posts, and still others then thatch on the roof. Molopai reluctantly allows his favourite son to go with the gardener to help him. Molopai’s son moves through the forest with ease, killing far too many marsupials for the gardener to bear. When they arrive at the gardener’s settlement, he skilfully cuts the branches from the trees in the garden. The gardener prepares domestic foods for him, they eat their fill, and go to sleep. Over the following days he discovers that the young man turns into a snake at night. One night he clubs him and tries to steam him in an earth oven. The snake boy escapes and begins his long journey home. At each place where he stops and rests the kepele cult is performed.

The Molopai myth lays down key themes of the kepele. The first is the contribution of the individual to the construction of the whole: Molopai’s sons return from the forest in the evening, singing and bearing parcels of food and assemble a house from their own bodies. Accordingly, when kepele cult houses were built, the clans or sub-clans of a tribe converged singing and dancing on the ritual site, each bearing essential materials for building the cult house and provisioning the feast, each giving something of himself for the completion of the whole that will ‘shelter’ the group. The second pivotal theme is that of transformation and regeneration. Molopai’s son exhibits superhuman energy on the trip with the gardener, transforms himself from human to snake and back to human, escapes the earth oven, binds his wounds, recovers his strength, and journeys on. Through performing the kepele cult, Enga social groups achieved similar regeneration.

As far as we could determine in trying to peel off historical layers of kepele tradition, the original kepele was held by mobile groups of the high country to assemble members and to separate boys from their mothers, and initiate them to secrets of the spirit world. The initiation was called mote. Though the ancestors may have played a role, the initiation was directed at forest life, sky people, and the rainbow python, also a sky-dweller.

After the introduction of the sweet potato, when these groups settled in the lower reaches of their land, oral traditions and accompanying rites were added which involved sharing of pork with the spirits of the ancestors embodied in sacred stones. The kepele then became reoriented towards earth, soil, and fertility. In the Lagai, a tradition of wandering women who turn to
fertility stones was used to explain the post-sweet-potato spread of the kepele and the addition of new rites and beliefs. Its roots lie in the story of the two women who brought the sweet potato from the Sepik, for in five of the six places where the ritual of ‘the bridge of the sweet potato vines’ was held in commemoration of their arrival, the tradition of wandering women turning to fertility stones was used to explain the origin of the kepele (Map 1). The travels of these women did not form a coherent ritual track, though associations between the traditions are clear: the Monaini tribe’s tradition at Mulitaka and Kasapa describes wandering women from the north who settle at Kasapa and turn to fertility stones, but are not directly linked to the women from the Sepik. That of Walini, near Ayaka, tells of two women coming from Kasapa, the mother being seduced by the Walini tribal founder, marrying him and later turning into a sacred fertility stone. The daughter continues to the land of the Sambe tribe near Mamale where a similar event occurs. The Yanaitin and Apulini traditions tell of mother and daughter leaving the Sambe tribe and being seduced by Yanaitin and Apulini men respectively. Unlike other Highland heroines, such as Afek, these women are neither given names nor attributed with supernatural powers until they turn to stone. Other tribes who adopted the kepele fabricated their own origin myths to fit the cult to local place. It is not regarded as inconsistent by the Enga, though it produces an initially confusing ritual landscape to the outsider, that the kepele can have two origin traditions — the overarching Molopai myth in addition to one fitting it to local place.

In the seventh generation, not long after the sacred stones were brought into the kepele, and with them a female component, a powerful representative of the male ancestors was introduced amongst tribes of the Mulitaka region: the yupini, a basketwork image of a man which is undoubtedly of Sepik origin. From Mulitaka it spread widely within the network. This popular figure was mated with the females’ stones, fed repeatedly, and then both were laid to rest to bring fertility to the soil. For the first time east and west shared a central religious orientation: that humans could work together with the ancestors towards prosperity.

By the fourth to fifth generation, many groups had adopted the kepele to form a vast network of ritual and exchange described as a snake with its head in Kandep and tail in Porgera. Though there was considerable variation in structure and content of performances within the network of sixty or more tribes (Map 1), the ‘snake’ of kepele was kept intact by a shared origin myth and beliefs, the initiation of boys in kepele performances of other tribes where
they had close relatives, the circulation of ritual experts, and the widespread attendance of relatives from outside the tribe. Enga kepele ritual experts were also summoned by groups in the Mendi, Huli, Wola and Ipili areas to participate in cults which shared some similarities with the kepele.

The kepele was a cult for all seasons of life in western Enga. The ceremonies for building the cult house pulled together tribes which were highly dispersed, expressed their internal divisions, but reaffirmed their cooperation. Boys were separated from their mothers, initiated to the sacred, and sent on their way to become men. The sacred stones were fed and mated, dialogue with the ancestors resumed, and confidence in the future restored. Social inequalities were masked by the equal participation of men who had to provide one pig per male family member to provision the ceremonies, amongst other contributions. The use of pork for virtually every sacred rite, as well as social feasts, placed high value on the pig and stimulated pig production in an area formerly dependent on hunting for meat supply. The kepele underwrote the two dimensions of Enga kinship by rallying agnatic relatives in rites of cooperation, on the one hand, while including those with a wide range of affinal ties from other tribes to help finance and support the ceremonies on the other. The social activities outside the sacred area allowed for contacts to be renewed, marriages contracted, and trade transacted, thereby lifting spirits and detracting from the monotony of daily life. Finally the kepele had an impact on social harmony: its cooperative and joyous activities broke the vicious cycle of anger and revenge that often characterised Enga warfare.

THE SPREAD OF THE KEPELE TO THE LAI VALLEY: THE AEATEE

Once established in the Laiagam region, the kepele was imported by some groups of central Enga in two waves. The first wave, described as part of the journey of the wandering python, may have occurred before the introduction of the sweet potato. It did not catch on in its entirety, though its origin myth and the rites for building the cult house appear to have been extracted and integrated with the pre-existing yainanda cult.

A second wave of kepele entered Enga in the fifth to sixth generation where it was called by the term that western tribes used to refer to the kepele in song — aeatee. The origin myth is that of wandering women. Early performances of the kepele in central Enga were said to be held on a very
limited scale and might have met the same fate as those in the first wave, were it not for problems arising within the sphere of the Great Wars and the *tee* cycle:

(1) Tribes of central Enga spanning the Great Wars and the *tee* cycle had some clans involved in each. Close cooperation between them was necessary, but at the time they had no ritual to unite the entire tribe.

(2) The *tee* cycle, unlike the Great Wars, was not structured by formal battles that defined sides, rallied people, and brewed a spirit of opposition. It required assertive campaigning to succeed. Given the number of clans involved, communities dispersed over a rugged landscape, complexities of communication, and the conflicting interests of egotistical big-men, this task was formidable.

(3) Social inequalities had become accentuated, causing tensions within clans that could inhibit attempts of big-men to elicit the energy and goodwill of fellow clans and clanspeople required to launch an episode of the Great Wars or phase of the *tee* cycle.

In a sense the *kepele/uacatee* was made-to-order for these problems. It articulated relations of different tribal segments to one another, and could thus be used to coordinate tribes divided between the Great Wars and the *tee* cycle. The large gatherings provided excellent opportunities for communication. As a cult of the west in which conservative egalitarian values were strongly expressed, the *kepele/uacatee* restored a sense of equality among celebrants, giving each family the feeling that they had a hand in determining the future. Finally, the formidable organisational requirements and the display of wealth provided one of the key elements for successfully launching a *tee* cycle — to convince the celebrants themselves that if they cooperated they would be on a winning team and the spectators from the east that western clans were wealthy, well organised, and ready for *tee* exchange.

As the *aeatee* was fitted to the *tee* cycle in two tribes of central Enga, which spanned the *tee* cycle and Great Wars, substantial alterations were made. The *mote*, rites of little meaning to the central Enga, was dropped. Male ancestors were represented by sacred stones, not the basketwork figure. Performances were extended into a six-phase cycle spread out over four to ten years, which revolved around the cooperative building and destruction of the tribal cult house, activities that clarified the relationships of individuals and sub-groups to the whole. The restructuring of the *aeatee* to fit the needs of the Great Wars and the *tee* was ingenious:
Stage 1. Gathering of materials
Each sub-clan was delegated the task of collecting specific logs and building materials for the cult house. These were wrapped in ferns, brought quietly to the building site, deposited, and covered with grass. A small marsupial feast uniting the entire tribe followed.

Stage 2. Preparation of the ceremonial grounds
Some months later a major marsupial hunt was initiated and requests sent out for different kinds of foods to be brought in from all directions. Relatives from other tribes and the tee cycle organisers from Sakn/Layapo clans came to participate in the hunt, bringing contributions for the feast. Just after midnight, segments of the hosting tribe, with blackened faces and bodies, descended to the cult grounds. Hand-in-hand they marched forwards and backwards throughout the night, stamping the ground flat. A line divided the site in half, the respective tribal segments keeping to their sides. At dawn the two groups marched separately back to the ceremonial ground to dance. The event culminated in a marsupial feast. Big-men from the east lingered to discretely plan the tee cycle in the quiet of men’s houses.

Stage 3. Construction of the oeatee house
At daybreak the men of the host tribe gathered by sub-clan to clear the site of debris, insert the perimeter posts representing sub-clans of the tribe, and build the scaffolding for erecting the king-post. The king-post was then fetched from the forest and carried to the ceremonial ground with great fanfare, mounted, and fixed in place while rites of fertility were conducted. When the house was completed, a large pork feast was held — for this occasion each male member of the tribe provided one pig. Big-men talked tee in the shadow of the ceremonies and when the feast was over, men from the east returned home bearing initiatory gifts for the first phase of the tee cycle.

Stage 4. Cleaning of the house site, redecoration of the walls
About one month after the construction of the oeatee house, a marsupial feast was held to clean up the ceremonial area and decorate the house once more. Men representing different tribal segments tossed a marsupial back and forth over the cult house roof in contest, and thereafter buried it alive in a nearby swampy area to bring fertility to the soil. Visitors from the east brought more initiatory gifts home for the tee cycle.
Stage 5. The rites for the sacred ancestral stones
The scaffolding erected to build the cult house was removed, broken into pieces, and the resulting ‘clubs’ distributed to the sub-clans as a symbol that they would kill pigs for the ancestors. Inside the cult house, the sacred ancestral stones were covered in chunks of tord, wrapped in the leaves of food crops, and buried, while a ritual expert chanted the sacred spells. A huge pork feast involving all celebrants and spectators followed. When this stage was over, big-men from the west travelled to the east to campaign for the phase of the main gifts which was to start in the east, for they had demonstrated that they had the wealth and unity to launch the main phase of the tee cycle.

Stage 6. Burning of the aeatee house
About two years later, preparations were made to burn the aeatee house and hold the biggest feast of all, attracting spectators from Tambul, the Saka valley, the Lai valley, Kandep, and the Lagnip. The burning of the house was a competitive event which engaged either young men from different sub-clans, or, in the case of the aeatee at Teteamanda (the western terminus of the tee), rival tribes in the Great Wars. A large pork feast followed, during which all of the pork was distributed and consumed. When the feast was over, the yae phase of the tee was launched — this phase would distribute cooked pork from west to east.

Though the aeatee and tee cycle were not directly intertwined, either ritually or economically, some Enga say that the aeatee made the tee possible. Through the aeatee, rifts within tribes at the western terminus were mended and tensions between clansmen caused by growing social inequalities eased. The goodwill of the ancestors was evoked, as was the spirit of group unity. Before individuals went out to pursue their own economic interests in the tee, celebrants were reminded that their personal successes would not only promote their own names but also provide for the needs of their fellow group members. The various stages of the aeatee, spread out over years, kept the cooperative spirit alive throughout one entire tee cycle and fixed points in time for the different phases of the tee cycle to begin and end.

THE ENDA YAINANDA (FEMALE SPIRIT CULT)
Shortly after the aeatee took hold in tribes at the western terminus of the tee cycle, tee organisers in the east, who had attended the aeatee, felt the need for a comparable event. The kepele was not within their immediate sphere of
interaction and so they turned to rituals developed amongst groups to the
southeast: the female spirit cult. Unlike in the west, where the cooperation of
entire tribes was necessary to coordinate the Great Wars with the tee, in the east,
the female spirit cult was purchased and hosted by single clans who were
central players in the tee cycle (Map 1).

The female spirit cult, *enda yainanda* in Enga and *amb kor* in Melpa,
originated in the Mendi area. It was directed at a mythical "sky woman", who
comes to men as a bride, but remains a virgin with a closed vagina, giving men
protection against menstrual fluids of human females and bringing fertility to
them and their families (see Strathern 1970, 1979; Strauss and Tischner 1990).
The underlying concept of a female spirit who transforms men is similar to
some respects to that of the Enga *sangai* except that the female spirit comes to
married men and not bachelors, is asexual, and brings fertility rather than
transformation into adulthood.

The female spirit cult departed from the *yainanda* ancestral cult of the
area not only in details of ritual procedure, but also in a number of
fundamental respects:

1) Two cult houses were constructed and fenced in — one male and one
female — and adult male celebrants divided into two opposing but
complementary moteties, one representing males and the other females. Its
central theme, that 'male and female must be both separated and indissolubly
linked' (Strathern 1970:49), was present in the *sangai* bachelors' cults and to
some extent in the aetadiekepele, but not in *yainanda* ancestral cults.

2) Authoritative ritual experts were required, generally one from a place
considered to be near the point of origin of the cult and another from the
hosting group or a group nearby. These men were paid handsomely.

3) The cult involved lavish display at its climax. When the ritual
procedures were completed within the fenced sacred area, the male participants
emerged in a dramatic parade holding pearl shells in front of them and
dancing with stamping movements, to the great excitement of the crowd.
Entering the cult houses once again, they re-emerged carrying net bags of
pork for the grand distribution.

The earliest Enga historical narrative concerning the female spirit cult
which we recorded, claims that the magic spells for the cult were brought by a
woman from the Mendi area to the Pauakaka tribe of the Saka valley. The cult
was first performed when the stones were imported (around the fourth to fifth
generation). Whether acquisition was spurred by Pauakaka's exchange
interests is not known. Shortly after Pauakaka had secured the cult, however, it
was acquired by the Yambatane Watenge, the pivotal organisers for the eastern end of the *tee* cycle. Historical traditions tell of how big-men from clans along all *tee* routes attended this great event, including men from the Mendi area, Tambul, and Tetemanda.

The female spirit cult was somewhat simplified in the Saka valley, and most Enga appear not to have assimilated its origin myth and ideology, regarding it as a new powerful cult for the ancestors that would bring fertility with a strong female component. At least three aspects of the cult had appeal in eastern Enga: (1) the lavish display of wealth that could signal wealth, unity, and readiness for the *tee*; (2) the interdependency of male and female principles expressed in the cult that were timely for the expansion of the *tee* cycle; and (3) the parade of the pearl shells, a feature totally exotic to other Enga cults that conferred a social and sacred dimension to these valuables. Recall that at this time pearl shells were first becoming incorporated into the *tee* cycle by big-men who had a strong hold on their acquisition. After Yambatane Watenge purchased the female spirit cult, other clans of eastern Enga followed suit.

The largest and most elaborate cults imported or developed in conjunction with the *tee* cycle and the Great Wars — the *neatee* and the female spirit cult — were found amongst tribes and clans at the eastern and western termini of the *tee* cycle, for these had the formidable job of organising and launching new phases of the *tee*. Nonetheless, most clans along *tee* networks adopted some cult to unify the group and draw partners to talk *tee*. The majority of clans of eastern Enga used the *sandalu* for this purpose or, in the eastern-most regions, the female spirit cult. However, the large and prominent tribes of Yakani and Depe, which spanned the border of central and eastern Enga, chose their own option — they received the *kepele* cult via the 'wandering women', altered it significantly and renamed it *pokalya*. The *pokalya* was performed in times of hardship — environmental hardship and hardship in organising ceremonial exchange. So prominent were *pokalya* performances in central Enga that it was not long before the revised versions were exported to some tribes of the Laiagam area.

Thus the ritual map resulting from seven or more generations of the development and circulation of cults created the following collage: at the base were former *yainandalkaima* divisions between east and west which remained, because new cults were added cumulatively to the repertoire without replacing former ones. Some *yainanda* cults were embellished with rites salvaged from imported cults that had failed to catch on and were renamed accordingly.
Next, came the kepele cult of western Enga that varied considerably in structure and content over space, owing to its pre-sweet-potato history and the many layers of oral tradition and rites added in subsequent generations to adapt it to new conditions and local needs. Tribes in central Enga then designed new renditions of the kepele, the aceate and the pokalya, which were so radically restructured to fit the needs of ceremonial exchange networks in central Enga that their origin in the kepele is only revealed through historical traditions. Over the entire map of Enga, bachelors’ cults were transposed, sensitive to local needs in their poetry and rites and markedly different in eastern Enga where the sandalu was closely tied to the tee cycle. Some clans in the Saka valley, who had imported the sangai at an earlier date found its offspring — the sandalu — so different that they performed both as separate but related bachelors’ cults. Finally, to mirror the aceate of central Enga as an event for organising the tee cycle, the female spirit cult was imported by clans of the Saka valley in the east. And so in the Saka valley, two female spirit women met — one who came as first wife to transformed bachelors in the sangai and the other who came to married men as a second virgin wife to further their prosperity and reproduction. So complex was the ritual map at first contact that, outside of the context of corresponding historical and economic developments, it appears incomprehensible.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The post-sweet-potato era of Enga history saw the development of truly vast and magnificent networks of ceremonial exchange. Within this context, cults were imported and exported to set new parameters for competition and deal with the contradictions it generated. As these issues were resolved, ceremonial exchange flourished. Because imports were made by big-men in the name of group fortune and in emulation of the successful, cults were an easily accepted and effective means of mediating social change. For example, the sangai bachelors’ cults defined all men as equals with rights to receive clan support in procuring brides and setting up independent households. In other words, it stipulated who could compete. Ideals laid down in the sangai poetry indicated what was to be competed for and how, steering the pace and direction of change. The sangai also bonded a cohort of clansmen, strengthening the clan as a unit of competition and projecting this image to competitors during emergence festivals. Through the enda akoko nyingi, women were offered a rare opportunity to fight for the men of their future households and thereby
have some say in structuring the exchange networks of their natal kin. Finally, with the spread of the sangai to eastern Enga, values and standards were homogenised, facilitating the coordination of exchange between east, centre, and west.

The kepelele\textit{e}e\textit{e}, by contrast, provided a forum to reassert traditional values, organise exchange, and mediate the effect of mounting social inequalities. During kepele performances, equal contribution of each household assured the goodwill of the ancestors and, with it, prosperity and fertility for all. The dramatic presentation of pigs and pork greatly enhanced the value of pigs as a common currency of exchange. The ceremonies for constructing the cult house recognised opposition and competition within and between segments of a tribe and then resolved it during rituals of cooperation. The lavish display convinced other clans in the tee cycle that the hosts were worthy allies in exchange. The six stages of the cult, spread out over years, provided fixed points for timing the tee cycle. Finally, the sharing and cooperation laid down in the origin myth reminded celebrants that the ultimate goal of inter-individual competition in the tee was to apply the winnings to the benefit of the group. The female spirit cult played a similar role in the east; in addition it underwrote male-female cooperation and imbued a new valuable — the pearl shell — with social and spiritual significance. Though juggling progressive themes of the sangai and female spirit cult with more conservative ones of the kepele, big-men managed social change just as they managed wealth for economic development.

To return to our starting point, the cults of Enga were transferred like objects in the trade: groups who obtained them were not bound into a centralised religious hierarchy, but were free to modify and export them as they pleased. And so cults, or elements of them, were circulated and developed in response to issues of the moment. The result was a ritual pattern that corresponded closely to the social, economic, and political map of area and era, cutting short the ritual tracks of wandering snakes and women, and reassembling them into the collage that so baffles researchers.

\textsc{Notes}

\footnote{The region from the Mountain Ok to the Melpa is one characterised by 'open' big-men societies (Gedelius 1991). The processes shown here may not apply to other parts of Papua New Guinea, for instance, neighbouring societies on the Highlands fringe. In reading Kelly's (1993) material on the Etoro, for example, the dissimilarity in mythical themes}
and ritual is indeed striking, suggesting that neighbours along the Highlands fringe may fall within quite another sphere of ritual interaction.

2 The term 'pirity', as used by Meggitt (1965a), is perhaps the most accurate anthropological term for mata andake of Enga, political units composed of aggregates of clans united by an origin tradition and genealogy that links members to a common ancestor. As discussed elsewhere (Wiessner and Turnu 1998), we have chosen 'tribe', a less precise notion, in order to use a term familiar to the Enga themselves.

3 This is but a rough estimate made on the basis of genealogical information (see Wiessner and Turnu 1998 for methods used).

4 Enga also hold extensive beliefs about forest demons, who figure heavily in Enga myth. When entering the high forest, Enga use a special language in which they refer to things in indirect terms out of respect for these spirits.

5 Opinions on this matter differ. Some say that the ancestors are only male and others that they are composed of deceased males and females.

6 Terms used for the yainanda vary from area to area: it was called kepaka in the lower Lai, ipaikuma in the Saka valley and some parts of the mid-Lai, yainanda or kepakanda among the Mai and talose, uaa ende yale pinge, ulul yaowene, owanat pinge in some areas of Kompian.

7 In the Porgera region the cult is called ipa née (to feed the water or pools) or ehekaima. A good description of the Iluli ehekaima can be found in Gibbs (1975:52-5).

8 In addition to the kainua and kepele, the dindi gamu was held. The dindi gamu, which had its centre amongst the Huli but also extended to the Duna and groups on the Papuan Plateau, skirted the western boundary of Enga. Though it never penetrated Enga deeply, it did provide a significant ritual link with groups to the south and west. The dindi gamu is a complex subject and beyond the scope of this paper (see Ballard 1995; Frankel 1986; Goldman 1983; Strathern 1994; Wiessner and Turnu 1998).

9 Surprisingly the Great Wars receive no mention in Enga ethnographic studies apart from a few pages in Meggitt (1977) which cover them inadequately.

10 The big-men of earlier generations were unlikely to have the same ability to manipulate cults as some of the renowned and highly influential tee organisers or Great War leaders of later ones.


12 We have no comparable information on the origin of bachelors' cults for the Nete, Penate, Hiewa or Duna. We also found no origin traditions for the sengai in eastern Enga, confirming the findings of Schwab (1995:3).

13 Iluli bachelors' cults are called umasina, those of the Huli, lbaganda. Eastern/southeastern neighbours of the Enga, for example, the Mendi and Melpa, do have rites to promote the growth of boys but not true bachelors' cults (Strass and Tischner 1990).

14 Wealth magic (toke) could be practised on the side during the sengai of western Enga, however, production and exchange were not integrated into sengai poby.

15 The rainbow python is generally associated with groups having strong traditions of a pre-sweet potato/hunter-gatherer economy.

16 Kepele houses that did not adopt the yupini, largely those of Kandep, used male ancestral stones for the same rites.

17 These tribes are Yanaitini and Apulini.
18 Whether this was by choice or due to the fact that the yapin had not reached Laiagam by the time the kepele was exported is uncertain.
19 Two descriptions of Saka performances have been published — a general one by Bronnaw (1977) and a patrol report describing its purchase and first performance by the Waimini clan in the 1940s (Lacey 1975); the latter is a fascinating document.
20 There are, in addition, a number of other cults in Enga brought from neighbouring groups by migrant clans. These are beyond the scope of this paper.

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