

**STORY OF THE KUK UNESCO WORLD
HERITAGE PREHISTORIC SITE**

and

THE MELPA

(Western Highlands Province)

Papua New Guinea

Pride in Place

by

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and

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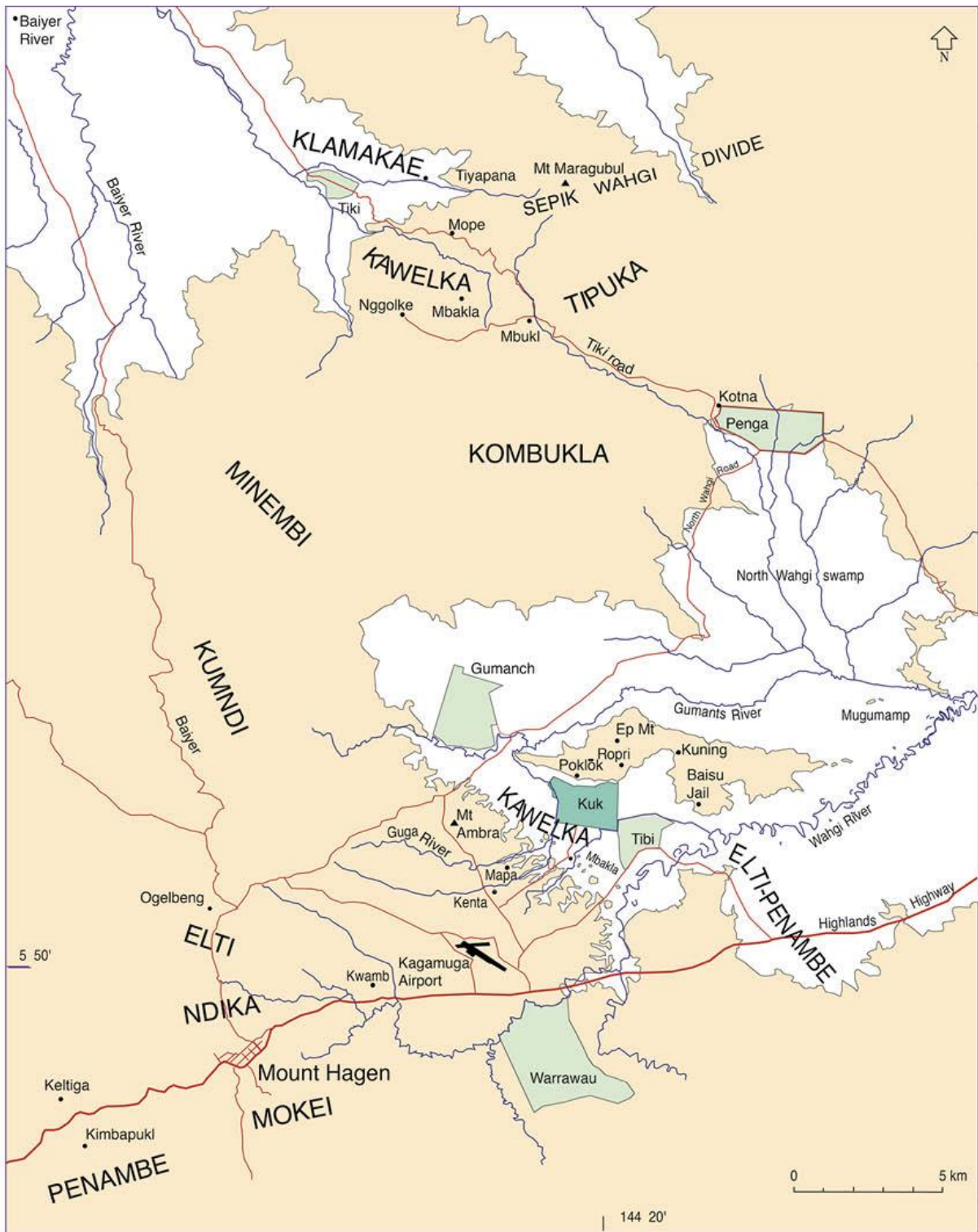
Map of Papua New Guinea. Mount Hagen and the surrounding areas can be clearly seen.

The border with West Papua (a part of Indonesia) is shown on the left.

Papua New Guinea is an independent country.



The flag of Papua New Guinea with the Southern Cross constellation (cluster of stars) and the Raggiana Bird-of-Paradise.



land above 1600 m plantation agricultural research station **KAWELKA** Melpa speaking group

The location of Kuk Station, Melpa-speaking groups and places (based on Hagen sheet PNG 1:100,000 topographical survey and sketch map by Andrew Strathern and Pamela J. Stewart). Figure 22 in Strathern, Andrew J. and Pamela J. Stewart. Hagen Settlement Histories: Dispersals and Consolidations. In, "Ten Thousand Years of Cultivation at Kuk Swamp in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea", edited by Jack Golson, Tim Denham, Phillip Hughes, Pamela Swadling and John Muke. Australian National University e-press, pp. 425-435.

Papua New Guinea *

New Guinea is a huge tropical island that sits north of Australia, straddling an area between the Pacific region and the Indonesian archipelago. Its western half, West Papua, formerly a Dutch colony, is a province within the Republic of Indonesia, while its eastern part, Papua New Guinea, has been an independent nation-state since 1975.

Some ten thousand years ago the island was joined by the Sahul land bridge to the continent of Australia. Much more recently (1884-1906), the southern part of Papua New Guinea was a British, then (1906-1975) an Australian, colony; while the northern half was administered by Australia under mandate from the League of Nations and later the United Nations after withdrawal by the Germans in 1920 following World War I.

New Guinea is thus a land that has been divided in complex ways by colonial and postcolonial history. But its great interior valleys, mountain ranges, swift rivers, and coastal swamps and plains have their own much longer history of change, including the development over many thousands of years of the lifeways of its indigenous peoples, with their many languages, cosmologies, social forms, ingenious environmental adaptations, and struggles for prestige and power among themselves.

Today these long-established indigenous complexities are overlain by and blended with a mass of changes whose reach has extended into every sphere of life, not least into the art of decorating the body for festive occasions, an art marked by great exuberance, skill, imagination and creation of meanings. Such art combines with the vigor of the people themselves to provide a striking testimony to the cultural creativity of the

diverse groups of New Guinea, peoples who were deeply integrated with their environment and drew on its vivid colors for their own self-enhancement and as a means of expressing their felt identities within the land and water. Art forms provide a recognition of the enduring spirit of approaches to life among these peoples, to their thoughts, their religious imaginings, and to their immense artistic abilities.

The New Guineans' love of decoration shows itself in their enthusiastic participation in contemporary local, regional and national celebrations where they adorn themselves with new purposes in mind: expressing political support for parliamentary leaders, entertaining visiting tourists, and continuing to express their own self-worth and pride in their history. In cases where the people have been discouraged from wearing their traditional decorations, or have themselves decided to reject these in favor of introduced forms of display, they tend cleverly to combine elements of the old and new forms together. One of the characteristics of people in many parts of New Guinea is their ability to embrace novelties while still staying linked to their pasts.

Perhaps the most striking impression that can be gained from looking at images of bodily decorations from New Guinea is their stylish use of elements from what one might call "nature", the flora and fauna of their world. Leaves, bark, moss, earth pigments, insects, snakeskin, animal furs, bird plumes, bones, varieties of shells, all these are drawn into the cosmetic panoply of forms which have evolved in these cultural settings. The impetus to adornment is not simply an expression of an aesthetic involvement with "nature". Rather, the items used are in every way seen as a part of the people's culture, and they are reshaped as means of communicating

messages about the world of societal relations: messages about the ghosts and spirits, about bodily attractiveness, social power and status, the roles of women and men, group membership, alliances, hostilities, and about the movements of initiates from one stage of existence to another, including the movement from life to death, seen as a transformation into spirit form.

Within these broad outlines the sheer variations in cultural practices that we find in different parts of New Guinea are quite remarkable. The linguistic diversity in New Guinea is so great that all of the languages together equal about one fifth of the total number of languages in the world. This diversity should not be underestimated.

Population density and agricultural intensity also tend to be greater in the Highland valleys than elsewhere. These Highland regions, because of their remote and hidden locations, tended to be the last parts of New Guinea to be entered into by explorers from the world outside of New Guinea, beyond the island itself. This does not mean that they were entirely cut off from the wider world inside their region. The sweet potato crop reached the Highlands about 400 years ago, transforming the food economy there and facilitating growth in population density. Earlier populations had relied on taro, yams, bananas, sugar cane, and other foods, as well as on hunting and gathering. The sweet potato afforded higher yields per garden area and the possibility to plant it at higher altitudes on dry land, thus expanding settlement areas and probably stimulating patterns of migration from one centre to another. It did not entirely replace other crops, but it tended to displace them as central in the sustaining of life.

The Mount Hagen people of the Western Highlands of Papua New Guinea proverbially have said that the sweet potato is their true food and

even that it is like a “medicine” for them. Another bonus the sweet potato provides is that it enables a larger population of pigs to be reared in domestic herds since it is fed to them as their main food source. Pigs were (and remain) important as wealth objects.

A variety of sea shells, imported into the interior of the island through intricate networks of trade routes, were also significant wealth objects. The pathways of trade through which these items moved blended with or emerged into the staging of largescale festive communal events in which complex processes of social life were negotiated and social values affirmed. Wealth items were also deeply involved in life-cycle rituals marking birth, weaning, adolescence, marriage, maturity, old age, and death. These rituals wove people and their places together in a tapestry of kinship and marriage, seen as a product of the flow of life-giving and life-enhancing substances.

Papua New Guinea is one of the most linguistically, environmentally, and culturally diverse parts of the entire world.

Materials about the Melpa Speakers of the Western Highlands of Papua New Guinea are presented in this book.

*Materials in this section of the book represent a modified and translated version of text that appeared in 2004 in, Strathern, Andrew and Pamela J. Stewart [Text] (2004) Nouvelle-Guinee. Danses de la couleur. Translated French version of English text. Paris, France, Hazan.

Kuk Swamp (Western Highlands, PNG):

An Astonishing History Told in the Earth *

Kuk is a place that the authors of this book (Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern) have worked in as Social / Cultural Anthropologists over the years and published many books and articles on their work. Professor Andrew Strathern began working in Kuk in the 1960s and Andrew Strathern and Pamela J. Stewart have worked with Mr. Bob Bates to provide information for the UNESCO World Heritage Listed Kuk Early Agricultural Site Interpretive Centre that is located at Kuk.

When explorers from the outside world first entered the great valley and mountain systems in the heart of the New Guinea Highlands in the 1930s they came across well-kept, extensively planted garden areas, supporting large populations of people, in a region which had previously been understood to be uninhabited. Surprise was great on both sides of these initial encounters, for the people of the Highlands had never seen, or even heard about, these pale-skinned visitors from another world (the world outside of New Guinea).

At first some of the scientists who came to study this region developed an idea that the entire emphasis on gardening, centered around the common food crop of sweet potato, must be relatively recent, since the sweet potato had entered into the island of New Guinea only within the last few hundreds of years. Sweet potato was brought into the general region by Portuguese sailors. Before the arrival of the sweet potato, it was suggested that the Highlands people must have been hunters and gatherers without settled

agricultural practices. The sweet potato, it was thought, had transformed them, in a short period of time, into the intensive gardeners and rearers of pigs encountered by the outside explorers in the early 1930s.

Long-term and painstaking archaeological research, supported by soil science, dating techniques, and ways of recovering evidence of plant remains on stone tools, turned this initial picture upside down. Professor Jack Golson of the Australian National University's Research School of Pacific Studies, undertook this research from the mid-1960s onward, joined by other scholars over a number of years. Their revolutionary archaeological finding was that intensive gardening practices in the area were not recent – they had a history comparable to the long time- depth of agriculture in parts of the Middle East or Asia studied previously by scientists.

Thus, the theme of 'ten thousand years of gardening' in the New Guinea Highlands emerged. The key to this knowledge lay locked in the swamplands at Kuk (and also in other areas of Highlands New Guinea). This was hidden from view because the swamp was not extensively drained until 1969 when the Australian government purchased a portion of land for development as a tea research station and later for general agricultural research gardening areas. To make the research area more usable, the government cut large drains to remove the swamp water. In the sides of these deep drains they found evidence of much earlier ditches, marked by the color and character of the soil, and cross-cut by the new drains that the government had put in. Alerted to this discovery, the archaeologists embarked on their comprehensive research in the area.

The earlier ditches were found in successive layers that went back deep in time. They were evidence of extensive gardening and water management

from the past. Evidence of a similar sort had also been found from the drains made at the nearby tea plantation at Warrawau beside the Wahgi river, where Professor Golson and colleagues made an initial investigation in 1966.

Another factor came into play. In the layers of dark peat in the ground there was revealed on the sides of the deep drains lines of lighter grey appearing at intervals. These were deposits of ash from volcanic eruptions that had occurred at various times and left their marked records in the ground. The volcanoes of Mount Hagen and Mount Giluwe to the west and south of Kuk have not erupted in the last 50,000 years, but the layers of ash found in the drains at Kuk have been dated and traced to more recent eruptions from further away, such as Long Island in the Madang area on the northern coast of New Guinea.

In this way the layers of ash help in dating the archaeological findings associated with them. The most recent deposit of ash is known as Tibito Tephra and dates to the most recent Phases of prehistoric agricultural activity in the swamp area, known as Phases 5 and 6 (1250 – c.1900 c.e.) in the archaeological classifications made by Jack Golson and his colleagues.

One of the fundamental things that archaeologists do is to arrange their findings in dated sequences of time. They achieve this aim by providing a scheme known as a site stratigraphy, in which the lower down the layer is, the older it is presumed in general to be. For Kuk, the investigations of garden drains at different depths in the soil of trenches, along with findings from dry land cultivation sites outside of the swamp, resulted in a scheme of six Phases of swamp-based gardening activity, the oldest of which went back to 10,000 years ago (Golson 2017a: 15). Golson lays out here what the six Phases are thought to be:

--Phase 1: from around 10,000 years BP [before the present, here present is set at 1950 in the current era of time] – this Phase showed ancient cultivation features and possibly the construction of drainage channels.

--Phase 2: from 6950-6440 BP [before the present, here present is again set at 1950 in the current era of time] -- this Phase showed mounded cultivation surfaces.

--Phase 3: from 4350-2400 BP [before the present, here present is again set at 1950 in the current era of time] – this Phase showed ditches of a right-angled type, and later networks of feeder drains.

--Phase 4: from 2000-1230 or 970 BP [before the present, here present is again set at 1950 in the current era of time] – this Phase showed field systems laid out in grid formation, as also seen in later Phases and today.

--Phase 5: from 1250 to 1600s in the current era of time – this Phase also showed field systems laid out in grid formation.

--Phase 6: from 1700 to c.1900 in the current era of time – this Phase also showed field systems as in Phase 5.

Stone artefacts were found in all of these Phases. In Phases 4-6 evidence of wooden tilling tools, house sites, and artificial channels were all found together.

Two things are notable here. First, there were gaps between the Phases of cultivation, during which the swamp land was apparently unoccupied. Second, wooden artefacts (digging tools) and house sites appear only in Phases 4-6, in contrast with the presence of stone artefacts. Stone tools actually predate the arrival of gardening activity, belonging to human

occupation from longer than 30,000 years ago. People were thus living around Kuk long before the first evidence of gardening activity.

What else went along with the story of these different Phases and the periods in which no evidence of swamp use was uncovered? First, there is the question of what the crops were that people were cultivating. Plant cultivars do not leave obvious identifiable traces, but analysis of residues of starch grains left on stone tools found in the swamp was able to show signs of both yams (*Dioscorea spp.*) and taro (*Colocasia esculenta*). This suggests that these, along with perhaps bananas and sugar -cane, were successfully grown there as common crops.

Highlanders nowadays have a range of other edible plants that they grow and eat that add to their diets, but it is not known how far back in time these go. The bulk of the evidence suggests that the sweet potato, the dominant contemporary food crop, reached the Highlands only in Phase 6 at Kuk, from about 1660 onwards, around the time of the most recent ash fall (Tibito Tephra). This means that for thousands of years cultivation was based on taro and yam, both crops also known to be ancient ones in other parts of the world such as South-East Asia. Yams are generally cultivated in raised earthen beds. Taro, however, does well in wet conditions. Taro plants are often found in the wet channels between raised garden planting beds or at field perimeters marked by large ditches, and are described in the Hagen Melpa language as *ru me* ('ditch taro').

In today's cultures in the Highlands domesticated pigs are immensely significant and valuable. Pork is discussed in folktales as a useful item to take on a journey to use as a means of befriending strangers. Pigs do not, however, seem to be a part of the earliest agricultural records. Tim Denham

(who has been one of the investigators of Highlands prehistory subsequent to Golson's pioneering work) estimates that chickens, pigs, and dogs were probably brought into New Guinea with a time depth of about 3,500 years (Denham 2017: 48).

In some parts of New Guinea pigs may not have been domesticated for such a long period of time. Highlanders also hunt for wild pigs, known in Melpa as *kng timbi*, and female domesticated pigs can mate with wild boars. It is not clear from the evidence if wild pigs have been present there long before domesticated ones. What is clear is that pigs and dogs have strong, if different, cultural values. Pigs are important as items for exchange locally in cultural affairs. Dogs are valuable for humans in hunting and as guides in the bush. In the Mount Giluwe area, wild dogs (*owa kararip* in the Melpa language, *owa peand* in the lalibu / Tambul dialects) are said to inhabit its upper reaches and to be dangerous to the wellbeing of a person who is guilty of some wrongdoing if seen by that person.

It is worth mentioning here in general that hunting traditions and ideas about the forests and their spirit inhabitants have remained significant in folklore, mythology, and in experience, because the forest is still the source of the materials used to construct elaborate decorations that men and women wear for dances at major exchange occasions. One of these forest materials is the bird of paradise plumes that form striking head-decorations for the local people to wear at important events.

The forest is also the place of marsupials that are hunted for their meat and fur. One of these forest resource regions is in the Jimi valley area north of the Sepik-Wahgi Divide (this is also the area that people's spirits were traditionally said to go in dreams as they travelled out at night, taking the

forms of marsupials and birds). To this day, at least in the more remote northerly and southerly parts of the Western Highlands Province, the forest remains both a provider of resources and a source of imagination and storytelling.

By contrast, swamp areas near rivers are traditionally thought of as the places of bush spirits who were thought to be able to afflict people with sickness if they strayed into the spirit's dwelling places.

The main virtue of the swampland is that once it is drained it is very fertile, with longstanding depositions of peat, loam (a mixture of sand, clay, silt, and organic matter), and volcanic ash. The main tools used to cut these drains in the time before non-New Guinean outsiders brought in steel spades and metal bush knives (machetes) were wooden paddle shaped digging spades. Such spades and other digging tools have turned up in waterlogged trenches both at Kuk and Warrawau, with dates from Warrawau varying around 2,000 years before the present, or around the time of Phase 3 (from 4350-2400 years before the present), when right-angled ditches first appeared in this area.

Lighter and smaller digging sticks were used by women for planting, weeding, and harvesting work, especially with the arrival of the sweet potato as a food crop. The wooden spades varied in shape. Some had long handles, others shorter ones, and one type was double-bladed, a spade at both ends of the tool. In the 1970s senior Kawelka men in the Hagen area were familiar with these spades, and could both make and use them. Other Highlanders also used them for wetland ditching.

What is most interesting is that the waterlogged spades found in ditches were preserved so well in the peat, from different periods of time. At Kuk one such spade was dated to only about 300-520 years before the present. A comparable spade found in the high-altitude swamp of Tambul, south of Kuk, was dated to 4564-4130 years before the present (Golson, 2017b pp. 366-368). These wooden spades remained useful until metal spades were introduced into the area by the non-New Guinean outside colonisers in the 1930s and onward. The wooden spades were made mostly from casuarina wood or black-palm (which is especially hard). Their use clearly spans across the time of taro planting and the time of the introduced sweet potato.

Comparable continuity is shown also in the records of the use of stone tools. Researchers found tools used for chopping, cutting, scraping, or smashing items, from the beginnings of agricultural activity onward. Also, stones used in earth-ovens were present throughout the archaeological Phases. Major changes in artefacts are seen in stone axe and adze blades belonging to the more recent archaeological Phases. Such blades were manufactured in a number of quarries around Kuk, including the Jimi Valley, the Sepik-Wahgi Divide, and the Tuman area to the south. Because of its proximity to Kuk, the Tuman quarry supplied the largest numbers of blades to Kuk, at least according to the archaeological records (more than half of all the blades found), but items from the more distant quarries were also known, and their different qualities are still recognized by older contemporary Highlanders.

The Kawelka Hagen people had their own quarry called Mbukl, which produced distinctive stones. The names of types of axes were well known to senior men in the 1960s and 1970s, as were their distinctive

characteristics. From Kawelka settlements people went out to collect the Mbukl blades and others for shaping and polishing, and the Kawelka leader Ongka Kaepa recorded a song about the weight of the loads involved:

Kundin wal-a

Nggaima wal-a

Mbun enem-a

Erol nde pa ye pa

Woi, nim mein mona

Na meimb-a

Wa-ndan-a

Erol nde pa ye pa

The netbag of kundin blades,
The netbag of nggaima blades,
Is so heavy.

Woi, will you carry them,
Or shall I carry them?
Help me hoist them up.

The singer asked his wife, Woi, who was accompanying him, if she or he would carry the stones, and he asked that she help him lift them up if he was to be the one to carry them.

The archaeologist John Burton estimates that stone axes entered the Tuman area around 2,500 to 1,000 years ago. Perhaps this could have happened during the time of the archaeological Phase 4 in Kuk when field systems of the grid type were laid out (Sullivan, Burton, Ellis, Golson, and Hughes 2017: 416). What axes were used before that time or why the growing trade in these items began are questions not answered from these data. Burton suggest that the Tuman axes met an increasing need for cutting tools associated with progressive intensification of gardening practices during the archaeological Phase 4.

A general question that arises from the archaeological record of the main Phases is why were the swamplands seemingly abandoned from time to time and then used again with different intervals of time in between? The starting point for favorable climatic conditions, with warming of the mountainous Highlands areas, coincided with the beginnings of archaeological times of gardening around ten thousand years ago.

Forest areas surrounding Kuk were reduced about 7,000 years ago and areas were burnt off, producing a more open swampland environment. At this time, the archaeological Phase 2 of gardening began, marked by a more obviously intensive profile of drainage work, with mounded cultivation and increased plantings of types of bananas. Cultivation took place on the margins of the wetlands as well as in the drained swamp areas.

Findings from the archaeological Phase 3, which is dated as beginning about 4350 years ago, imply a very long gap between Phases 2 and 3, although people may have shifted onto dryland sites out of the wetlands. From Phase 3 onwards, larger channels were dug and maintained, requiring more intensive labor, and the explanations given for periodic abandonment

between Phases center on the increasing difficulty of keeping the channels clear.

In Phase 3 straight channels were dug, showing deliberate planning and co-ordination of efforts. Soil tillage, to increase fertility, appears in archaeological Phase 4, and may first have been practiced on dryland sites. With continuing reliance on taro, fertile soil was needed, and taro usually needs to be planted in fresh soil (in this regard, unlike the sweet potato). In addition, *Papuana* beetles attack the plants in dryer areas and spoil the crop. Perhaps the swamp cultivation of taro was one way to avoid beetle infestation. Also, dryland areas can be subject to drought, leading to a renewal of swamp drainage. The archaeological Phase 4 drainage works show communal investment in large ditches for channeling water, and this may indicate that the taro crop was also used at this time for feeding pigs, justifying a larger investment in garden access. With pigs, social exchanges of wealth would have become more marked.

At the same time, without any authoritative forms of control by leaders, the drainage-based economy would be vulnerable, with dangers of disputes and warfare emerging and inability to maintain drainage ditches. The archaeological Phase 4 did end in the abandonment of the swamp, and its requirements for cooperative labor, about 1,100 years before the present. This was after a particular fall of volcanic ash that would have made the dryland areas more fertile than before. At this time, also, planting of the casuarina tree, for firewood and for improving the fertility of fallow garden areas (those left unplanted for one or more growing seasons), increased on hillside sites. This suggests that people switched to the dryland for their

subsistence. For three hundred years, at any rate, the swamps were not drained or used for gardening.

Global weather events also affected conditions at Kuk. Extreme droughts, caused by strong overall shifts in climatic phenomena, may have induced cultivators to return to the swamplands in archaeological Phase 4. At the end of this Phase there was another transition to colder weather, with more frequent droughts, which could have made it favorable to return again to cultivating the swampland.

The two archaeological Phases 5 and 6, were both characterized by intensive field grid gardens, similar to those of Phase 4.

Phase 5 was marked by the definite appearance of houses along one side of the deep channels dividing cultivated land from pig pasture, and here women would have been responsible for the care of the pigs, watching out for them by day, feeding them, and providing stalls in their houses for them to sleep in at night, as a precaution, perhaps, against theft. Women's labor would have become increasingly important in the production of wealth at this time, along with the intensification of gardening, and the likely arrival of a new type of yam, from coastal regions, replacing or supplementing taro. It is not possible to say when other factors may have come into play that were evident later, such as the trade in valuable shells from the southern and northern coasts or the possible advent of malaria along the same trade routes from the south that brought pearl shells into the Highlands. Swamp areas would have been particularly vulnerable to the malaria disease whenever it emerged. The Tibito ash fall records a volcanic eruption that produced Highlands-wide stories of a 'Time of Darkness' and subsequent renewal of soil fertility, especially in dryland areas outside of the swamp.

The archaeological Phase 5 lasted until the 1600s, and may have been brought to an end by this latest volcanic eruption, from Long Island in the Madang region in 1660. This event coincided with the estimated arrival time of the sweet potato as a new crop, and a subsequent expansion of garden cropping, pig herds, and competitive leadership, belonging to the archaeological Phase 6, which ended at Kuk in the early 20th century with the concerted attack on the resident traditional land owners, the Kawelka group, and their dispersal northwards to resettle with new allies on the sparsely inhabited hillsides of the Sepik-Wahgi Divide. How different this new environment must have seemed to them from their fertile swampy habitat! At this point, also, archaeology merges with oral history and this in turn with contemporary issues and with the original and ongoing work by anthropologists (for example, Andrew Strathern 1972 and Andrew Strathern and Pamela J. Stewart 1998).

The Kawelka Leader, Ongka-Kaepa, recounted how his father's generation had become embroiled in warfare with other groups around them, including some Mokei clan groups. These groups had formed a war coalition against the Kawelka and deliberately drove them out, forcing them to quickly flee. Ongka's account mentioned three matters.

First, the swamp environment was hazardous in warfare. Pinned back by their enemies, the Kawelka men had to try to escape across the swampy edges of their settlements, and some drowned while trying this route.

Second, a sacrifice of pigs was made by some Leaders, saying to the land and their ancestors' spirits that they were sorry to be leaving like this, but they would not forget them.

Third, one of their ancestral Leaders, Koi, had set up a standing stone, as a witness to their ownership of the valuable land they had occupied. With these farewells, the survivors made their way to the place Mbukl, which is where they mostly were in 1964, when the first anthropological work with them began and our research records on the Kawelka date from.

Kawelka history is thus deeply bound up with the long prehistory of agriculture in the Highlands of New Guinea, and so also with the efforts to consolidate Kuk as the site of an astonishing story of the beginnings of agriculture there. This history makes it highly significant as a heritage for the Western Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea, and the whole world.

The 1930s was a time when the New Guinea Highlands region first made its way into world media. The later archaeological work helped to establish the long prehistory of the area, and our own long-term ethnographic work has gone hand-in-hand with establishing the recognition of Kuk as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and will hopefully result in favorable circumstances for the local people as custodians of a unique global history.

As several scholars have noted, there remain significant gaps in scientific knowledge of the long history of Kuk and comparable parts of the Highlands that require research to be conducted in them.

The integration of studies of dryland and wetland cultivation is an example of such a gap. A related topic is, where could one find evidence of the men's houses and ceremonial grounds (*manga rapa* and *moka pena*) that were central to political structures in the 1930s onward? Where were people buried during the early prehistoric times? Perhaps dryland rock shelters and caves might provide some clues. Also, throughout the

Highlands mortars and pestles from some prehistoric times were reincorporated into major rituals as sacred items of worship. Where did they come from?

The Kuk heritage story has still to encompass these as yet unsolved mysteries.

*The materials in our text here are drawn from our readings of the twenty-five chapters. Including chapter 22 by ourselves, of the book *Ten Thousand Years of Cultivation at Kuk Swamp in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea* (edited by Jack Golson, Tim Denham, Philip Hughes, Pamela Swadling, and John Muke) in Terra Australis Series no. 46, Australian National University Press, 2017). Our contribution to this book added aspects of ethnohistory of the Kawelka tribe. We cite here a few of the chapters from this book specifically referenced in our text and also from our own research and writings, especially the earlier volume that we edited on the archaeology and ethnohistory of Kuk entitled *Kuk Heritage: Issues and Debates in Papua New Guinea*. (edited by Andrew Strathern and Pamela J. Stewart, 1998). Pittsburgh, Department of Anthropology, University of Pittsburgh.

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The Kuk World Heritage Interpretive Centre

At this Centre you can learn directly about the Kuk World Heritage Site and speak with the local Melpa people about this world-famous place and its spectacular historical depth.



The detailed archaeological evidence from this site can be found in the book entitled, *Ten Thousand Years of Cultivation at Kuk Swamp in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea*, edited by Jack Golson, Tim Denham, Philip Hughes, Pamela Swadling and John Muke (Australian National University, 2017). Our contribution to this book covered the ethnohistory of the Kawelka tribe at Kuk as did the earlier volume that we edited on the archaeology and

ethnohistory of Kuk entitled *Kuk Heritage: Issues and Debates in Papua New Guinea* (edited by Andrew Strathern and Pamela J. Stewart, 1998, Pittsburgh, Department of Anthropology, University of Pittsburgh).

The primary archaeological work at this site was undertaken by a team of researchers from the Australian National University that was led by Professor Jack Golson and the archaeological investigations were intensive rather than extensive. The excavations affected only a minor portion of the core area of the site. The excavations and scientific work that have been done here were of the highest international professional standard and thus the excavated remains retain their authenticity.

The archaeological work that has been carried out at Kuk since the 1970s has yielded evidence that crop cultivation has been practiced in this area for 10,000 years before the current period of time. This makes the Kuk Archaeological Site one of the earliest primary sites for agricultural practices in the entire world.

Elaborate mounding of earth in garden beds and drainage ditches have been found that date to around 7,000 to 6,000 years before the present period of time. Long paddle-like digging sticks were used to make the ditches and stone axes and adzes were used for tree-cutting, along with wooden knives for cutting grasses. The earliest cultivated plants at the Kuk Site probably included bananas, taro, yams, and possibly sugar-cane.

A visit to Papua New Guinea would not be complete without a trip to the Kuk site. It is one of the many jewels of the Western Highlands Province.

The Kuk Standing Stone

The Kuk Standing Stone

The place of the stone in the story of the Kawelka's departure from Kuk around 1920 and return there from about 1960 is told, in Chapter 22, *Hagen Settlement Histories: Dispersals and Consolidations* (Strathern and Stewart, 2017)

Source: Photograph by Paul Gorecki. This photograph appears in our Chapter 22 in *Ten Thousands Years of Cultivation at Kuk Swamp in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea* (A).



The Standing Stone at the place Kuk, Western Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea is a relatively rare heritage object located nearby to the Unesco World Heritage Listed Kuk Early Agricultural Site Interpretive Centre (1).

Standing Stones have been used throughout history as commemorative signs and place markers. The Kuk Standing Stone is symbolically important as a marker of the local people's identity in their environment.

The Standing Stone is an uncarved limestone column said to have been erected by Koi, an ancestral figure of the Melpa Kawelka tribe (Stewart and Strathern 1998). It is not common to find such Standing Stones in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea.

The narrative associated with the Kuk Standing Stone is as follows:

An ancestral Kawelka figure named Koi found the stone while on a hunting trip to the Ep mountain ridge just north of Kuk. The stone's importance was revealed to him by its ability to speak and through its appearance of strength. Also, it was covered in *kopong* (grease), a mark of fertility and health. After making sacrifices in front of it and planting a special cordyline bush nearby as a sign of his group's ownership of the land, Koi erected the stone as a marker within the Kawelka territory.

The planting of the cordyline near the Kuk stone is important. The cordyline represents the sacred *mi* or originating power of the Kawelka (2). It makes the connection of the physical and the spiritual world and is the substance on which oaths are taken. The cordyline plant grows vigorously, renewing itself even after being burnt off.

The Kuk Standing Stone was not erected as a commemorative marker to one individual or even a group of persons who had physically died, but was dedicated to the collective identity of the Kawelka.

The Kawelka say that the Kuk stone is like their bone (*ombil*). The Melpa speakers in general, like many Highland peoples of Papua New Guinea, make a distinction between “flesh” and “bone”. Bone is long lasting, it is strong, and when buried stays in one place, while flesh is not permanent and decays over time.

-(A) 2017 Strathern, Andrew J. and Pamela J. Stewart. Hagen Settlement Histories: Dispersals and Consolidations. In, “Ten Thousand Years of Cultivation at Kuk Swamp in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea”, edited by Jack Golson, Tim Denham, Phillip Hughes, Pamela Swadling and John Muke. Australian National University e-press, pp. 425-435.

-(1) This stone is discussed in further detail by Stewart and Strathern, see:

1999 Stewart, Pamela J. and Andrew J. Strathern. Politics and Poetics Mirrored in Indigenous Stone Objects from Papua New Guinea. Journal of the Polynesian Society. [March 1999] Vol. 108, No. 1, pp 69-90.

Strathern, A. and Pamela J. Stewart (eds.) (1998) Kuk Heritage: Issues and Debates in Papua New Guinea. The National Museum of PNG and the JCU-Centre for Pacific Studies and the Okari Research Group, Department of Anthropology, University of Pittsburgh

1998 Strathern, A.J. and Pamela J. Stewart. The Kuk Site: Past Heritage, Future Issues. In, Kuk Heritage: Issues and Debates in Papua New Guinea. A. Strathern and P.J. Stewart (eds.) Pp. 87-93.

1998 Stewart, Pamela J. and A.J. Strathern. Cultural Heritage Written in Stone. In, Kuk Heritage: Issues and Debates in Papua New Guinea. A. Strathern and P.J. Stewart (eds.) Pp. 94-98

--(2) This is discussed in further detail by Stewart and Strathern, see:

Strathern, A. and Pamela J. Stewart (2000) The Python's Back: Pathways of Comparison between Indonesia and Melanesia. (2000) Westport, Conn. and London: Bergin and Garvey, Greenwood Publishing Group.

The Hagen People *

[Aspects of Culture, and in this section Gardening Practices, are changing all the time. The materials presented here are from recent historical times and reflect the main patterns inherited from the past]

The Hagen people living north and south of Mt. Hagen township in the Western Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea are speakers of the Melpa language. Melpa speakers number in excess of 100,000 persons. The town has greatly influenced the surrounding rural areas since the 1960s. For many miles around it, people grow crops in order to bring them to the town market for sale. Coffee trees, introduced in the 1950s or 1960s, are planted throughout the area, and everyone is concerned to have cash income.

A group of women and children spread out coffee parchment (beans with husk) to be dried further in the sun. The beans are laid out on lengths of yellow plastic which can be folded over to protect them from rain and are weighted with rocks against the wind. In the corner of the enclosed compound is a modern trade store, built with planks and corrugated iron. (Near Mbukl, 1970s.)-(© P.J. Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive)



The area of the Melpa speakers is ecologically varied. The Wahgi Valley, at about 5,100 feet above sea level, is the most fertile area, with rich black soil deriving from drained swamplands, vulnerable at times to drought. The Central Ogelbeng Plain rises to the west of the Wahgi Valley, with volcanic soil covered by grasslands reaching to the foothills of Mount Hagen and the Sepik-Wahgi Divide. The Wahgi Valley and the Ogelbeng Plain are densely

occupied. Further to the north, in the area known as Dei Council, population density is by no means so high, and the people live scattered on hillsides cut by rivers and streams and dotted thickly with casuarina tree groves. The Kawelka people, a political group of some 1,600 today, were driven northwards from their territory at Kuk early in the twentieth century and settled around Mbukl and Nggolke, there befriending members of the Tipuka tribe, with whom they became linked in alliances for major tribal warfare. Pacification in the 1940s and the growth of the town in the 1950s and 1960s, together with smallholder cash cropping and the development of a (now defunct) government agricultural station at Kuk, brought many of the Kawelka back into the Kuk area, which is now once more their main population center. In the 1960s, they were censused as having approximately 860 members, mostly living around Mbukl, Nggolke, and Mope. Population growth has been steady since the 1960s.

Gardening *



- Man stands in garden planted with peanuts and corn (Kuk). Peanuts are most often harvested and sold for cash in local markets. The Kuk people regularly take their produce to the daily market in Mt. Hagen town. (1980s)-(© P.J. Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive



A man employs a large spade to make the initial cuts for a trench. The garden fence, with pointed stakes, is at his back, and beyond it is canegrass and secondary casuarina tree fallow. The gardener wears a *koa mak* tally at his chest, indicating his participation in moka events at which he has given away pearl shells in exchanges. (Kawelka territory, Nggolke.) (1970s) (© P.J. Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive)

The staple crop throughout the area is the sweet potato, and methods of cultivation for it and other crops are relatively uniform throughout the area. For the sweet potato, the so-called gridiron trenching system is predominantly used. In this system, trenches are first cut in a garden space after it has been cleared of debris and undergrowth, placed so that water will run off. Then trenches are dug that bisect the first ones to produce roughly square or rectangular patches of raised ground heaped with earth, which are then further lightly tilled prior to being planted. The sweet potato is usually planted in these tilled grids. Women take runner vines from existing plots and push them into pockets of soil, from which they develop new shoots and begin spreading within days. Men make the trenches, as well as participating in the work of clearing the garden area.

As numerous writers have noted, several characteristics of the sweet potato make it a highly advantageous crop for the New Guinea Highlands. It grows easily; it is propagated easily; it can be planted continuously the year

round as long as there is some rainfall; it can be planted at a higher altitude than *Colocasia* taro; and its tubers develop faster than taro corms do. It is, in short, a perfect crop for the colonization and effective use of new areas of land. In addition, it can be planted repeatedly in areas of reasonably fertile soil. Finally, pigs like it and will happily eat the small tubers that women separate from the larger ones used for human consumption. All these considerations explain why sweet potato tends to be the staple crop in almost all Highlands areas, and why it is generally thought that its advent triggered a stage of further intensification of gardening and population movements.

In Hagen such movements are reflected at two different levels. First, the origin narratives of all the major groups tell how ancestors of the group migrated into their area from elsewhere or moved along a particular direction to arrive at their current settlement area. Second, at an individual level, people use ties of kinship and marriage to shift from place to place in response to conflicts and new opportunities. The major groups themselves are tribes, with populations ranging from a few hundred to several thousand people. These tribes are extensively segmented into subgroups.

The groups as a whole maintain stories that tend to represent them as expanded groups along male lines, with male ancestors and their sons. However, the mother's line is highly significant in these stories. These relationships provide an overall political structure and allow for considerable flexibility in affiliation.

Generally, a first-comer or original gardener of an area gives to his descendants the primary right to cultivate that area in future. This category of people is called the *möi pukl wamb*, the 'root people of the ground.' But flexibility in this is also widely seen.



- This picture shows the co-operative labor of a younger and an older man, working with their spades to cut a trench in line with a length of string. The older man is a worker (*kintmant*) for a leader or big man of the group. (Nggolke.) (1970s) -(© P.J. Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive)

The gridiron system of gardening provides a simple way of dividing gardening strips in a garden. It is the owner of the basic rights (*pukl*) who apportions the area in this way. In turn, this person must recognize the claims of his household and others who have helped make the garden or whose relatives gardened it before. A male owner typically allocates areas to female relatives, especially to his wife or wives, and to male kin of his own group who have an interest in the land and have helped in the work of clearing and trenching.

The gridiron system is found throughout the Melpa area, from swampy valley flats to relatively stony hillsides with little topsoil. In the flats, its major function is to effect drainage; on the hillsides, trenching helps to provide sufficient concentrations of topsoil for crops to grow. In both contexts trenching can therefore be seen as adaptive.

The importance of the idea of trenching and its clear divisions of a garden is shown by the use of the term for a trench to represent a segment, usually at the clan level, within the tribe. While a tribe is *mbi ou*, "the big name," a clan may be called *pana-ru*, "the garden ditch."

Gridiron ditching of gardens is found in Hagen and eastward to the Chimbu area. A different system, mounding, practiced in the high-altitude areas of Ialibu and Tambul (at above 7,000 feet) has a primary function of protecting the sweet potato against the effects of frost, and mulching inside the mound increases its internal temperature through vegetation decay. It is reasonable to suggest that mounding was first developed in these high-altitude places and was subsequently diffused in different directions with the movements of people.

A detailed examination of origin stories and contemporary gardening practices would be needed to examine this ethnohistorical pattern. For the present, we suggest that gridironing began for the purpose of drainage in the Wahgi, and mounding began because of the need for mulching in Ialibu and Tambul. Both practices thus began as adaptations and spread with the diffusion or migrations of people.

As we have also argued, in no area is the sweet potato garden the only type. It is likely, therefore, that the specific forms of mounding and gridironing have themselves been produced over time in order to provide an effective environment for the sweet potato. Alternatively, of course, they may be older forms later adapted for the new crop. In Hagen and elsewhere, the other main type of garden is the mixed-vegetable plot. The name of this in Hagen is in fact the generic term for garden, *pana* or *pona*, whereas the sweet potato garden is *oka-pana* (sweet potato *pana*).

Pana gardens are planted with many different kinds of vegetables. They may have *Colocasia* taro and bananas as their main crops. The crops develop at different times, greens and cucumbers first, then maize, New Guinea asparagus, and later taro, then finally bananas and sugar-cane. A *pana* garden therefore lasts for quite a long time. It needs fertile soil. Ditches are made to carry excess rainfall away, but not in a grid pattern. The drains are aligned as necessary to carry the water away in the most effective way. Men and women combine their labor in making these gardens and in planting different crops. *Pana* gardens are much valued for the variety and flavors of their products, and people enjoy spending time in them or at their edges, weeding and harvesting, or simply sitting in the cool.

Many of the *pana* crops are taken to market and sold, as are specialized crops such as wing beans, peanuts, and fruit pandanus. When coffee was introduced, its seedlings were often surrounded by vegetable crops of the *pana* type, and this process continues with new plantings today. After all the vegetables and bananas have been harvested, the coffee trees take over completely. In this way some *pana* areas have been lost. People look for new areas within their land claims that they can use for *pana* crops. In the past, men in particular would offer sugar-cane and ripe bananas, if available, to their guests, particularly valued kinsfolk and exchange partners.

Gardening practices contain traces of historical processes. They leave marks on the land which express forms of identity as well as being records of adaptive ingenuity and local knowledge.

Gardens are an essential and pleasing part of the settings in which people live. They provide an intimate cluster of useful and decorative plants around houses. Settlements are often surrounded by plantings of flowers, bushes,

and cordylines with their mixtures of bright red, yellow, and green, enlivening the appearance of the settlement and also fixing the claims of its occupants for the future.



- Coffee trees at Kuk, beside a small family house. Coffee trees are often planted in this way to make it easy for the owner to guard against theft of the berries. (Kuk, 1980s.)- (© P.J. Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive)



Fruit pandanus spikes harvested and laid against a house front. Fruit pandanus is a favorite luxury food that comes notably into season in December and January when the weather is wet. Pandanus groves are usually planted in secluded, damp areas around house sites or at the edges of gardens. (1970s) (© P.J. Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive)

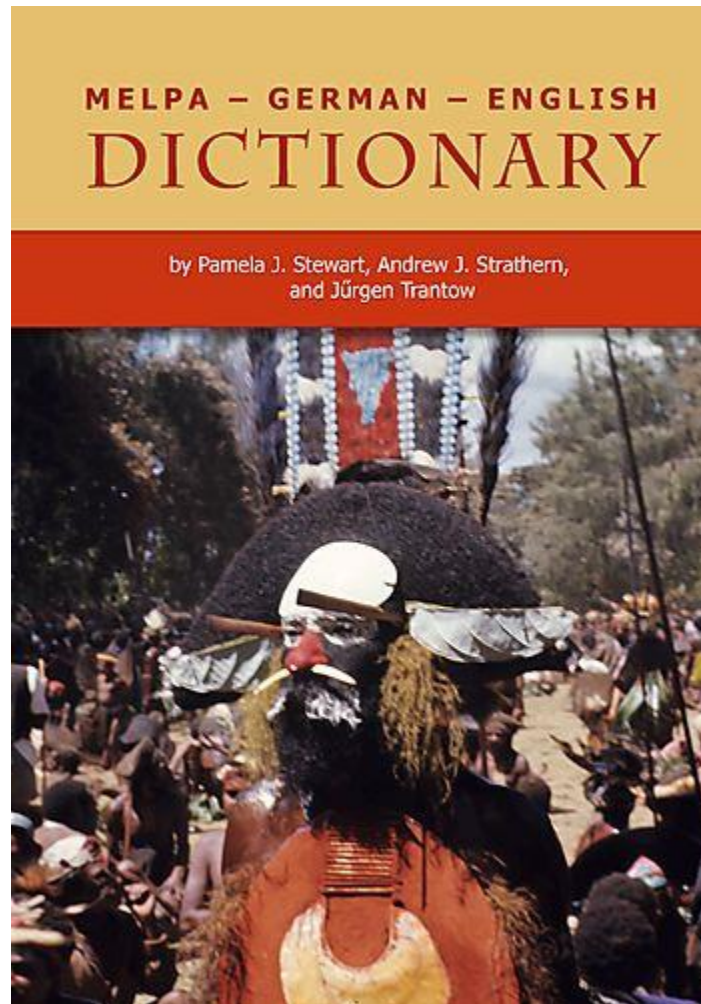


A small child watches as her mother uses her digging stick (*öpukl*) to search for sweet potato tubers in an established garden. The mother sits in the hollow of a garden trench. (*Mbukl*) (1970s) -(© P.J. Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive)



A woman enjoys harvesting wing bean tubers (*Psophocarpus tetragonolobus*). The wing bean vines have been growing on cane stakes. The woman's hair is shaped in ringlets (*peng kandökl*). Wing beans are a much valued crop and are grown mostly at Kuk in the Wahgi Valley, where they flourish (1970s) -(© P.J. Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive)

*Materials in these sections of the book (The Hagen People and Gardening) represent a modified version of a text that appeared in 2002 in Part II. *Gardening: Comparisons from Three Highlands Areas* (Duna, Pangia, and Hagen). In, *Horticulture in Papua New Guinea: Case Studies from the Southern and Western Highlands*. (Sillitoe, Stewart, and Strathern), Ethnology Monographs, No. 18, University of Pittsburgh, pp. 199-338.



Melpa Language*

Introduction

The Melpa (variants Medlpa, Metlpa) language is a language belonging to the Central New Guinea Highlands. Melpa shows a number of grammatical features that are shared with other Highlands languages. The language is highly sophisticated and details of this are presented in Stewart, Pamela J., Andrew Strathern, and J. Trantow (2011). *Melpa, German, English Dictionary*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Library System.

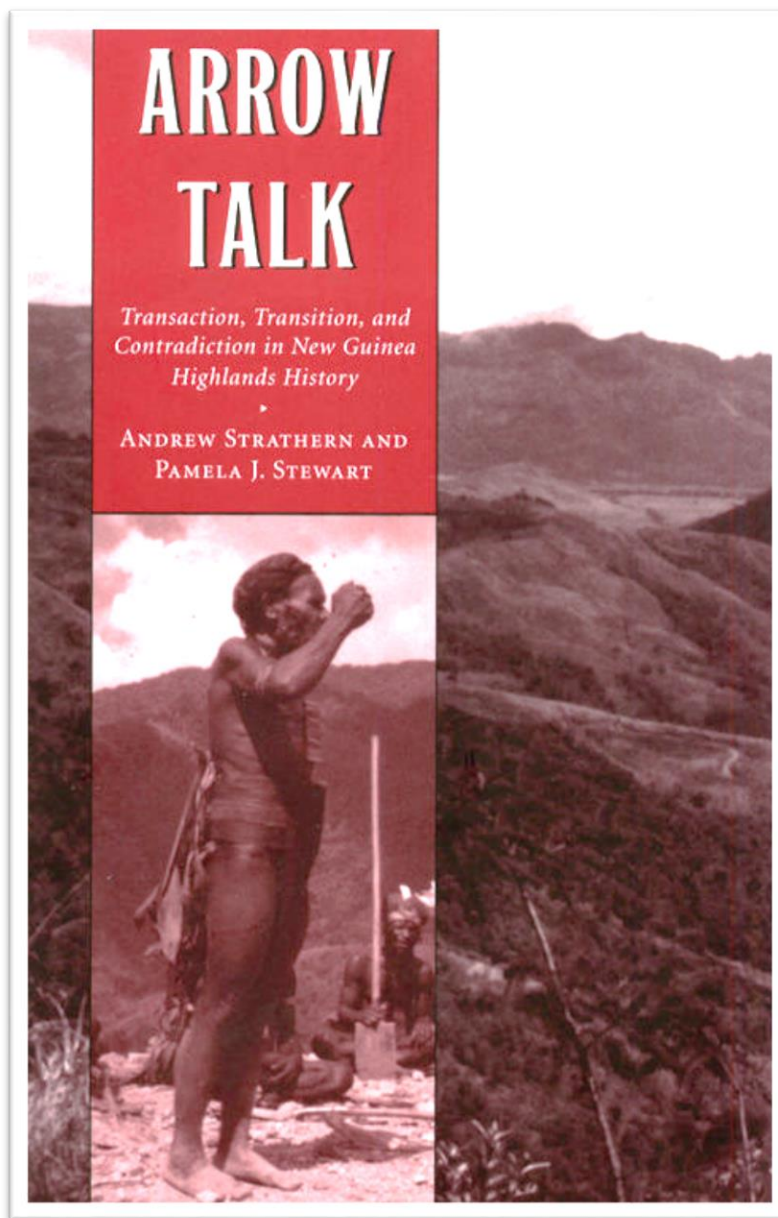
Verb forms in the Melpa language are complex, showing a great concern with small descriptive differences of sense and meaning. Melpa uses a rich and detailed vocabulary. The language is clearly an important window into, and instrument of, cultural expression among the people. The language is a treasure in itself and hopefully will continue to be spoken and used in the many creative ways that it has been used in the past and continues to be used in the present. These ways include public oratory for occasions of peace-making (*el ik*), ceremonial occasion songs (in *moka* events: such as, *kenan*, *mörl*, *werl*, *mölya*, and *rom rondoromen*) and songs for courtship (*amb kenan*), folktales (*kāng*), and long sung ballads that retell elaborate and dramatic versions of themes in folklore (*kāng rom*).

Melpa is a thriving language spoken by over 100,000 people in the Western Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea. Many of its younger generations of speakers have been extensively schooled in English and / or Tok Pisin (a creole language / the lingua franca of Papua New Guinea). Speakers of the Melpa language live north and south of the township of Mount Hagen. South of the township in the Nebilyer Valley and Tambul live the speakers of dialect forms closely related to Melpa, and in the northern Melpa area various specific verb forms and vocabulary differentiate the area from the more numerous Central Melpa speakers. The term ‘Melpa’ originally designated the swampy parts of the Wahgi Valley, but is now used to refer to the whole language group.

El Ik (Arrow Talk)

El Ik (Arrow Talk) is a Melpa form of public oratory (1). Highly skilled and articulate Leaders present their ideas in compelling and dramatic ways

at the end of political events. *El Ik* formulates the history of and significance of the events and charts the future of the groups that are involved in the event. Its primary purposes are to cement peace between groups following conflicts and deaths resulting from such conflicts. It is also a way of building alliances and of creating prestige for speakers who are especially talented in this demanding art form. Below is the cover of our book showing a Leader using *el ik*, Hagen 1960s.



Concealed Talk (*ik ek*)

The skillful use of Concealed Talk (*ik ek*) is a talent used by speakers in mediating conflict and in persuasion. It is an ingenious use of the language. *Ik ek* is also primarily used in political events, where it may be important to avoid too direct a reference to issues between groups that are tense and can lead to violence. Conversely, it can also be used to articulate a concealed threat directed at enemies.

Courting songs (*amb kenan*)

In courting occasions, men would gather in a women's house to sing and 'turn head' with unmarried girls under supervision of a senior woman. The partners would make contact on their noses, then turn their heads together this way and that. We give here an example of a Courting Song (*amb kenan*) from the northern part of the Hagen area (1960s) (2). The singer is a young man who has traveled north from his home in order to court a girl in whose place the White Bird of Paradise (*köi kuri*) is found.

Köi kuri eklka-maklka elna

Ambokla manem ndip kaklnga

Na kond enem a kaemb enem a

Kona röngin kona ilya pöt röngan ka

Nanga kopa kong ilya mbi ond a

Lkömb kong ilya mbi ond a

White bird of paradise plume, you sway back and forth.

Girl, as your mother keeps the fire burning,

I feel sorry, I feel sympathy.

Dawn, come quickly in the place where you rise.

I am going off to my place of mists,

To my ridges where the light rain falls.

The images created here all belong to the context of courting as it was practiced in Hagen in the past. Girls received men as their courting partners in places in which the men took turns to “turn head” (*peng walyinga rui*) with the girls, making contact on the forehead and the nose, while the others sang songs expressive of the occasion and the mother of one of the girls typically watched over the event. The performance took place at night, in a senior woman’s house (men and women had separate houses that they partially shared). The mother kept the fire burning so that she could better see what those taking part were doing. After an event like this a girl might choose to follow a man to his house as a mark of her preference for him.

Another courting song creatively employs the image of a cloud or mist.

Konde moklp a kant mel a

Wande kopa ropa wone ninim a

Le pa win a pa wa ye

Kng e korond a

Mel e korond a

Pren nim kandepa kond enem a

Le pa wina pa wa ye

I am here at Konde and I see

How mist covers over Wande
I'm looking for pigs
I'm looking for shells
Friend, as I look at you,
It makes me so sorry.

The sense of incompleteness, of lack, of longing, comes through gently in the song, as though it were emerging out of the mist. The emotion of *kond*, feeling “sorry,” is found frequently in these songs. In the song here Konde and Wande are actual settlement names, and the places are close enough to be mutually visible in bright weather. Mists can come down suddenly, obscuring the view, and causing a sense of undesired separation.

Both girls and men decorated themselves informally for the occasion. Girls might wear stripes of red face paint across their foreheads in an area where these would make contact with a partner's skin. The face paint might be mixed with magical substances. Men wore bird plumes that moved back and forth as the two participants made the head-turning movements.

In the first song, the singer also expresses his *kond*, his *kaemb* (two terms for sympathy), for the girl. These two emotion terms demonstrate that he is attracted to the girl and wants to stay with her. His own place is distant. He needs to get up early to walk back to it during the day. The girl comes from a low-lying place where the White Bird of Paradise is found, the Jimi Valley north of Hagen. His own place is a cold one, a high mountain ridge covered with mists and rain. When the image of mist appears in these songs it marks distance as separation from the one who is being courted. The warmth of the fire contrasts with this image of a cold climate and of separation. [In the

Hagen area, these courting practices began to disappear in the 1970s. They are still performed in versions for tourists. The art or capacity to create and perform these songs is likely to be lost with the decline of the practice.]

Melpa Ballads (*Kang Rom*)

The Melpa ballads are called *kang rom*, “loud stories” or “stories of praise” (2), (Stewart, Pamela J. and Andrew Strathern, 2005 *Expressive Genres and Historical Change: Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Taiwan* and Pamela J. Stewart, and Andrew Strathern. *Gender, Song, and Sensibility : Folktales and Folksongs in the Highlands of New Guinea*, 2002).

Kang rom are sung by specialists who are skilled in this form of performance. Traditionally *kang rom* would be chanted in a men’s or women’s house. Both women and men had the knowledge and opportunity to produce ballads. Great care was taken in the intervals of breathing so as to assist in producing heightened emotional responses in the listener.

The themes of these ballads are reminiscent of origin stories for Melpa groups. But in *kang rom* the main characters are not seen necessarily as “first people” but as individual human characters. The consequences of a person’s actions are clearly portrayed in these stories [this is a feature shared with origin stories and courting songs (*amb kenan*)]. The various themes and narrative flows are identical with those found in the spoken forms of stories but they are sung in an elaborate poetic vocabulary that make them a distinctive and highly unique artistic form.

Balladic (*kang rom*) performance was a prime form of entertainment in the past among Melpa speakers. The stories were constructed around a

limited set of plots that frequently involved a female and male and their story of courtship, which had favorable or unfavorable consequences for both them and their family.

PLOTS OF THREE *KANG ROM* BALLADS

1. The Story of Kuma Pököt and Kopon Morok

This is a tale of the difficulties of marriage to a person from another group where Pököt goes on a search for a wife and experiences trials and tribulations in his journey (not all of the journey's details are presented here in this short version of the story). Pököt is from the central Hagen area (known as Kuma) and Morok is from the northern Hagen area (known as Kopon).

While Pököt is at home he sees a column of smoke arising in the distance just at sunset. The smoke rises and mixes with the mists of the hills. Out of curiosity Pököt wants to see what the source of the smoke is. Before leaving on his journey he takes a bath, and this reveals his healthy, shiny, brown skin. He carefully decorates himself for the journey

with a bark-belt fitted around his waist, cordyline

leaves at his back, and a front apron.

As he travels toward the column of smoke he sings to himself while crossing rivers and waterways, climbing mountains, and traversing barren plains. Finally, he reaches a garden at Mukl Ropanda in the Jimi Valley where he finds a grand house. Here he sees two young women. The father of the two women appears and asks Pököt what he has come for. Pököt explains that he saw the column of smoke and was curious to see who lived

there. The father takes Pököt into his grand house and feeds him fresh sugar-cane and prepares a fine earth oven (*rokopa*) feast for him. Pököt spends the night in the house and in the morning he declares that he is leaving. The father offers him many fine presents (money, fine shells, and cassowaries) as departing gifts but Pököt does not accept them. So the father presents Morok, one of his daughters, to him. Pököt prepares a great feast for his new wife and her family. He again washes himself as he had at the beginning of his journey and sets off for his home with his wife at his side.

When he arrives home (Mukl Dopaim) he asks his new wife to wait in his house while he goes to tell his family to come and greet his bride. But shortly after he leaves her alone the suitors from her own village, who had followed closely behind during the return journey, approach her and in anger ask her why she has left to go to live elsewhere. They say to her, "Come on, let's go".

The young bride does what she is asked to do by the suitors but before leaving she cuts off a lock of her hair, moistens it with her tears, and wraps it in a leaf, leaving it for Pököt. When Pököt returns to find his wife gone he is very sad and unable to recover his joy of life.

2. The Story of Miti Weipa and Kundila Rangkopa

The plot of this *Kang Rom* ballad is a variant of the previous ballad (Kuma Pököt and Kopon Morok). In this story Weipa, like Pököt, goes in search of a wife and the story proceeds in essentially the same way up to the point when Weipa leaves with his wife to return to his home village. As Weipa and his wife Rangkopa are traveling home they notice that in the direction from

which they have come (Rangkopa's home village) a great deal of smoke is rising into the air. Rangkopa is worried that something may have happened in her village and she is concerned for her family there. Weipa says that he will go back to investigate. When he arrives, he finds that the suitors of Rangkopa, who were angry with her departure, had killed her parents and set the village on fire. Weipa takes revenge on the suitors but one of them succeeds in mortally wounding him with a spear. In concern for his new wife's wellbeing, Weipa sends his spirit back to her and shows her the way to travel to reach his village safely. Rangkopa is confused by the appearance of Weipa, but does not realize that he is dead and that only his spirit is guiding her. Rangkopa arrives safely at the village of her husband's people only to discover the body of her husband being carried in for burial from the place where he had been killed. In her great grief she takes an axe and cuts off a finger and then another finger and yet another finger. She mourns for his passing for three days while his body is elevated on a funeral platform. Rangkopa stays with Weipa's family for the rest of her life.

3. The Story of Miti Krai and Ambra Rangmba

Miti Krai sees a column of smoke in the distance at a sweet potato garden far away up on Mountain Ambra, distant from his own place, Miti Ku, to the north of the smoke column. He wants to investigate. His mother warns him of the potential dangers ahead of him while traveling to unknown regions. But he goes off, and at Ambra meets Rangmba, and he and she declare that they will always be together with each other as husband and wife. Just as Miti Krai and Rangmba are preparing to leave Ambra to return to Miti Krai's village where they will live, Rangmba transforms herself into an old, ugly

female; but Miti Krai had promised always to be loyal to Rangmba, so he takes her on the long journey back home. Upon arrival at his home village his people are revolted by the old woman who is his wife since she is supposed to be a young bride able to work for many years and have a family of children with Miti Krai.

Miti Krai is scolded for bringing her home with him and his sister complains loudly and beats Rangmba severely. But Miti Krai takes Rangmba to his house and begins married life with her. One day a “big-man” leader in the village dies and a funeral is prepared for him. Before attending the funeral Rangmba transforms herself again, this time into a handsome young man. At the funeral Miti Krai’s sister, the one who had beaten Rangmba when she first came home with Miti Krai, sees the handsome youth who is really Rangmba in a transformed state, and she falls in love with the young man. Meanwhile, Miti Krai goes ahead and prepares a large bridewealth payment, having seen a speck of red ochre paint on Rangmba’s eyelid as a mark of Rangmba’s former appearance as his bride.

Rangmba eludes Miti Krai’s sister and in secret transforms herself back into a young bride—the one that Miti Krai had first seen and fallen in love with. The sister of Miti Krai who had treated Rangmba so badly was heartbroken and never recovered from her sorrow.

Kang rom text lines are highly ordered, with numerous repetitions. The lines tend to fall into poetical line forms. Some lines from the beginning of a

version of the Weipa and Rangkopa story (recited by Oke-Koropa in 1965) illustrate this pattern.

Mukl Miti kang Weipa-e
Mukl Miti okla murum-e
Murum omba moklŋa moklŋa-e
Pan kil kil int purum-e
Ui kil kil yand urum-e
Römndi rup kwun pitim-e
Untinga nombokla oronga mba titim-e
Kang mel e kit ni-e
Murum mba moklp moklp-e
Pela ming e leil pitim-e
Tembakl koa leil pitim-e
Kang mel e kit ni-e
Tep alt ndurum köndöröm mel-e
Mukl Kundila al kana-e
Ndip ni wurlung nurum-e
Ndip ni arlung nurum-e
Ma ya amb nam-e
Ta ya wö nam-e
Al kona mukl ila-e
Ndip ti nonom e ya-e

Na mbo könimb mint-e
Nimba kumb kelipa purum-e
Ma ya amb nam-e
Ta ya wö nam-e
Niminga nin ik-e-ya
Na ya pili napint-e
Al kona ndip nonom ila-e
Mbo kumb kelimb nitim-e
Kang mel e kit ni-e
Pöp kumb ya nitim-e
Pili kumb ya nitim-e
Köni kumb ya nitim-e
Kang mel e kit ni-e
Pen nimba pena purum-e

The translation follows:

Weipa, the boy of Miti mountain,
Was up at Miti his home.
As time went on and on,
The dry days passed away,
The wet days came back.

He stood as straight as an arrow

And walked on the old paths,

That daring youth.

As time went on and on

He played his bamboo flute,

He played his bamboo harp,

That daring youth.

Then, as he looked to the east

On Kundila mountain, see!

A fire burnt to the west,

A fire burnt to the east.

Oh, who is my mother,

Oh, who is my father?

On that eastern mountain

A fire is burning and

I must go now and see!

He said and finished his talk.

Oh, who is my mother,

Oh, who is my father?

Whatever it is you say,

I will not listen to you!

The fire that's burning there
I really must go and see!
That daring youth
Spoke his good words.
I want to learn, he said,
I want to see, he said,
That daring youth.
And out he rushed away . . .

The text goes on from this point to describe how Weipa kills and cooks a pig to take with him and then decorates himself for his courting activity.

He cut a *rukmömb* banana,
He gathered some *morok* greens,
He split the casuarina wood,
That daring boy.
He took it to the sacrifice house,
And went right inside
That thing you call the pig's rope,
He tugged firmly at it,
Out of a red, out of a black lake, as in the stories,
Calling, he took hold of it:

A red male pig,
Its big ears flapping,
A depression on its forehead where the club would strike,
Bristles standing up on its head.
Its belly hung down to the ground,
Its feet shook with its own weight.
He applied the pig's rope
To the front leg and
Took it right inside,
That daring boy.
See! right into the sacrifice house
He took it right inside,
Struck it with his club of *milik* wood
And its spirit went down to the banks of the Jimi River,
That daring boy.
Then he singed its hair, it was not like singeing, but more
As though he were clearing a field of tangled weeds.
That boy of Miti, Weipa,
He singed it and laid the skin bare,
And then as he listened, over there he heard
Two things fighting, like fists banging

Against each other, holding tight.
What are those two things? he thought.
One was the bamboo knife of Temboka, Mot,
The other the knife of Melpa, Wat,
Each saying he wanted to eat the pork.
Be quiet, Melpa Wat, he said,
and Temboka Mot came in.
He cut the pig from the tail to the head,
And laid bare the shoulderblade meat.
He cut it again from head to tail,
And pierced the opening to its bowels.
It was not like meat for eating,
It was plentiful as pebbles, on a river bank,
Plentiful as beech nuts that fall from trees.
Like a cluster of red cordyline leaves,
Like a bunch of red *yuimb* tree leaves,
That bold blood of the pig
He made into packs and strung them
Over the fire, as a great leader is lifted
Onto a platform at his funeral.
That daring boy

Said that it was good.

The big pieces of pork he placed in the oven,
Like *konda* bananas, buried to make them ripen,

The little pieces too he buried,
Like *konda* bananas to make them ripen.

Weipa, the boy of Miti hill.

He went down to the banks of the Jimi River,
That daring boy.

He rubbed and rubbed at his skin,
Until it was like the skin of a *mopa* banana.

He rubbed and rubbed at his skin,
Until it was like the skin of a *wenakla* banana.

The fat showed plentiful under his skin,
Even though his body was not so big,

That boy of Miti, Weipa,
And he pulled himself out of the water,

Saying that it was good.

At the entrance to his men's house.

He threw aside the wooden fastening slats,
Took a look about and entered,

That daring boy.

And people who were watching said,
“What is it he’s about to get?”
He went for his pack of salt,
That stood up like the Tirikla hill.
He broke off a piece and took it.
And then he grasped a root of ginger,
Round like the head of the *rumbina* bird,
That daring boy.
He pinched off a leaf of *murip kopal*,
Saying that this was good,
That daring boy.
He pinched off a leaf of *woröu kopal*,
That daring boy,
The boy of Miti, Weipa.
When he blew the salt on the pork,
It was like a storm of rain and hail,
That daring boy.
The people on the far side of the Jimi River
Said it was a rainstorm blowing, and
Covered themselves with their pandanus mats
The people on the near side of the Jimi

Knew it was Weipa blowing his salt,
And came to get a lick at it.
Weipa, the boy of Miti hill
He cut and cut at his pork
See now! He gave to his mother and father,
Making a great heap for them,
And telling them to stay there and eat it.
Then, when he had finished,
He briskly entered his house,
He fastened his bark-belt tightly,
Inserted the cordyline sprigs at his back,
That daring boy.
Tight and dry as a rock cave, inside his belt,
The cordyline tops stuck out like legs of a wild pig,
And as he walked they moved like the wings of the *poklma* bird,
That daring boy.
The conus shell in his nose
Closed his mouth like the door of a house
where people with leprosy live,
Like the disk of a full moon in the second month of *Ui*,
That daring boy.

See! How he wore his nassa shell bands
Strung round his cheeks like wraiths of smoke,
Like the fastenings on fences the Koka-Milika make,
That daring boy.

Weipa, the boy of Miti hill,
His headnet, inwoven with possum fur,
Was like a *kepa* marsupial and its young
Up on the fork of a forest beech,
Weipa, the boy of Miti hill.

That was how you might look at it.

His cassowary headdress
Was like the bloom of the *kengla* bush,
See! Riding high on his head, it was also
Like the great mound of an anthill.

Weipa, the boy of Miti hill,

Said that it was good.

He filled his *kupin* apron inside his belt,
Bright like the gushing water of the Wahgi River.

As he walked he dug up the ground
Like a wild pig rooting for tubers.

That daring boy.

The bright green-snail shell
Hung from his ear like a *nggoimnga* fruit,
Clinking at his cheek.
Weipa, the boy of Miti hill,
That daring boy.
His face was red as the cordyline,
That's planted to mark a boundary.
He said, "I'll stand," and he stood;
His skin was as bright as lightning.

Commentary: The elaborate vocabulary as presented here is full of precise and descriptive images. The pig that Weipa kills is not just a pig: it is a prize specimen. The passage where he calls to it is similar to the context of myths in which pigs were magically called out of a "red" (light-colored) or a "black" (dark-colored) lake. The pig itself is "red" and male. The red color is a mark that it will be dedicated in sacrifice to Sky Beings.

Its male character makes it suitable for the comparison with a great leader (*wuö nuim*) placed on a funeral platform. In Hagen, when pork is prepared for the earth oven, it is customary to put small pieces of fat mixed with blood into long packets of leaves, then to roll these up, fasten them, and cook them above the wooden trestle on which cooking stones are heated for lining the oven. They are hung up in a way that the *kang rom* ballad compares with the placing of a dead leader on a *paka*, a funerary platform, for all to see. The

valuable pig Weipa kills is thus further dignified by being compared with such a dead leader.

The interlude in the ballad that describes the two types of bamboo knife can be compared with the folktale stories about bamboo knives. In this *kang rom*, the *mot* knife is described as being from the Nebilyer Valley (the home place of the narrator's group), and it is the *wat* knife that is said to be from the Wahgi area. The local knife is chosen.

In going to wash himself, Weipa is said to "go down to the banks of the Jimi River." Earlier in the narration, we are told that this is also where the sacrificed pig's spirit goes. The Jimi, lying to the north of the Hagen area proper, is one of the traditional places marking the boundaries between the living and the dead. Saying that Weipa goes down to this same place to decorate himself is at one level just a conventional form of expression. At another level it points out that Weipa is about to engage in a dangerous expedition, which could, and in fact does, lead to his own death.

The epic proportions of his acts show in the idea that when he blew out a mixture of salt and chewed ginger as a seasoning for the blood sausages of pork, the spray seemed to distant people (like those in the Jimi) to be a sign of a storm of hail and rain.

The description of his decorations is detailed, and includes a reference to a style of wearing single bands of nassa shells looped across the cheeks and attached to the nose. This was not current fashion in the 1960s in Hagen, but was a marker of the past. The nassa bands on his face are likened to the bindings on fences made by a people who live in the rainy, mountainous Kaimbi area south of Hagen, known for the neat and secure fences they make, the Koka-Milika tribe. The conus shell is compared to both a full moon

in one of the months traditionally enumerated in pairs by Hageners as the “elder and the junior” months (*komon akel rakl*).

Emphasis is placed on his shells and his feather headdress of cassowary plumes. His overall “red” color marks him out as filled with health and beauty but also as possibly in mortal danger. When he leaves his home, he tells his parents that if a “red” cloud comes up from the place he has gone to, it will mean he has been killed. A red cloud does later appear.

The description of Rangkopa as she decorates herself for her marriage with Weipa, after declaring against all opposition that this is her personal will, is equally striking:

She went down to the banks of the river Jimi,
And washed her skin over and over again,
Until the fat under her skin was glowing,
Though her body itself was small.
Her skin was like the *mopa* banana,
Her skin was like the *wenakla* banana.
She pushed away the dark color
Like pebbles in the Nebilyer River,
She brought back the light color
Like pebbles in the Komon River.
Her headnet she wore raised back from her face,
And the bangles bit deeply into her arm
The woman of Kundila, Rangkopa,

To the right she wore the testicles of a pig
The woman of Kundila, Rangkopa,
To the left she wore the penis of a pig
The woman of Kundila, Rangkopa,
She wore a slim pearlshell at her breast
The woman of Kundila, Rangkopa,
She draped herself in long seed-necklaces
The woman of Kundila, Rangkopa,
Her cheeks sloped smoothly upward,
Her cheeks sloped smoothly downward
The woman of Kundila, Rangkopa,
Her face was like an iris flower
The woman of Kundila, Rangkopa,
Her face was like a sweet flag flower,
The woman of Kundila, Rangkopa,
She said that it was good.
Her teeth were like those of girls who sit
In corners of fields with little cane-grass knives.
See how they can chew!
See how they can eat!
At her front she wore her apron,

Closed over her like dams on the river Nebilyer. . . .

The belt slid loose and rode up.

The woman of Kundila, Rangkopa,

She was such a fine woman,

The woman of Kundila, Rangkopa,

She was there,

Her skin was as bright as lightning.

Commentary: Several phrases in this passage exactly repeat those describing Weipa. Rangkopa (or Rangmba in many versions) goes down to the banks of the Jimi as does Weipa. She, too, is at the edges of life and death. Both decorate themselves finely because their marriage may be the supreme moment in their lives; so finely indeed that it is almost as though their decoration was also to mark their death.

The difference between the descriptions lies in the stress on the physical, bodily attractiveness of Rangkopa, by comparison with the enumeration of the magnificent shell and feather decorations of Weipa. But both are depicted as dazzling: their skins were as bright as lightning. Weipa's style of wearing nassa bands looped on his cheeks is matched by Rangkopa's style of wearing pig's penises as bracelets on her forearms. Early pictures from Hagen confirm that this was indeed a practice in the 1930s.

Rangkopa, like Weipa, is a magical character, supremely full of vitality and a sense of herself. In another passage, the narrator describes how she smokes tobacco:

Rok nomba ol rurum e

Rok wakl prap-prap purum e

Where she smoked tobacco and spat,
Tobacco seedlings sprouted there.

Weipa takes it upon himself to avenge the death of Rangkopa's parents. This is a personal act, induced by his own sense of honor and his feelings of love for Rangkopa. He would not have been obliged by any rules to undertake this. He prepares himself for battle and goes.

Kundila okapona kota nile

Kang mel e kit ni ya

Woklöui mel nimbö kana

Piling ndopa ropa ropa kitim a

Kang mel e kit ni ya

Wuö nimbö ropa ropa kana

Ropa ropa kumndi mbö mundurum a

At the edge of the Kundila gardens

That daring boy

He took out his arrows

And shot them again and again, until he was satisfied,
That daring boy.

See! He shot and killed, he killed those men
He killed them and piled up their bodies in a great mound,
like a mound of pork.

[But in turn one of the enemy is aiming at Weipa himself:]

Nanga wuö nimbö rokon ken a

Nimba pilpa kelpa a

Mbuna-nga karakl ti

Kang mel e warpa-nga nde nila

Pukl tepa moklpa kana

Mukl Miti kang Weipa

Mel ti mbur ndopa köndöröm

Aem mong kikoröm kana

Mukl Miti kang Weipa

Ile poklpa terakl nitim a

“You are killing all of my men,”
He said, and prepared his thoughts,

He drew out his piece of the black-palm tree
 And tightened it on his *warpa* bow.
 It pierced the nipple of Weipa's breast,
 It pierced him straight and he fell back.

Weipa dies, and his ghost, still devoted to Rangkopa, comes to her in order to guide her back safely to his own place. It is a new way for her and she might stray from the path and get lost. She would not be safe at the place of her birth after the killings. Rangkopa thinks that Weipa is still alive, but is confused by his appearance:

Niminga oron e mel a
Köi kngal kiya na nonom e
Kokla poke kiya na nonom e
Nggraem kel kiya na nonom e
Köng i öit kul kul oklna e
Niminga köng i kandep nint e

You do not come as you usually come,
 Your cassowary headdress does not shine,
 Your conus shell, it does not shine,
 Your forehead nassa band is dull,

Your skin feels cold, so cold,
What has happened to it, I say?

Weipa's ghost guides Rangkopa on the way but as they reach his home his family come carrying his dead body and she realizes the truth. Rangkopa is wild with grief and she cuts off three of her finger joints.

Kundila amb Rangkopa ni ya

Amb e ruk körkili nitim e

Nanga wuö mon we ti ka

Wuö-enga köng kandep ont ndi

Wuö ndi rong kant e

The woman of Kundila, Rangkopa,
Threw herself down in grief.
“My fine, my beautiful man,
The man whose body I saw and came,
I see they have killed him.”

After the funeral, at which his body is raised on a platform for the mourning, as befitted his status, Rangkopa stays with his parents.

Mukl Miti kang Weipa
Ya koklpa elim purum e
Kundila amb Rangkopa ni ya
Mukl Miti kang Weipa-nga
Tepam-na mam rakl-kin a
Ile pek korong e

So Weipa, the boy of Miti hill,
Died and went upon his way.
The woman of Kundila, Rangkopa,
Stayed with the father and mother
Of Weipa, the boy of Miti hill,
Until they all died.

She remained faithful to his memory and stayed as a daughter-in-law with his parents and kin for the rest of her life.

Romantic ideals of this kind are of course not always realized in practice. *Kang rom* are forms of high art and as such they present idealized themes.

Kang Rom chanted epics and the spoken folk tales on which they drew certainly influenced people's ideas of the world they lived in and were enjoyable forms of entertainment.

Leader making speech
to plan a moka –
Kawelka group, Hagen,
Papua New Guinea,
1965 - (© P.J. Stewart
& A.J. Strathern
Archive)



Nut pandanus tree with platform
against rats - Nebilyer Valley,
Hagen, PNG, 1965 - (© P.J.
Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive)

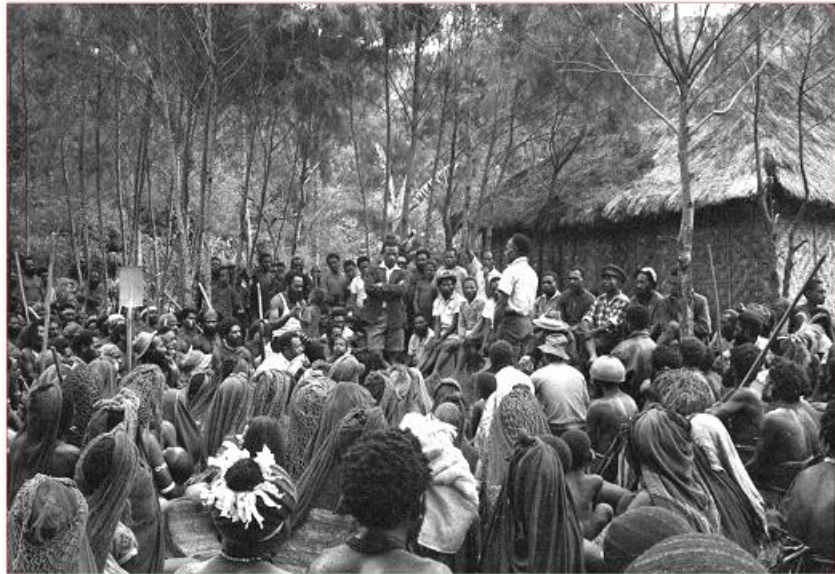


Girl with her small nephew at house-building, Kawelka group, Hagen, PNG, 1965 - (© P.J. Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive)



Leader with long moka stick(koa mak) ornament, at display of pigs for moka – Tipuka group, Hagen, PNG, 1965 - (© P.J. Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive)





Political Candidate on Campaign - Dei Council, Hagen, PNG, 1968 - (© P.J. Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive)

*Materials in these sections of the book on the Melpa language represent a modified and enhanced version of a text that appeared in,

Stewart, Pamela J., Andrew Strathern, J. Trantow (2011).

Melpa - German - English Dictionary. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Library System (available in print and online, open access:

http://www.stewartstrathern.pitt.edu/papua_new_guinea/melpa_dictionary.html

-(1) Materials in this section of the book are drawn from,

Strathern, A. and Pamela J. Stewart (2000) *Arrow Talk: Transaction, Transition, and Contradiction in New Guinea Highlands History*. Kent, Ohio and London: Kent State University Press

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-(2) Materials in this section of the book are drawn from,

Stewart, Pamela J., and Andrew Strathern (2002). *Gender, Song, and Sensibility : Folktales and Folksongs in the Highlands of New Guinea*, Greenwood Publishing Group, Incorporated.

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Melpa CULTURAL TERMS

Old Times, Recent Times, and Current Times

Old Times

--► Traditional tools included the ordinary digging stick (*öpukl*) used by women to plant, weed, and harvest plots of sweet potato and other crops.

--► The main recognized traditional crops were taro (*me*), yam (*op*), banana (*rua*), sugar-cane (*po*), sweet potato (*oka*), and edible green vegetables and flowering vegetables. (*kim kund, mui, ropin*), also winged beans (*pat*), all with different, named varieties.

--► Clothing included netbags (*wal*, made and used by women), *nggil* (women's string aprons) *mbal* (men's front apron, made by women), *wal wönyö* (men's cap or headnet), and *kan nggak* (men's large belt, made by men from tree bark). In addition, men wore an array of cordyline leaves tucked into their bark belts as a rear covering. This list does not include the many items used as adornments or ceremonial costume (*moke mel*).

--► Previous tools: so-called paddle spades, larger than women's digging sticks, were used in the earlier times to cut deep ditches in swampland and convey the excess water away.

Ru is the term for ditches, cut into the peat swampland to carry water away, leaving drier land for cultivation.

--► Each major tribal group had its origin story (*kaklpa titim ik*) and its sacred origin-place (*kona wingndi*), marked by special plants, and an initial mythological encounter with a creative Sky Spirit. Each tribe also had its *mi*, a sacred creature, plant, or object, associated with its origin story, and which was used as a means of establishing that a group member was telling the truth in a situation of dispute and conflict.

The origin stories of each tribe told first how the group acquired the power to prosper and succeed in growing its population. Then the stories often included a narrative of how the group migrated from one place to another. Finally, they described how with the growth in population each tribe became divided into sub-groups based on the genealogies of senior and junior lines or branches within them.

Recent Times

--► *Moka*: a major institution of society and exchange relationships among groups and individuals. A *moka* sequence could develop out of a situation of conflict in warfare, as a means of turning hostility into positive exchanges, based on competition for prestige. This could happen either between enemy groups, or between allies. If there was a history of major hostility, *moka* exchange could not develop.

Where allies were concerned it was the responsibility of the group that had initiated the fight and called on others to help them, to pay compensation in pigs for the allies' losses in battles. Such compensation was described as being for the 'dead man' (*kui wuö*). Between minor enemies, a killing could also lead to compensations, starting with a category of gift known as *wuö*

metemen, ‘they carry the man’, also consisting of pigs and other valuables. In a twist, the victim’s group would conventionally come forward and make solicitary gifts of pigs (*kng pek*) to encourage the killer’s kin to make the main compensation payment.

Moka was then built out of this scenario, because the two sides continued to make exchanges, with each other, and tried to outdo each other in terms of the amounts of wealth transferred. This is called exchanging ‘on the roads of pigs’ (*kng nombuklal*) and is the only way in which friendship is extended over time.

--► *Kuimö*. Another major institution is the custom of paying bridewealth (*amb kuimö*). As with *moka*, bridewealth is actually an exchange of wealth between the new husband’s and the bride’s families. The groom’s side must raise a sufficient number of pigs to satisfy the bride’s kin, notably her mother. The pigs for this purpose are displayed publicly (and called *kng pena*), whereas the return gifts, which are like a dowry for the bride in her new role, are called *kng mangal*, ‘the pigs of the house’, and are given privately. The bride takes these pigs with her when she goes to her husband’s place to start her new life-role.

Women are the major caretakers of pigs, and their views on the adequacy of the bridewealth are given weight. The mother of the bride, particularly, must receive an appropriately fine pig for her daughter’s marriage, the pig called the mother’s head pig (*mam peng kng*). If this is not offered, the bride is likely to gather her things and walk away.

--► *Kin*, pearl shell. A major wealth item in the past. These shells originated in the Torres Straits off the south coast of New Guinea and gradually travelled into the Highlands by circuitous trade routes. Possession of these

shells and giving them away in *moka* or *kuimö* was a mark of Leadership status. After the colonial explorers brought in large numbers of shells by airplane, the value of the shells was undermined and eventually they went out of currency, replaced by introduced paper and coin money. They were, and are, still worn as ornaments for dances to celebrate *moka* occasions or other significant life-cycle events.

--► *Kng* or *Kung*, the pig, supreme source of value. Pigs are costly to rear, and care of them falls largely to women, who feed them, keep them in stalls in their houses at night, and give them names. Colonial explorers and business people brought in new breeds of pigs to mix with the earlier ones, and the resulting pigs were larger than the indigenous ones, and colored grey rather than black. In December 2017 we were told that large pigs were priced by sellers at anything up to 5,000 kina in cash, a steep increase in prices from previous years.

--► *Ku moni*, introduced state money, began entering into transactions in the 1960s and the trend accelerated at Papua New Guinea's Independence in September 1975. Money was given a sacred and aesthetic aura by being given for *moka* and compensation payments.

--► *Nuim*, leading person, male (*wuö*) or female (*amb*). Male leaders in the past tended to be prominent in exchanges, in speech-making, in engaging in and arranging marital alliances, and in guiding their followers in situations of conflicts. Government and business roles today provide men with the status to operate as societal leaders. The same holds for women who can become prominent in development work, education, and also in the work of Christian churches.

--► *Reklaep*: this is a general term for named kinship groups that are constituent features of identity and social life in Hagen. *Reklaep* literally means 'a line or set of people' Each person in Hagen belongs to a large named tribe and within that tribe to successively smaller divisions of it. Tribes remain important as voting blocs in national or regional elections and in large-scale issues over killings and deaths by accident or deaths attributed to sorcery and witchcraft. *Reklaep* can refer to either the whole tribe or its segments.

--► *Moke*: a general term for the adornments people wore on ceremonial occasions. It can refer to head gear, feathers, shells, leaves, grasses, earth paints, aprons, headnets, cordylines, reed skirts, in fact every item that may form part of an assemblage of decorations.

--► *Mön*: ritual spells, either used for healing purposes or sung as an essential part of major ritual complexes directed to the Female or Male nature spirits in order to restore fertility and sustainability to the land and its people. For healing, the expert, called the *mön wuö* or *mön amb*, male or female ritual specialist, would whisper the spell over the patient and perhaps rub some earth on their skin or have them drink some bespelled water from a bamboo tube. The expert would receive a conventional level of payment for these services, associated with portions of pork from pigs killed to appease the spirits of dead kin in case they were upset and needed to be made to feel better by the sacrifice of pigs in their honor.

--► Sacred Tub (*pokla mbo*): Right in front of every ceremonial men's house, built at the head of a *moka pena* (space reserved for exchanges of wealth), there were one or more of these sacred tubs, with a wooden and bark frame surrounding packed earth. The tub had, buried in it, items thought to be

magical and capable of attracting wealth items such as pigs and shells to the men's house. In the sacred tub a special tree (a cordyling or another long-living tree) was planted by the leading sponsor of the *moka pena*. This tree was believed to bring fertility to the locality and all that lived in the place of the *pokla mbo*. The tub's name means "planted shoot".

--► Sacred Earth Oven (*rokopa*): This special earth oven was constructed by a leading ritual expert of the *Wöp* ritual celebration. The *Wöp* ritual was in honour of a male spirit thought to dwell in a pair of special water pools stemming from natural springs (one was called eye closed - *kumbili* and another was called eye open - *mökeli*). The *rokopa* was used to cook sacrificial pigs. The oven was lined with strips of silvery coloured leaves (*mara omong*) and rusty-brown coloured leaves (*kundumb omong*). These same two types of leaves were used to decorate the entrance gate into the ritual site where the pigs were sacrificed for cooking. Both kinds of leaves are from the high forest. The *Wöp* ritual was held in a special enclosure in the forest where these leaves grow and where the special water pools were located by the officiating ritual expert.

--► *El* and *El Ik*: *el* is a term for 'arrow' or also 'fighting', 'warfare', whereas *el ik*, 'arrow talk', is actually the term for a heightened kind of rhythmic oratory practiced by Leaders to mark the establishment of peace between groups that have been in conflict. With *el ik* the speakers traditionally would move around swinging an axe and punctuating each line of the speech with the sounds - o-o-o. The speeches were highly compressed and filled with stimulating commentary that skillfully used metaphors [a language use that creatively makes a comparison between two things] and in-group references to create a state of mind in the listeners to assist in producing a peace

process. The formal style of *el ik* is effective in engaging the listeners to carefully follow the content of the speech. Much depends on the speaker's skill and standing in the community.

Warfare itself took various forms in the past. A distinction was made between minor fighting (*el öninga*) among groups that could also make alliances or help each other in other fighting events and major fighting (*el parka*, "red bird of paradise" warfare) against groups where long-standing enemy relationships existed. *El parka* fighting groups usually did not have the possibility of making peace or compensation payments that could lead into *moka* exchanges. Bird of paradise plumes were worn as head-dresses by warriors in major combats.

In cases where a first major compensation for a killing was held, those paying the compensation would be described as 'carrying the man' (*wuö metemen*), with the sense that compensation was a means of giving renewed life to the receiving group. The pigs given could be used to pay bridewealth for new marriages and the replacement of group members lost in fighting.

Women played an important role in making these events possible through their work with raising pigs and keeping them calm so that they could be lined up and given to members of the receiving groups. They were deeply involved in compensation payments, and without their input these could not have taken place. As formal representatives of the groups, however, men took the leading part in speech-making.

Current Times

Many new things have come into the lives of the people.

--► State-introduced money and commerce have had an enormous effect. Melpa speakers call money *ku moni*, 'stone money', from their early familiarity with metal coins. As they did not have metal in their own cultures, they called these coins 'stones'. Nowadays they are very familiar with paper currency. When this currency first entered into the people's *moka* exchanges, they arranged the notes in artistic ways in circles, sprinkling them also with flowers as decoration and laying them out on colourful introduced cloths bought in tradestores.

--► Coffee (*kopi*) was an early crop introduced by the colonial government to give the people an income producing crop. The people took up its cultivation everywhere, and it remains today the most prominent cash crop. The first plantings were in the 1950s and many of these trees are old now. In some places people are replacing them with vegetable gardens for produce to be sold in the town market or on the roadsides. Major plantations of coffee were also established by expatriate business people from Australia such as the one at Tiki in the Baiyer Valley set up by an early expatriate entrepreneur. Tiki was purchased later by the local government council. Many of the plantations have now been subdivided or have fallen into disuse. Local entrepreneurs own plantations they themselves created, such as the coffee stands on Mountain Ambra which was formerly a bare volcanic hill jutting out from the surrounding valley floor. Local coffee growers also cover large parts of the former agricultural research station at Kuk. Tea was also introduced as a commercial crop in the Wahgi Valley, with large expatriate-owned plantations, including the Warrawau plantation owned by the Manton company and also numbers of small holdings owned by Hageners. Warrawau plantation was abandoned after a series of conflicts over the land

among the traditional landowners and with the company. Coffee is easier to grow and to process than tea, so it took over.

--► Hospitals (*kui manga* in Melpa, Haus Sik in Tok Pisin). Government and mission authorities set up biomedical hospitals and rural clinics in colonial times. The rural clinics, staffed by minimally trained paid orderlies, have suffered from a lack of medical supplies and committed personnel. The Lutheran mission hospital at Kotna has been well staffed in the past, and its manager, Dr. Kulow, was known and respected widely in the area. The Hagen town hospital is funded by the government, but it has experienced staff shortages and deficiencies of supplies also. The hospital is surrounded by a protective fence.

--► Education (*sikul*). Education is vital for a developing country like Papua New Guinea. The colonial government and missions established a wide variety of institutions at multiple levels, including tertiary levels with the Port Moresby based University of Papua New Guinea. The Western Highlands Province government lays great stress on the creation of new high schools throughout the Province, in line with the policies of the present (2018) Governor and Regional Member of Parliament, The Hon. Paias Wingti.

--► Transport, Vehicles (*rot, kar* in Tok Pisin). Roads are vital components of development in Papua New Guinea. Over time, improvements in roads are marked by their being sealed with tarmac and drainage established at their sides. Road development is uneven. A rural area of several miles between Tiki and the Highlands Highway is sealed to a high level, whereas the urban centre of Mount Hagen is sometimes in need of repairs to potholes. Four-wheel drive vehicles early on became objects of high prestige and remain so. Small buses ply the unsealed country roads as well as the

highways, carrying large numbers of passengers to town markets and commercial stores belonging to expatriate companies, many of them Chinese-owned. On a broader front, those who can afford to do so travel overseas, especially to Brisbane and Cairns in Queensland, Australia.

--► Church (*lotu*, in Tok Pisin). Christian missionaries made their way into the Highlands in the 1930s soon after initial explorations and the preliminary introduction of colonial government. In Hagen the Lutheran and Catholic missionaries divided up the areas around the developing township. Catholics took the area to the south, Lutherans to the north. Increasingly in the 1980s onward, many new charismatic and Pentecostal churches have been established and become very popular. They tend to set themselves against traditional culture and its values, but in practice reincorporate old ideas into their own frameworks of belief by stressing the reality of spirits and the significance of dreams. Catholic and Lutheran practices have also been affected by 'revival' movements and charismatic elements of practice such as speaking in tongues, prophesying and driving out spirits by local prayers. Churches are mostly staffed and run by national personnel, but expatriate missionaries have played a very big part in creating their presence among the local people and in setting up health, development, and educational facilities.

--► Values (*ukl kae mbö*). Every society needs a sense of social values by which to steer its pathways. Modern life produces many challenges to the older ways of life. The old ways, however, still contain much that is very valuable, in terms of the importance of work, respect for kin and parents, skill in communication, and the creation of good feelings among people by positive exchanges of wealth for keeping the peace.

Further information on local Cultural Terms and Practices can be found in the following publications available in print and as e-books:

--► **Ethnohistory and Oral History**

- Strathern A. and Pamela J. Stewart (2007). *Collaborations and Conflicts. A Leader Through Time.* Cengage Learning Publishing. This is a life-story of Ongka Kaepa, a Kawelka Hagen Leader from the Kuk area. Also, Andrew Strathern was the anthropologist and translator for the famous film (*Ongka's Big Moka*).

- Strathern, A. and Pamela J. Stewart (2000). *Stories, Strength & Self-Narration. Western Highlands, Papua New Guinea.* Adelaide, Australia: Crawford House Publishing. This is a life-story of Ru Kundil, a Kawelka Hagen Leader from the Kuk area.

- Strathern, Andrew and Pamela J. Stewart (2007). Preface to the New Edition. 2007 Waves of Change, pp. xv-xviii. In, *The Rope of Moka.* [Re-issued with corrections, 2007]. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

--► **Folktales**

- Stewart, Pamela J., and Andrew Strathern (2002). *Gender, Song, and Sensibility : Folktales and Folksongs in the Highlands of New Guinea,* Greenwood Publishing Group, Incorporated.

and

- Stewart, Pamela J. And Andrew Strathern (eds.) (2005). *Expressive Genres and Historical Change: Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Taiwan.* London, U.K. and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing.

--► **Healing Practices / Healing Spells**

- Strathern, A. and Pamela J. Stewart (2010). *Second edition, "Curing and Healing: Medical Anthropology in Global Perspective"* [Updated and Revised]. Durham N.C.: Carolina Academic Press.

- Strathern, A. and Pamela J. Stewart (1999). *The Spirit is Coming! A Photographic-Textual Exposition of the Female Spirit Performance in Mt. Hagen.* Ritual Studies Series, No. 1. Pittsburgh, PA.

- Stewart, Pamela J. and A. Strathern (2001). *Humors and Substances: Ideas of the Body in New Guinea.* Westport, Conn. and London: Bergin and Garvey, Greenwood Publishing Group.

--► Conflict, and Peace-Making

● Strathern, A. and Pamela J. Stewart (2000). *Arrow Talk: Transaction, Transition, and Contradiction in New Guinea Highlands History*. Kent, Ohio and London: Kent State University Press

● Strathern, A. and Pamela J. Stewart (2011). *Peace-making and the Imagination: Papua New Guinea Perspectives*. Brisbane: University of Queensland Press.

● Stewart, Pamela J. and Andrew Strathern (2002). *Violence: Theory and Ethnography*. London and New York: Continuum Publishing.

--► Exchange / Sacrifice / Ritual / Religion

● Stewart, Pamela J. and Andrew Strathern (eds.) (2008). *Exchange and Sacrifice*. For, Ritual Studies Series, Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press.

● Stewart, Pamela J. and Andrew Strathern (eds.) (2009). *Religious and Ritual Change: Cosmologies and Histories*. For, Ritual Studies Series, Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press.

***Amb Kor* (Female Spirit) Ritual**

The *Amb Kor* ritual was a practice directed towards a powerful female Sky Spirit, worshipped in the form of sacred stones. The *Amb Kor* was said to reveal to a Leader or Leaders the knowledge that it was time to perform the ritual practices, sacrifices, and dances belonging to the tradition of her origins in the Tambul area south of Mt. Hagen. The aim of the performance and related ceremonial events was to secure the fertility and prosperity of the land and its people. The male performers who sacrificed pigs in the ritual enclosure were conventionally referred to as the husbands of the *Amb Kor*. Ritual experts from the groups associated with the origins of the practice visited and gave the performers sacred plants and cool water. They mixed a vegetable substance, *uipip*, into a meal of pork, as a protection against sickness. In return, the performers paid the experts with pork, shell valuables, and, more recently, introduced money.

Inside the ritual performance area, hidden from view by a special fence, was a structure, called the “men’s and women’s house,” (*manga rapa ambnga*). The ritual performers made earth ovens in this house, that were piled over with forest moss when they cooked the sacrificial meat. This meat was dedicated to the *Amb Kor*. Each of the male participants was ritually paired with another male participant as a partner, and these pairs always had to enter and leave the ritual enclosure area together. This pairing symbolized the importance of men and women in the production of pigs and the reproduction of humans within the group. One partner was said to represent the men’s side of the ritual house, while the other was said to represent the women’s side.

At the last event of the performance the men came out from the ritual area in their pairs. They wore head-dresses with White Bird of Paradise feathers and they performed a dance of drumming with their feet in honor of the *Amb Kor*. This dance was called *kor kondoromen*, “they complete the spirit dance”. Then the performers streamed back into the enclosure, and re-emerged onto specially constructed high wooden platforms. From these platforms the performers distributed pieces of pork to the massed spectators. They placed the meat onto the upturned spears of the recipients.

The leaders of the performance later buried the sacred stones representing the Spirit in a secret spot within the enclosure.

The whole performance depended on the co-operative labor of the men and women of the performing group, even though the Spirit was said to be jealous of the male performers’ human wives, and to ban them from entering her enclosure.

The origin myth associated with this *Amb Kor* ritual explains that the *Amb Kor* was connected with the Sky and the power of mountain storms, and that the sacrifices to honour her were first instituted in response to environmental stresses, and were designed to restore fertility to the land and its people.

The *Amb Kor* stones

The *Amb Kor* stones are volcanic stones that male ritual participants collect to serve as representations of the Female Spirit during the *Amb Kor* ritual performance and ceremonies. The location of the appropriate stones is revealed to the men by the Female Spirit during their dreams. Once the stones have been collected from river beds and elsewhere (some are

prehistoric mortars), they are placed inside the ritual performance enclosure and serve as a vessel for the powers of the Female Spirit.

Many of these stones are round, and some are elongated. They are decorated with red and white earth paints and pig-fat much like the decorations that are worn by the male ritual performers at the festive dancing that marks the end of the ritual ceremonies. The Amb Kor stones are further surrounded by cool ferns and carefully placed to rest in the earth, where they are said to continue to exercise their beneficial influence on behalf of the group. These stones, marks of the Spirit, are often collectively called the “wife” of the ritual performers during the period of the ritual celebration.

Melpa Images *

[Aspects of Culture are changing all the time. The materials presented here are from recent historical times and reflect how history intersects with the present.]

Social life of communities in Papua New Guinea is diverse and changing, with aspects of continuity running deep into history. Various indigenous practices have been modified with cultural / social elements being borrowed or passed on between groups of peoples across linguistic and political boundaries. Following contact with colonial powers and missions from overseas, forms of Christianity have been established in almost every corner of Papua New Guinea, often founded initially on a rejection of indigenous ideas and values but later incorporating more of these ideas and values back into the new practices. Many varieties of Christianity have been introduced over time: for example Catholicism, Lutheranism, Presbyterianism, Methodism, Seventh Day Adventism, and Charismatic and Pentecostal versions, such as the Assemblies of God (AOG). Catholic and Lutheran churches were brought to Mt. Hagen in the 1930s and now are considered to be the 'traditional' forms of Christianity.



Men holding down pig for sacrifice - Hagen, Papua New Guinea, 1964 - (© P.J. Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive)

Two men carrying bundles of pearl shells for moka – Hagen, Papua New Guinea, 1964 - (© P.J. Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive)



Woman plastering mud on pig for moka – Hagen, Papua New Guinea, 1964 - (© P.J. Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive)

Men repairing pearl shell mounts in preparation for moka – Kawelka, Hagen, Papua New Guinea, 1964 - (© P.J. Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive)



Ongka-Kaepa scraping pearl shell for repair – Kawelka group, Hagen, Papua New Guinea, 1964 - (© P.J. Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive)



Feather plaque head-dresses mounted on banana stock, worn at moka – Kawelka, Hagen, PNG, 1964 - (© P.J. Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive)



Pearl shells laid out for moka display – Kin Pup (place), Minembi Yelipi group, Hagen, PNG, 1964 – (© P.J. Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive)



Live pigs tethered on rainy day at ceremonial ground for moka – Minembi Papeke group, Hagen, PNG, 1964 (© P.J. Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive)



Carving pork for a festival – Ogelbeng (place), Elti group, Hagen, Papua New Guinea, 1964 - (© P.J. Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive)

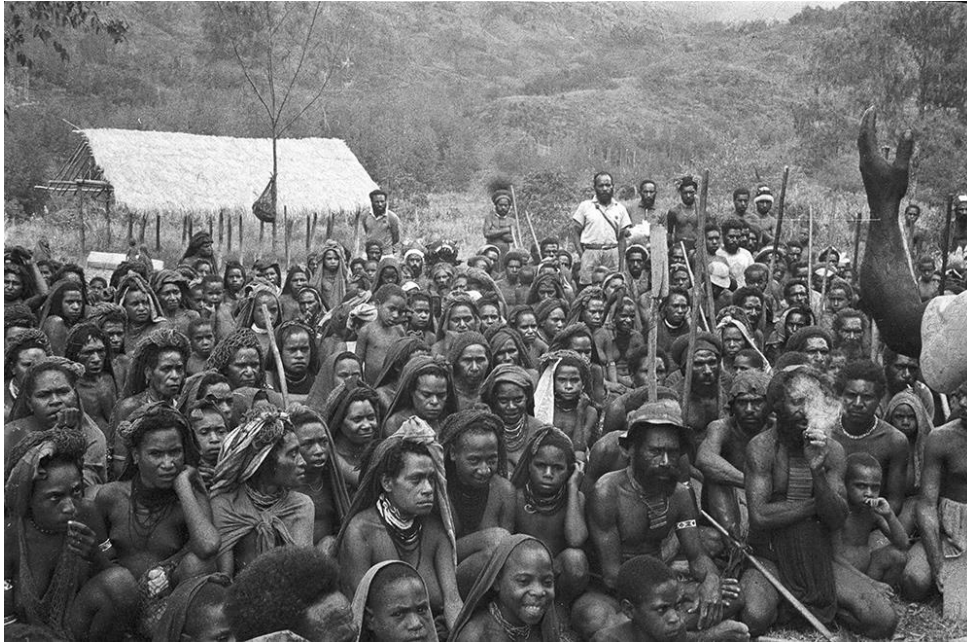




Sacrificial earth oven lined with moss and ritual markers of Male Spirit – Nebilyer Valley, Epokla-Eilya group, Hagen, PNG, 1965 - (© P.J. Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive)



Sacred tub of cordyline plants (*pokla mbo*) at head of ceremonial ground – Nebilyer Valley, Hagen, PNG, 1965 - (© P.J. Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive)



Women and men listening to election speech - Dei Council, Hagen, PNG, 1968 - (© P.J. Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive)



Male dancers with tall head-dresses - Nebilyer Valley, Western Highlands, PNG, 1968 – (© P.J. Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive)

*Materials in this section of the book (Melpa Images) come from our © P.J. Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive.

Material Culture of the Highlands*

Senior women dancing at a moka; Hagen, Papua New Guinea, January 1978 (© P.J. Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive)



Description

Ornamental object worn in men's wigs.
Two black palm prongs, and animal teeth bound with fiber strings onto a soft bark core.
Dog/marsupial teeth(?).
Also described as a 'comb'.

Global Region of Origin

Papua New Guinea

Date

prior to 1964

Material

Palm, animal teeth, fiber, bark

Provenance

Tambul area, Western Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea

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Description

Nassa shell mat, with diamond spaces in middle, old bridewealth goods, backing of bark cloth on which the shells have been sewn

Local name *pela öi*

Global Region of Origin

Papua New Guinea

Date

Pre-1960

Materials

nassa shells, fiber thread, bark cloth, red paint in diamond spaces

Provenance

Melpa area, Mount Hagen, Western Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea

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Description

Crescent pearl shell worn as a neck pendant.

Strap made of Coix Lacryma Jobi seeds (kokla wöyö) strung on black string.

Local names *kin, mande*

Global Region of Origin

Papua New Guinea

Date

N/A

Material

Shell, Seeds

Provenance

Mount Hagen area, Western Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea

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Description

Tightly woven armband worn by men for ceremonial dances, plaited plant fibers bound on cane bands.

Local name *ki akla*.

Global Region of Origin

Papua New Guinea

Date

N/A

Material

Plant fibers, cane

Provenance

Mount Hagen area, Western Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea

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Description

Netbag, used to carry food, infants, piglets, other items.

Global Region of Origin

Papua New Guinea

Date

1998

Material

Woolen or string fiber, obtained from garments

Provenance

Highlands, Papua New Guinea

Copyright

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Description

Clay whistle with decorative incised patterns, in shape of fish.

Global Region of Origin

Papua New Guinea

Date

1990s

Material

Clay

Provenance

Chimbu (Simbu) Province, Papua New Guinea

Copyright

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Description

Bamboo pan-pipes with 20 pipes.

Global Region of Origin

Papua New Guinea

Date

1990s

Material

Bamboo, bindings of fiber.

Provenance

Highlands of Papua New Guinea

Copyright

© P.J. Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive



Description

Mottled cowrie shell with necklace of nut shells.

Global Region of Origin

Papua New Guinea

Date

1990s

Material

Cowrie shell with nut necklace strung on fiber.

Provenance

Highlands of Papua New Guinea

Copyright

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Front view



Back view

Description

Planilateral axe, blade for ceremonial use

Local name *rui mong*

Global Region of Origin

Papua New Guinea

Date

before 1960

Materials

greywacke stone

Provenance

Mount Hagen area, Western Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea

Copyright

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Description

Knife for carving meat with band of fiber

Local name *koya*

Global Region of Origin

Papua New Guinea

Date

1998

Materials

Bamboo

Provenance

Mount Hagen, Papua New Guinea

Copyright

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Description

Axe blade (lenticular)

Global Region of Origin

Papua New Guinea

Date

unknown / prehistoric

Materials

heavy black stone

Provenance

Papua New Guinea (Highlands)

Copyright

© P.J. Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive



Description

Prehistoric Stone Pestle

Global Region of Origin

Papua New Guinea

Date

unknown / prehistoric

Materials

heavy grey stone

Provenance

Papua New Guinea (Highlands)

Copyright

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Young man's headdress - Tipuka Group, Hagen, PNG,
1968 - (© P.J. Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive)



NETBAGS (*Wa*) (Bilums)

Netbags are a ubiquitous part of daily life in both urban and rural contexts in the Hagen area. Women make these bags using a special technique of looping together plant fibers, or nowadays wool threads, to produce a very flexible mesh that can easily expand to hold large quantities of garden foods. Women also use these bags, slung at their backs and suspended from their foreheads, to carry small children or piglets around. At a broader symbolic level, netbags are markers of the female womb and capacity to 'carry' children. Men also may wear netbags, wearing them either at their fronts or on their right shoulders.

Prior to direct contact with other areas, Hagen women's netbags were made from plant fiber, rolled on the thigh to produce string, and dyed dark blue or purple with a plant dye called *kung*. With the advent of store goods, including second-hand clothing of many different colors, women began unpicking the cloth and rolling new threads from it, entering into a period of

innovation in colors and designs that continues today. The creators of the bags borrow designs that they see are developed in their Highlands areas, and they invent designs of their own. Different designs have names such as one that looks like the shape of an evergreen tree that is called 'Christmas tree' design.

Most recently the basic netbag designs have been further elaborated into kinds of fashion wear for women, advertised in media outlets, with individual female designers. Some of the items made are called 'bilum-wear' and can take the form of an attractive trim-fitting dress. In advance of this consciously developed fashion trend, young women in Hagen already used to attach light-coloured scarves to their netbags, allowing these to drape gracefully over their faces and body. When some Christian churches forbade women to decorate in the traditional manner for *moka* dances, women turned to decorating their netbags rather than themselves, in the bright-red and yellow colours of before, and they adopted many different names for these designs.

Women can be seen in various places making netbags -- at the market place, while sitting with other women and children having conversations, and while waiting for events to occur. The Market of the Pacific in Hagen is a place where netbags are sold in addition to locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables. Outside of the Kagamugla airport, in Hagen, netbags are displayed and sold to tourists and travelers in the area.

Overall, one symbolic association of women's netbags remains, and that is the parallel between the netbag and the womb. In another sense, the two items that women deploy to make these bags are further referred to as symbols of co-ordinated preparations to make a *moka* exchange. The saying is *nim kan rōngi , na nggal aepa*, "You will be the thread, I will be the flying fox bone needle'. A woman skillfully pulls the thread with her needle through loops to make a netbag. Exchange partners co-operate to make a *moka* event happen in a similar manner. Pathways of pigs exchanged through networks are painstakingly meshed together, leading up to a major *moka* occasion. One partner is like the thread, the other like the needle, and both must work together to produce the event.

*Materials in this section of the book (Material Culture of the Highlands) come from our © P.J. Stewart & A.J. Strathern Archive.

Also from our essay, 1997 Stewart, Pamela J. and Andrew J. Strathern. Netbags Revisited: Cultural Narratives from Papua New Guinea. *Pacific Studies*. Vol. 20, No. 2. pp. 1- 30.

The Pride in Place

Melpa Cultural Heritage Centre at Rondon

This Centre is a living and growing tribute to the Melpa People in the Western Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea. The Centre is located near to the Rondon Ridge Lodge where travelers can rest, eat, and be a part of the beauty of Highlands Papua New Guinea, with lush rainforest surrounds, placed in an ecologically friendly environment.

This locality is a delight to experience with the wind in the trees; the ever-changing cloud patterns; the amazing variety of birds, moths, butterflies, beetles, ferns, grasses, tree orchids, and multiple varieties of cordyline plants.

The Centre is divided into several sections:

--The Distant Past,

--The Recent Past,

--The Now Time

--The Library / Research center for collection and archiving of research materials on the histories of all the major tribal groups and their experiences of change in their lives.

--The Garden of Life (demonstrating local foods that are grown in the area)

--An area for culturally related Melpa Performances of song, dance, narratives of history, Melpa story recitations, demonstrations of locally

produced items such as the famous netbags (bilums) and the techniques of stone ax blade manufacture, and musical instrument playing with end-blown bamboo flutes, and mouth harps.

The Centre aims to show a history of both changes and continuities over time, demonstrating the resilience of the Melpa People. It aims to play a pivotal role in enhancing cultural awareness among visitors; strengthening senses of identity, heritage, and pride among the local people; and providing a source of cultural education to schoolchildren in the Province.

The natural and cultural environment in this area is like nowhere else and is a priceless possession for the country.