

Divisions of Power: Rituals in Time and Space among the Hagen and Duna Peoples, Papua New Guinea *

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This paper analyzes the results of original research by the authors in two areas of the Papua New Guinea Highlands, Hagen and Duna. The paper stresses the importance in both areas of the phenomenon of ritual trackways and the principle of precedence in the sphere of ritual. "Ritual trackways" is a term for the historical passage of cult performances from one group to another, starting from a point where knowledge of the cult is said to have originated. Experts from this geographical point act as officiants in performances along the trackway and may be paid for their services. "Precedence" refers to the superior rights of these experts over the secret knowledge and power to produce fertility that constitutes the rationale for cult practices. The non-Austronesian speaking Highlands societies have been described as predominantly based on egalitarian and competitive exchange relations. Cult contexts, however, show that, in the sphere of ritual, rights established by precedence modify this picture. In turn, exchanges that are built into the cult activities reassert the status of those participants who recognize the superior powers of the ritual experts. This framework for analyzing the Highlands societies gives us a different perspective from that which has been previously established, and shows that precedence, well known in Austronesian-speaking cultures, is also significant in ritual contexts in these non-Austronesian-speaking areas. An emphasis on the ways in which ritual power is seen as originating and on how it is successively shared or divided as it is transmitted along trackways further makes it possible to suggest a comparison between aspects of Female Spirit cults in Hagen and Duna and

* We thank the government of Papua New Guinea for relevant research permission to carry out field research since 1964 through 1999. We thank all of the Papua New Guineans with whom we have worked over the years. We thank also the institutions that have provided financial assistance, including the Wenner-Gren Foundation, the National Science Foundation, the H. F. Guggenheim Foundation, the American Philosophical Society, James Cook University of Northern Queensland (Australia), and in Pittsburgh the Pitcairn-Crabbe Fund and the Office of the Dean, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, University of Pittsburgh.

the temple worship of Mazu, a female deity of considerable importance in Taiwan. This comparison is based on two points of similarity. The first is the shared idea of precedence, in terms of the place from which power is held to originate. This principle is strongly established in the Mazu complex. It also goes with trackways, along which ritual power is held to have been distributed and shared out over time as new temples were established. The second point of similarity is based on the gendered identity of the spirits or deity involved. The imagery of a female entity expresses the idea of mobility and of the spirit or deity coming to an area like a bride, bringing new connections and new powers. This imagery is explicit both in the Papua New Guinea cases and in the Mazu complex. In the Mazu complex also there are elaborate exchanges which establish the status of the participants who receive ritual power. These analytical similarities can be discerned in spite of the obviously great differences in terms of history and material culture. The paper therefore suggests a methodology for a comparative understanding of the forms of transmission of ritual power. It also pinpoints the particular significance of gendered symbolism in the genesis of ideas regarding such forms of transmission.

Keywords: precedence, ritual trackways, female spirits, New Guinea, Taiwan

Introduction

Seen in time and space, there are two main ways in which ritual power may be transmitted: a strictly hierarchical mode, and a relatively egalitarian mode. When we apply this concept to the transmission of ritual power in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea (PNG) contexts we see that these two ways are sometimes combined into a system of “ritual trackways” (Stewart 1998). We have developed this concept in earlier publications on the transmission of ritual complexes in the Hagen and Duna areas of the Highlands of PNG.¹ Here we analyze further these trackways as modes of power-transmission which merge notions of *precedence* that are commonly found outside of the Highlands of PNG, in various Austronesian language areas, and notions of *exchange*, which are often found to be basic to many of the Highlands societies as well as throughout the South-West Pacific. Ritual trackways can be seen as

¹ For more detailed materials on the Hagen area and on the topics of this section see Stewart and Strathern (1998a, 1998b, 1999a, 1999b); Strathern (1971, 1972); Strathern and Stewart (1997, 1998, 1999a, 1999b, 2000a). For more detailed materials on the Duna and on ritual practices among them see Stewart (1998); Stewart and Strathern (2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2000d, 2001a, 2001b, 2002a). Other works on the Duna area include Modjeska (1977, 1982, 1995).

the expression of a combination of these two principles (i.e., precedence and exchange).

Precedence implies the rights of one group or person over another by virtue of seniority in genealogical terms and/or residence or action. For example, it may operate through primogeniture; or through the assertion of rights derived from first occupancy; or through agnatic against cognatic ties, as found in the case of the Kwaio and Choiseulese peoples of the Solomon Islands (Keesing 1982; Scheffler 1965). Precedence may also influence the form of exchanges of wealth, giving greater power to those seen as "senior". The effect of reciprocal exchanges is often to ameliorate the asymmetry of precedence and endow relations with a more symmetrical set of meanings. Exchange is also an avenue in which precedence may be upset by competitive achievement. Juniors may outdo or replace seniors by their own efforts. Tensions surrounding these principles are characteristic of many societies in the South-West Pacific.

For the Highlands of Papua New Guinea, such an analysis of the interplay of principles has not generally been a focus in the ethnographic literature. For New Guinea as a whole the prevailing emphasis has been placed on categories such as "initiation cults" or "cargo cults", and on their demise or emergence in contexts of historical change. In relation to the Highlands region, Michael Allen (1967) and Daryl Feil (1987), among others, recognized that male initiations and warfare tended to be stressed more in the eastern highlands and fertility cults and exchange links among local groups more in the western part of the region. Closer inspection of the way fertility cults and exchange practices are tied together indicates that one context involved is that of "circulating cults", in which cult rituals are transmitted from one group to another in a determinate sequence, accompanied by exchanges of wealth between the groups involved. Such sequences therefore constitute one type of ritual trackway. These same parts of the western highlands tend to be associated with the idea of competitive leadership ("big-manship") established through prominence in exchange activities. Circulating cults and ritual trackways may fit with patterns of leadership of this kind. But they also exhibit principles of precedence, as we have noted. Our focus in this paper on the interplay of precedence and exchange in cult contexts opens up a different way of analyzing the ethnographic data from approaches previously adopted in the literature.

At the outset it is necessary also to specify some further points about the concepts of precedence and exchange themselves. Precedence has a more limited sense than hierarchy. Hierarchy implies an encompassing structure of power that flows unequivocally from superior to inferior grades in a society or group. This structure is typically modeled in terms of a vertical

representation, with the highest points and sources of power at the top and the lowest at the bottom. Social hierarchies of this kind would be difficult to find in the indigenous societies of the Highlands. By contrast, rules of precedence are found there. Most often, they belong to contexts that are ritually buttressed. For example, ritual experts from an area where a cult complex is said to have originated are recognized as having superior knowledge and authority to direct cult performances than others. They hold a precedence that is based on knowledge and the valorization of places of origin. This is the pattern that is found among the Hagen people. Another example of how precedence can work is found among the Duna. In Duna local groups (*rindi*), agnatic lines of group members are said to have superior stewardship over the land by comparison with non-agnatic or cognatic members who are affiliated through female links. This superiority is not seen as an arbitrary structural principle. It is based on a knowledge of invocations to spirits of the land (*tindi auwene*) and the female spirit (*Payame Ima*) who are the ultimate guardians of it and whose domain is in the environment. This knowledge is seen as a part of the sacred *malu* (stories of origin) that give the group as a whole precedence over others in relation to their *rindi*.

The discovery of principles of precedence of this sort in Highlands societies, ultimately belonging to the domain of sacred knowledge, constitutes a necessary revision of the ethnographic analysis of these societies, in two ways. First, precedence (and various forms of hierarchy) has characteristically been associated with Austronesian speaking areas, including the societies of Eastern Indonesia, rather than with the non-Austronesian Papua New Guinea Highlands. This typological contrast must now be modified, by recognizing the importance of precedence in ritual contexts in both Austronesian and non-Austronesian areas. We have discussed this point at greater length in an earlier publication (Strathern and Stewart 2000b). Second, the existence of precedence as a principle indicates a degree of structural inequality built into the Highlands societies that runs counter to some depictions of them as being based entirely on competitive exchange established on an egalitarian basis. It is of special interest here that the contexts in which precedence operates are those of ritual, involving fundamental ideas about origins of power and fertility. Exchanges based on more egalitarian notions may take place outside of these ritual contexts. However, they also are likely to be tied in ultimately with ritual notions regarding the body and the cosmos at large (see Stewart and Strathern 2001a for a broader exposition of this point).

This brings us to the concept of exchange itself. Exchange need not be based on egalitarian ideas. The idea that it is based on such ideas derives from the contrast economic anthropologists have made between chiefly

redistribution on one hand and competitive exchange on the other (e.g., Sahlins 1972, following the work of Karl Polanyi 1944, 1957). This early characterization led to Sahlins' distinction between Polynesian chiefly or hierarchical societies and Melanesian ones based on big-manship (Sahlins 1963): a distinction, however, that omitted to take into account cross-cutting similarities and differences between systems. In fact, reciprocal exchanges may express either symmetry or asymmetry of status between the exchanging parties; or, in more complex terms, they may express an argument about status resulting in the simultaneous expression of both symmetry and asymmetry. Societies of Eastern Indonesia in which exchanges take place at marriage but wife-givers are seen as superior to wife-takers exhibit the pattern of structural asymmetry expressed in the kinds of goods exchanged. In general, where the goods exchanged are the same in categorical terms, there is a tendency to symmetry; where they are dissimilar there is a probability of asymmetry.

The pertinence of this point to our argument here is that in circulating cults dedicated to an important Female Spirit in the Hagen area the payments made by the performing group to classes of ritual experts both acknowledge and modify the asymmetry of their relationship to these experts. "Exchange" in this sense, as a reciprocal payment for sacred knowledge, both recognizes precedence and in some regard reduces it. Precedence and exchange, as we employ the terms here, are in a kind of dialectical relationship, in which each to some extent modifies or conditions the other. It is this notion that we apply primarily to the Hagen materials which have been ethnographically described in earlier publications.

With the case of the Duna the trackways in which we are interested cannot be analyzed in the same way as the Hagen trackways, since they did not involve the same practices of exchange conditioning precedence. Instead the trackways themselves express a very strong notion of ritual precedence, as we will see. Nevertheless such trackways generated indirectly certain further cult practices from which exchange relations did flow. Also, in common with Mount Hagen, trackways signified that ritual power is also seen in terms of its place of origin and its directional trajectories over time and space: when and where it originated determines how ritual practice takes place at any given time. This general characteristic is further shared with the Taiwanese Mazu performances as discussed by Steven Sangren and many other scholars (Sangren 1987, 2000; Chang 1993; and papers from the International Conference on Mazu Cult and Modern Society, Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, 2001). In the Mazu complex, also, precedence is strongly stressed and is the basis for the travels of performing troupes and of pilgrims; but it would seem that the gifts made by pilgrims and visitors

represent at the same time an element of exchange in return for the transfer of putative benefits.

In sum, the concepts we have discussed here both give us a different way of analyzing circulating cults and ritual power in the Papua New Guinea Highlands and provide a point of comparison between the Female Spirit cult complexes in the Highlands and the Mazu complex in Taiwan: a comparison based on analytical grounds, not in terms of material culture, levels of wealth, or historical connections, but in terms of ideas about sources of ritual power.

In order to set our discussion into the framework of previous debates and accounts we give in the next section a short overview of work by other scholars on circulating cults and ritual power in the New Guinea Highlands that is relevant to our presentation here.

Approaches to Ritual Power

Scholars working in the Eastern Highlands, as we have noted, remarked on the prominence there of elaborate male initiation rites (e.g., Read 1952). This feature was shared by the Highlands areas with their neighbors, the Anga speakers, studied by Godelier (1982) and others. Godelier made the Baruya Anga speakers his type-case for the “great-man” leader, whose status he saw as based on ritual power in distinction from the “big-men” leaders of the western highlands. In certain ways the “great-man” figure can be seen as strongly based on ideas of precedence; but connections with ritual power were also important for big-men in Hagen (Strathern 1993; Stewart and Strathern 2002b). Eastern Highlands scholars do not seem to have identified circulating cult complexes in their region. Indeed these complexes are empirically most clearly found in the Western Highlands, Enga, and Southern Highlands Provinces. Two separate varieties can be distinguished: circulating cults found as a part of wider complexes of wealth exchanges that linked groups together (here the Hagen, Enga, and Mendi areas can be cited); and ritual trackways or notions of the ritual interdependence of different areas linked in ritual cycles as such, but not tied in with other extensive wealth exchanges (Huli and Duna areas). We consider the Hagen materials separately below, but note here that these cults received their first ethnographic descriptions in Vicedom and Tischner 1943-1948 and Strauss and Tischner 1962. Our discussions of them have been, based on both these early accounts and on first-hand fieldwork in the area.

For the Enga area, it is well known that this is an area in which an extremely elaborate set of geographical and political linkages of groups occurred through the *tee* exchanges of wealth, by means of which also big-men competed vigorously for prestige (e.g., Meggitt 1974, 1977; Feil 1984, 1987).

Wiessner and Tumu have recently set this picture into a complex history of the development of the *tee* itself, set alongside interwoven histories of cult practices: bachelors' cults, cults for ancestors, and old initiation rites (Wiessner and Tumu 1998). Wiessner and Tumu importantly note the association of bachelors' cults traditions with spirit women from the sky, and remark on this same association found by Frankel (1986) and Goldman (1983) among the Huli (Wiessner and Tumu 1998:221). It is this theme that is in broad terms universally shared throughout the Western Highlands, Enga, and Southern Highlands Provinces. Ultimate precedence in the power to "make" youths turn into men is attributed to a female figure who appears either as a wife or as a mother to the initiates. Biersack (1982) identified the same theme for the Paiela or Ipili speakers in the western part of Enga Province near to the Porgera gold mine, where she hypothesized that the spirit, or "ginger woman" is conceived of as a "wife" to all of the bachelors. Among the Duna she is thought of as the "wife" of the senior ritual specialist in the bachelors' cult, the *palena anda*, and therefore more like a "mother" to the initiates themselves.

Although the female spirit is not the immediate symbolic focus of ritual trackways in the Huli and Duna areas, as she is in the Hagen and Enga areas, ideas about her merge with ideas of the fertility of the earth and its renewal which lay at the heart of a system of regional ritual trackways that linked the Huli and Duna together. This is the system described by Frankel as the *dindi gamu* or "earth magic" complex, which from the Huli viewpoint spread across from the Onabasulu area on the Papuan Plateau, eastwards to a site known as Bibipaite among Enga speakers (Frankel 1986:20-21); and from the Tsinali area, also on the Papuan Plateau, where he says there was a cave approached via an avenue of pine trees (probably hoop-pines), and: "Inside are stalactites, the breasts of the creatress, which were anointed with red pigment and *tigasso* [*Camphosperma*] oil as the culmination of the Gelote ritual" (ibid.:21).

It is notable here that a chthonian female ancestral spirit is mentioned. Rituals were performed at major sites putatively linked by the "root of the earth", seen as a thick liana entwined by a python in a tunnel through which water and smoke could flow. Sacred sites along this trackway were called "the knots of the earth" (*dindi pongone*). Ritual power as a whole flowed "from south-west to north-east" (ibid.:19), and an overall aim of the ritual cycle was to make an ash fall (*mbingi*) reappear and renew the earth's fertility. Frankel does not explore any issues of precedence in relation to this directional flow of power. His overall picture is confirmed by references in Goldman (1983:113-120), Wiessner and Tumu (1998:186-195), Biersack (1995, 1998, 1999) and Ballard (1998:67-85). Among the Paiela, the image of the "earth-knot" finds its parallel in the notion of the "earth-joint" (*kimbu*), and

these joints were held also to be connected. In the case of the Duna, as we will see, their ritual trackways fed into those of the Huli and were similarly punctuated by sacred sites which we could see as points of contact ("knots", "joints") with the chthonian powers. A regional sacred geography thus existed, transcending social and linguistic boundaries. Goldman interestingly points out that for the Huli "clans are informally ranked according to which parts of the origin myth [regarding *dindi pongo*] they 'hold' (*yi*) and their traditional roles in the cycle of fertility rites" (1983:113). This gives us a glimpse into a structure of precedence in relation to ritual power. Goldman goes on to point out that the holders of special ritual knowledge were achieving new status for themselves in contexts of modern politics and land claims, including a movement to establish a new province called Hela, based on the Huli, separate from the Southern Highlands province as a whole (ibid.:114). This observation shows us the adaptive potential of myth and ritual in transformed contexts, a topic we explore in detail for the Duna in Stewart and Strathern (2002a). Ballard adds a further dimension to the cosmic picture involved in this regional system, noting that "Huli temporality and, more broadly, Huli historicity are expressed in terms of much longer cycles of entropic decline in growth interspersed with dramatic regeneration events [such as the return of *mbingi*]" (1998:73). Ballard suggests further that the python stands for "the sun by night" and also for oil found in the ground (ibid.:78); and that the southward direction, to the Papuan Plateau, where the ghosts of the dead are held to go along with the flow of rivers, is also the direction of fertility and plenty, a source therefore of regeneration (ibid.:71). There is, then, a cosmic image of precedence in terms of ideas of origin and amplitude of fertility that ties together the ideas of the flow of ritual power. The dead go south with the rivers; but from there also comes regeneration. Again, we see here a clue as to how ritual precedence has been constructed in the case of the Huli.

In all of these studies, then, we find similar sets of ideas that help to delineate a linkage between ideas of fertility and flows of ritual power. We also find hints, but not a systematic exposition, of interplays between precedence and exchange. As well, there is a persistent theme regarding female imagery. Ballard, for example, notes that "women and female fluids are identified in Huli myth as the source of substances such as fire, mineral oil, sago, and pandanus" (ibid.:75). He adds that male agency is seen as channeling or directing this fundamental female energy. From this we could construct a picture of gendered complementarity which would fit broadly with our interpretation of the female spirit complex in Hagen. We turn now to the Hagen case.

Mount Hagen

We consider first the Hagen case. The 80,000+ speakers of the Melpa language live north and south of Mount Hagen township in the Western Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea. Their region has experienced continuous and extensive social, economic, and political change over long periods of time, most recently since the first direct colonial intrusions into their world in the 1930s (Strathern and Stewart 2000a). The Hageners had a competitive exchange system that was known as the *moka*, in which individuals and groups of people attempted to out-compete each other by the size of gifts they made to each other. The gifts required that a reciprocal return be made or the receiver of the gifts would lose prestige. The wealth goods given in these exchanges included shells, that had been obtained by trade for goods from the coastal region, and pigs, whose value women created and maintained through rearing and care. In the 1970s the use of shell valuables was replaced by the introduction of state money.

The *moka* system itself has gone into decline since the 1980s, overtaken by resurgent intergroup animosities and the rise of Christian churches and parliamentary politics. Some aspects of *moka*-type exchanges co-exist with these two new institutions. Nowadays, people sometimes compete to build large or well-constructed church buildings in what we have called “*moka* with God” (Stewart and Strathern 2001c); and politicians seek to extend influence over voters through the regeneration of exchanges seen as means of garnering votes. The indigenous ritual complexes with which we are concerned flourished in pre-colonial times, and then, after an interlude of some twenty years, from the 1950s to the 1980s. They have had their own history, recognized by the people themselves in terms of their spatial origins and the places to which they have been transmitted over time. Our focus here is on the *Amb Kor*, the Female Spirit cult complex. The narrative of origins and the narrative of pathways through which the group celebrations of this cult have passed together make up the image of a field of power, notionally transected by the indigenous spirit forms themselves as they travel or are passed on from place to place. This image is given expression in a number of ways; one of which is by the payments and exchanges between persons and groups that take place within this field of ritual power which is set up, and which extends outside of it by the benefits that a successful cult performance is thought to bring to the group as a whole.

A model of the flows of power that are activated in the field of ritual in this context needs to identify and distinguish between the following elements:

- (1) the story of the first origins of the cult;
- (2) the places from which ritual experts (*mön wuö*) are recruited to officiate in cult performances by particular groups;
- (3) the ritual pathways created by the transfer of the cult from one group to celebrants in the next group;
- (4) the new emplacement of the cult when it is performed for the first time by a group, and its subsequent renewal in the same place after a lapse of time;
- (5) the success of the ritual performance and the continued flow of ritual power to the community which depends on the participation and active involvement of both men, who conduct specific ritual actions within the cult enclosure, and women, who work to support the activities of the men from outside of the cult enclosure (see Stewart and Strathern 2002b). Female imagery is strongly represented in the ritual performance and in the source of its power—a female spirit.

These four elements are the constituents of a dialectic between flow and fixity that holds in this field of power as a whole. The story of first origins (1) establishes a foundation or fixed point from which power is held to have flowed out. Ritual experts (2) are expected to come from groups geographically close to this point because these groups are notionally those who first obtained the knowledge of the cult practices from its founders or obtained it independently through dreams given to them by the *Amb Kor* spirit. Points (1) and (2) together constitute a dimension of hierarchy in the cult, on the basis of *precedence*. Points (3), (4), and (5) introduce further dimensions that co-exist with this hierarchy. If a group has collectively been inducted into the rituals of the cult and has successfully performed these under the tutelage of a master ritual expert or experts, all of its men who have participated in receiving the new ritual knowledge become secondary ritual experts who are able subsequently to pass the cult ensemble on to a further group. This further group will be one that is either in a prior relationship of alliance with their own group or becomes so as a result of the transmission of the cult to them. The new group makes a payment to the group whose members have held the cult performance earlier, and this payment is explicitly likened to the payment of bridewealth. The Female Spirit is said to come to the new group as a bride and the group seen as transferring the cult onward is regarded as giving away their sister. Here we can see that the source of the ritual power is clearly female. Point (5) highlights the gendered aspects of the cult. The Spirit is bride to the group she goes to and sister to those who “give” her to the next group. This main metaphor or way of speaking about the transmission also sets up a transitive dependence between the groups involved, but because the “bridewealth” is paid, the cult recipients retain parity of status with those who are passing on the cult. This partially negates

the relationship of precedence between them. The hierarchy of knowledge is turned into a reciprocal exchange between the groups. Hierarchy and equality continue to coexist within the same relationship. This is also true for the different roles that women and men play in ensuring the successful outcome of the cult performance. Overall, the stress is on *collaboration* (Stewart and Strathern 1999b).

With point (4), as noted above, the knowledge and power associated with the cult become newly fixed in the place where the cult has just been performed. Moreover, local and independent claims to power are made. The Spirit herself is said to give dreams or visions to an aspiring male leader in the group. She is declared to appear to him as a well-decorated and healthy young woman, dressed in the style of the ancestral area from which the cult is held to have diffused, that is, in the ancient style of the origin place itself. This place is Tambul, a high-altitude, remote mountainous area to the south-west of the central Hagen region. Tambul sits on the edges of the borders between the Hagen language and the language groups of the Enga family to its west and south. Oral traditions locate the origins of numbers of circulating cult complexes in or near Tambul or in the remote and bleak Tomba basin that links the Hagen and Enga regions. It is a place of historical interchange of cultural practices through which ritual forms flowed across boundaries. From the perspective of the Melpa speakers of the central and northern parts of Hagen it is seen as the starting place of major cults such as the *Amb Kor*; while people who have performed this cult are also made aware that the language of its sacred invocations and powerful chants may derive from farther off, for example from Kandep beyond Tambul or even Mendi far away in the Southern Highlands Province. Other spirit cults are also held to have originated in Tambul; but only the *Amb Kor* has this mechanism for its continuous transmission from one group to another via the idiom of bridewealth. This is a significant point. Only this female spirit expressed the idea of continuous alliance between groups.

This Spirit from distant points of origin is herself highly mobile and can reveal herself as a female to a man whom she chooses. She is thus seen primarily as a “bride” to this man and secondarily to all the participating males of his small group, who through the ritual gain rights to the knowledge of the cult. She can also appear as stones laden with fertility and ritual power. These may be shaped as elongated, round, or in the form of what archaeologists identify as prehistoric mortars belonging to earlier populations in the Highlands. The Female Spirit is said to reveal the location of these stones to male leaders who will thereafter be bound to perform her cult. Subsequently other men are expected to find these stones and add them to the leader’s find, building a local fund of ritual power derived from the Female

Spirit. The Spirit is in all such cases given the agency involved: she comes to the men, they cannot search for and find her on their own. But in so far as the stones “emerge” in the local land, in the group’s own territory, they can also be seen as an expression of autochthonous ritual power, obtained for use in the cult performance and benefiting the entire community of men and women. Ritual experts are needed to show the men how to handle these powerful objects and their contained power. It is thus the stones that become an overt focus of ritual action. Each cult participant must contribute one to the total set, and each participant is paired with another participant as a bound pair, who enter and exit the cult enclosure together and sit opposite each other during the ritual actions performed in the cult enclosure. One of the pair belongs to the *rapa* or “men’s house” moiety in the cult, the other to the *amb-nga* or “women’s house” moiety. Together the two moieties make up an internal structure that expresses both duality and unity, as well as overtly expressing the importance of gendered difference to the success and strength of the group at large.

Together the celebrants decorate their stones with red and white pigments and rub them with pig grease. This action takes place in a cult house where sides of pork meat are brought for cooking with steam heat in earth-ovens. A select set of senior males will later place the stones in a seclusion area within a further cult house known as the “house of the men and the women” (*manga rapa amb-nga*). Later, these same men will bury the stones in the earth at a hidden spot in the enclosure where the stones retain the power of the Female Spirit within the group’s area. This division between leading performers and others in the group creates a new dimension of precedence in the flow of power. The stones remain buried until the cult performance is renewed after a generation of time has passed. The “autochthonization” process of receiving the Female Spirit’s power is concluded with this burial of her stones, ritually described as her “bones” (*ombil*). From them the powers of fertility are held to proceed into the local earth. In the earlier rituals the main ritual experts give the cult celebrants sacred water to drink that is said to remove harmful substances from their bodies; and they fortify them with steam-cooked herbs (*uipip*, the ritual term for these herbs, used only in this context) prepared along with pigs’ kidneys.

The celebrants must pay not only the group that assists in bringing the Female Spirit to them as a “bride”, but also the head expert or experts, who come from the vicinity of Tambul. While the payment to the group of secondary experts is likened to a bridewealth, that to the primary experts is known as “straightening, that is, paying for, the magical work of the men who make *mön*, the incantations for the Spirit” (*mön ukl kaklk ngoromen*). This payment is often said to be especially for the *uipip* and other *tamb mel*,

magical substances, which these head experts bring with them, including certain plants that can be set into the local clan land to grow there and help to invigorate the soil. The real or “inside” knowledge of these plants or substances is not necessarily conveyed to their purchasers. These *mön wuö* retain their hierarchical position vis-à-vis those they serve by retaining the details of their ritual knowledge. In turn, this enables them to offer their services to a further group at a later stage. Their primacy is maintained both through their symbolic identification with the places of the cult’s origin and through their guardianship of the most significant and secret forms of ritual knowledge. The partial knowledge that each set of recipients of their services obtains enables them to gain equal access to the benefits of fertility which the cult is held to bring with it. No recipient group, however, transcends the precedence of Tambul and its cadres of head experts. If a recipient group performs the cult a second time, after the elapse of some twenty years, its men must still find a head expert to officiate again. As each group and its leaders make a claim to equality of ritual power with other coordinate groups around them, so this equality is constrained by an ongoing dependence on the superior power of the originating group in Tambul and their experts, whose proficiencies are made available to others in the wider region.

As we have argued at the outset of this paper, it is in the whole schema of the *ritual trackway*, the passage of the cult from place to place, that this dialectic of equality and hierarchy takes place. The trackway records all the movements of ritual power, its fixed points of perceived historical origins, and its capacity to shift fluidly from group to group while rooting itself in the earth at each way-station with the host clans that perform the cult in sequences. The trackway also encodes a cult history and a trajectory that is in principle open-ended: where it stops it can also begin again with a renewed transmission. In the northernmost part of the Melpa-speaking area the cult practice was just making its way through a chain of groups from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s. Among one group, the Kawelka, it was performed successively by particular clans within the wider group as a whole, the last one finally carrying it out in 1983–1984. None of these groups has since performed it a second time, however.

Changes in religious and ritual practices have overtaken the history of the ritual trackways of the past. In particular the activities of Catholic and Lutheran missionaries in the 1930s, and later in the 1980s the spread of fundamentalist and charismatic Christian church movements, have changed the face of ritual practices throughout the Hagen area. An uneasy transition period existed in those earlier times and still does in many ways as people who have joined various Christian churches continue to adhere to various non-Christian ritual practices, leading to tensions. For example, in the 1980s

among the Kawelka there was a particular difficulty that arose when an *Amb Kor* ritual expert from the Mundika group, whose homeland is in the Tambul-Tomba area, had joined an Assemblies of God church. He was reluctant to continue with his involvement in the revival of an *Amb Kor* cult performance. Like many other people from his remote and high-altitude area he had migrated down to the Wahgi Valley near to Hagen in order to grow coffee trees on blocks of fertile land the Papua New Guinea government had made available for settlers whose own areas were unsuitable for cash-cropping. There, in a new, multilingual and quasi-urban environment, he was exposed to the evangelizing of the newer Christian churches. He had officiated at an *Amb Kor* performance many years previously among a different group in the northern part of the Hagen region, when he was a young man. The Kawelka that were involved in this particular cult performance prevailed on him to carry out his services for the last time in his career, and he appeared among them, now grey-bearded and dressed in shirt and shorts instead of the traditional garb of barkbelt, front apron, and cordyline leaves which all the other participants were required to wear. In subsequent years, as the Assemblies of God church, in addition to other Christian denominations, became popular among the Kawelka themselves, younger men trained as pastors and women became very active in the sustained success of the churches in their communities. These active church participants began to tell of having dreams and visions of Jesus, God, and Satan rather than of the Female Spirit. The Christian version of ritual power began to replace the access to power that characterized the Female Spirit cult and others like it; but many of the hierarchical and egalitarian modes of acquiring ritual power are reflected in these Christian religious forms, in addition to new mechanisms of interaction that have arisen out of a combination of other historical changes among the people, and the inherent nature of the Christian practices that have been introduced into the region. The process is an ongoing and fluid one.

The Duna

Some 20,000 speakers of the Duna language live to the north and north-west of the populous Huli speakers in the Southern Highlands Province of PNG. Like the Hageners, their traditional subsistence depends on the cultivation of vegetable crops such as sweet potato and taro and the rearing of pigs for occasions of bridewealth, sacrifice to spirits, funeral offerings, and other life-cycle payments or social crises such as the need to pay compensation for deaths in fighting. Duna groups are defined in a complex way through the intersection of agnatic and cognatic ideas of descent set into a territorial

framework, in which agnates figure as the custodians of the land and as the holders of the primal *malu* (origin stories) that guarantee the group's rights to its territory lands and resources. In other respects Hagen and Duna territorial groups operate in comparable ways.

A feature shared by the Hageners and the Duna is the importance accorded to ritual trackways, inscribing power relations on the landscape (Stewart and Strathern 2002a). But with the Duna these trackways operated in a somewhat different way from the Hagen case. Two major cult complexes traversed a multiplicity of Duna local areas (*rindi/tindi*). Each complex had its starting point in the north-west of the Duna area as a whole. The two complexes were known as the *hambua hatya*, "the yellow pathway", and the *kirao hatya*, "the burnt pathway". The *hambua* began at a place called Yokona near to the Strickland River which divides the Duna from the Oksapmin people, who have a different language. Responsibility for initiating the *hambua* belonged to a particular Yokona group, which therefore held precedence in relation to it. The *kirao* also began near to the Strickland River at a site connected in myth with a group known as the Songwa, whose origin story encapsulates a number of fundamental values in the Duna world view. The Songwa can be seen as embodying the principle of ritual precedence here. The whole western Duna area was divided into two moieties in terms of access to and participation in these cult complexes. Those who knew the *hambua* did not know the lore of the *kirao* and vice-versa. The founding myths regarding the complexes clearly reveal their common concern with ensuring the fertility of the land on a regional basis by means of sacrifice. In both complexes the sacrifice involved was one of human substance. In the *hambua* a human adult male victim was captured in the Oksapmin area, held at Yokona in a cave, and after his death his body parts were carried along a lengthy trackway transecting the Duna area leading to a major sacred site, on the far south-east borders of the Duna with the Huli people. This sacred site was known as Kelokili ("the place where the Ficus tree is pulled / made to stick"). Here the remaining human body parts would be thrown into a deep hole, probably a limestone sinkhole, as an appeasement to the *hambua* spirit, a male chthonian ancestral figure who is supposed to have disappeared into Kelokili, from where he required that a sacrifice of this sort be given to him on a recurrent basis as a part of the overall process of maintaining the balance and fertility of the earth. A myth explains how this practice was established, specifying how a mythical son traced the passage of his father, a spirit (*tama*), as he traveled underground from Yokona to Kelokili. Along this trackway at intervals where the two were thought to have taken their rest a sacred site, an *auwi* place, was established. These sites were the places where human body parts were notionally distributed along the *hambua* trackway. On each of

these occasions when the path of the ancestral spirit being was followed and ritual was performed at the sacred sites the overall aim was to rejuvenate the earth and bring health and good fortune to the people of the area. Using a modern simile, a knowledgeable young man from Yokona described the action as giving “medicine” to the ground. The indigenous Duna term for this is *rindi kiniya*, “straightening or repairing the land.” *Rindi kiniya* is a central concept underpinning all Duna ritual practices. It corresponds to the basic goals of the major traditional cults in Hagen such as the Female Spirit (*Amb Kor*) cult we have discussed above. Notably, in both areas the cult complexes that handle this need are seen as trans-local, moving along trackways. Although each local group seeks to enhance its own reproduction these ritual complexes recognize that the power to do so comes partly from outside of the group itself, and that there is an enchainment of dependencies involved both between humans and between human and spirit beings.

The *kirao* expressed these same values, but in a different modality. While the source of sacrificial substance in the *hambua* was a captured adult (married) male with children, from an outside group, in the *kirao* the sacrificial substance was the menstrual blood of an unmarried female from a group that had connections with the Songwa people. In the *hambua* the male was killed as a sacrificial victim. In the *kirao* the living female became like a priestess who walked in procession with her own blood (held in a decorated bamboo tube after having been collected). She and her entourage walked from the Strickland River up to the Aluni valley and then on to Kelokili where her blood was tipped into the hole to appease the *tama* who lived there and who appeared in myth as the cannibalistic elder brother in a primal group of Songwa siblings. In the myth, the *tama*'s younger brothers bound him and threw him in the hole after he had been seen biting off the heads of marsupials that he had caught in the forest and calling these marsupials by his brothers' names. While in the hole the *tama* called out his demands, announcing that he wanted his sister. He threatened to cause “cosmic” disruption. His brothers were afraid and they threw the sister into the hole as a sacrifice to appease the *tama*. The menstrual blood offered in the *kirao* served as a surrogate for the human sacrifice of the sister in the myth.

The sacrifice of the sister herself is paralleled in other Duna narratives that explain how *tsiri*, a category of *tama* spirits, gave pigs or valuable cowrie shells in return for killing and putatively eating the wife or the sister of a human male. The *kirao* thus represents the first stage of a transformation of sacrifice from the killing of a human to the offering of a powerful human substance (female menstrual blood). The transformation is completed in the Songwa myth, which records how a Songwa ancestor, Kepepa, persuaded the Poli clanspeople at the Strickland River to abandon the killing and

consumption of humans at the death of pigs and to reverse these roles by killing pigs as sacrifices at the deaths of humans. This same myth describes the pathway of Kauwi Peta, the ancient “mother” of the Songwa siblings, from her home at Sipuyambo in the Oksapmin area across the Strickland River, through the Aluni Valley and across to Kelokili, laying down another set of *auwi* sites wherever she rested. A brindled pig (the *songwa* pig) pulled her along this pathway and was the mother of a litter that included a male child who became the Songwa ancestor. Arising from this dual maternal schema of Kauwi Peta and the pig, the Songwa in the myth then become the instruments whereby cannibalism and human sacrifice are replaced by pig sacrifice and consumption of pork at times of funerals. Kauwi Peta herself is said either to have gone into the hole with the elder Songwa brother or to have died near Kelokili, and her spirit was sent back to the Strickland area from which she came. The Strickland is thus a primal origin place and starting point for ritual trackways, but these all have a common ending point in Kelokili, where sacrifices to ensure the continuing stability and fertility of the earth were periodically made: practices which were given up, according to Duna narratives, soon after Christian mission influence began in the 1960s. The Duna saw the Churches as offering access to a new form of ritual power that was also associated with new forms of material goods that came into the area at that time (metal tools, building materials, etc.).

These large-scale ritual transects across the Duna landscape were counterbalanced by local cults emphasizing the autochthonous sources of power for each *rindi* or local group. A powerful female spirit, the *Payame Ima*, figures prominently here as a focus for ritual among the local groups or parishes within the Aluni Valley. Although the *hambua* and *kirao* rituals are no longer practiced, the *Payame Ima* is still considered to be a strong force in the area as an overseer of the environment (Strathern and Stewart 2000b). She is associated with the high forest, river water, nut pandanus and fruit pandanus trees, and certain types of parakeets and lorikeets; and she was held to guide the processes of growth of youths in bachelors’ cults, coming as a kind of bride to a senior bachelor and ritual expert who in each parish might be in charge of these cults. As long as this ritual expert was “married” to the spirit, he was not allowed to take a human wife. The *Payame Ima* also gave to such experts the power to hold a divining stick, the *ndeke rowa*, which assisted these men in identifying witches who were said to be killing members of a local *rindi* by consuming their bodily force in spirit form.

Further, in each parish ancestors of a previous generation were expected to emerge as round volcanic stones, which then became a focus of ritual activity in contexts of sickness (Strathern and Stewart 1999b). And the skulls of ancestors also formed a focus of such attention in the *Liru* cult (a ritual

performed “to heat up the earth”) which was integral with the *Kira* cult that took place occasionally. The *Kira* cult differentiated between men in terms of their status in the cult and provided a venue for the whole parish to reaffirm its unity and its dependence on its ancestors as well as an opportunity for visiting men who had performed the *Kira* elsewhere to participate as high-ranking cult members. Finally, each parish was associated with its own male ancestral figure of the forest, the *tindi auwene*, to whom special invocations were made, known only to agnatic leaders in the parish itself. These spirit figures, emphasizing the autonomy and autochthony of parish groups, were, then, the counterparts at the local level of the power that came through the intergroup linkages of the trackways. This balanced emphasis on autonomy and integration parallels the overall pattern we have found earlier for the Hagen region.

Comparisons and Implications

There are differences, as well as similarities, between our cases. The differences apply largely to the trackways and the position of the female spirits in Duna and in Hagen. In Hagen, the trackways were open-ended. They came to a halt as a result of social change after reticulating outwards from a point of origin. They followed the extensive pathways of exchange that defined the field of relations between groups in general, traveling along the network of exchanges known as *moka* that linked groups in competitive alliances. There were no such extended networks of ceremonial exchange among the Duna. The ritual dependencies were laid down in origin stories that gave primal importance to the Strickland at one end of Duna territory and Kelokili at the other. Both the points of origin and the points of completion of the rituals involved were significant. The versions also gave great prominence to a single group, the Songwa, whose ritual preeminence was comparable to, but exceeded, that of the cult experts from Tambul who officiated in the Hagen Female Spirit cult. Altogether, then, we see that among the Duna a ritual structure of power defined a rather clearly demarcated field of social relations. Moreover, their trackways were not sites from which exchanges between groups were explicitly generated as in Hagen. In this regard the stress among the Duna was on precedence itself rather than on reciprocal exchange.

In both areas, Christian influences have been seen as a new source of ritual power and have replaced many aspects of the older ritual practices and beliefs but by no means all of them. For example, among the Duna, ideas connected with the *Payame Ima* have proven durable and have easily been carried over into the Duna Christian contexts, partly because of the protection

she is said to afford against witches, a protection people say the Christian churches by themselves cannot provide. The *Payame Ima* and the *Tindi Auwene* have together also figured in a new narrative which developed at the Strickland in 1999 in connection with the activities of a mining company drilling for oil there (Stewart and Strathern 2000d). In this narrative these two spirit beings are portrayed as resisting the activities of the oil drillers but also promoting the interests of a particular group, the Yangone, as among the landowners of the area who stand to gain from royalties in the event that oil is found. This narrative showed the dramatic capabilities of the *malu* genre of origin stories in contexts of change and the enduring power of spirit images in people's ways of looking at and dealing with their world. These events among the Duna parallel the resurgence and transformation of themes regarding chthonian powers and mining resources among the Paiela (Biersack 1995, 1998, 1999).

Origin stories provide an interesting context in which to examine basic ideas of how ritual power is constituted. In the Duna case we have been examining here it has been the rituals of the trackways that have proved less enduring in the face of colonial and post-colonial change, while by contrast local ideas regarding tutelary spirits of the ground have persisted and reemerged in new contexts, where they are useful for pursuing claims in relation to outside mining companies. On the other hand, the general curtailment of the *rindi kiniya* rituals has led to an unease about the possibility of the world ending. The threatening figures of the *tama* at Kelokili remain in people's imaginations with the idea that since they are not receiving their former sacrifices they might emerge from their sinkhole site and contribute to the world's end. No such ideas are found in the traditional mythology of the Hageners, although they too have been troubled by rumors of world's end derived from the scenarios in the Book of Revelation and the advent of Christian narratives about the Rapture and the mark of the Beast prevalent in the teachings of the Assemblies of God churches.

The Hagen origin stories show the same combination of notions about the fixity and flow of ritual power that we have shown to exist in the ideology of the ritual trackways. Implicit in such an ideology is the idea that power can be both communicated and reproduced over time and space. The power of the original founding ancestor of the group revealed in the idea of the *kona wingndi*, the "creative place" where Sky Beings granted this power to a human, is held to continue projecting itself through succeeding generations (Stewart and Strathern 2001b; Goldman 1998:98-99, on the Huli). As group members migrate to new areas they may recreate the original *kona wingndi* by establishing a new version of it in their place of resettlement. Such a process parallels the process whereby groups that receive spirit power in a

trackway from a point of origin convert this into their own locally rooted version of this power. The basic reason why this form of power continued to be significant in Hagen was that in this area economic development came in the form of cash-cropping, mainly coffee-cultivation. The fertility of land was thus at a premium, especially with population growth, and the spirit cults provided a promise that such fertility could be maintained. Each group thus continues to draw on its *kona wingdi* traditions; and, until recently, on circulating cults such as that devoted to the Female Spirit. Nowadays, Christian prayers may be used to meet these needs, or to deny these by an alternative focus on next-worldly values. Various indigenous ritual ideas are retained and easily function side-by-side with Christian rituals while others remain in latency, perhaps to be re-adopted at a later stage if a need for them arises. With falling coffee prices and growing population density this could conceivably happen, or perhaps new religious and ritual practices will be introduced outside of the indigenous and the Christian ones.

If, as has happened with the Duna at the Strickland River, rumors of the discovery of oil or gold should develop close to a Hagen *kona wingndi* site then this would favor the principle of *precedence* that is encoded in both the Hagen and the Duna systems. In the past, as we have pointed out, precedence has been balanced by *exchange* as a complementary principle in Hagen ritual practices, especially in the Hagen circulating cult complexes. Contemporary situations and pressures are likely to favor the transformation of such a situation into one in which precedence, linked to property rights, is given primary stress, especially among the Duna.

Finally, we take up the question of why there is a special place given to female spirit figures in relation to the ritual trackways we have been considering. Two points are significant here. First, we are dealing with gender, that is with social relations and ideas modeled on female/male differences. The idea of a Female Spirit belongs to such a context, in which male and female agencies are seen as in a co-ordinated relationship. Second, the basic idea involved seems to be that primal fertility belongs to the female, but for it to be activated and channeled collaboration between males and females is required. In a social universe in which local relationships are expressed in an agnatic idiom, as is the case for both the Hagen and Duna areas, interlocal relationships are most appropriately expressed in terms of an alliance between men and women embedded in the interlocking of opposite sex sibling and spousal ties. This theme appears clearly in the Hagen *Amb Kor* complex, where it is also the basis for ritual trackways. It appears among the Duna, where the *Payame Ima* was said to come as a wife to the local ritual expert of the parish, bringing with her the power to turn youths into attractive men. Duna ritual trackways also carried female associations (in the *kirao*

sequence and in the myth of Kauwi Peta), but not exclusively. What does hold overall is that female spirits are seen both as origin points of fertility power and as mobile agents, capable of moving from place to place. These two characteristics appear to be seen as intrinsic to their female gender in these areas. In all cases, however, human male agents are important in claiming or appropriating female fertility and mobility. A similar pattern can be discerned in the Mazu complex in Taiwan, in which Mazu is seen as having great power over matters such as fertility and rain, and temples to her are ranked in terms of their putative founding dates and their consequent privileges of precedence in relation to one another. Strikingly, this relationship of precedence is marked by troupes of performers carrying statues of Mazu back to temples from which their own temple or its images originated, in order to renew their power and to show the performers' respect to the founding temples. The idea of a hierarchy of power is more strongly established here than in the New Guinea cases; but the idea of female mobility, analogous to the mobility of a bride in marriage, is markedly present, making a clear similarity to the Hagen *Amb Kor* figure.

The ideas regarding the division and communication of ritual power which we have discussed here can also be compared with those analyzed by Steven Sangren for the Mazu complex (Sangren 1987, 2000). Points of origin of power are important in Taiwan as in Papua New Guinea, and we also find that power can be communicated or transported and relocated. One difference is that in the Mazu cult, as with many others, the point of origin generates pilgrimages back to it for the purpose of renewing the pilgrim's embodied association with the source of power. In our Hagen case that renewal is accompanied by the use of ritual experts whose home area is close to the cult's point of origin. Among the Duna, the journeys to Kelokili could be compared to pilgrimages in a sense; but their purpose was quite specifically to make a sacrificial appeasement to the chthonian spirits there. Nevertheless, Sangren's ideas on divisions of magical power have in general led us to think further about our Hagen and Duna materials.

At the broadest level, religious complexes of activities can be analyzed as fields of gendered performance in which basic notions about power, fertility and agency are dramatically played out. At this abstract and analytical level, there is a genuine comparison between Mazu in Taiwan and Female Spirits in New Guinea, because both represent particular forms of recognition of female powers in a social world that is unequally defined by gendered agencies. What cult rituals do is to mediate the potential opposition of female and male powers by joining them together in forms of collaborative alliance. Interlocal alliances and dependencies in turn form the basis of both pilgrimage events and ritual trackways.

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權力的區劃： 巴布亞新幾內亞的哈根與杜納人的 儀式時間與空間

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本文是記述作者在巴布亞新幾內亞高地的哈根與杜納兩地之研究，著重分析兩地區儀式路徑的重要性與儀式領域中的優先原則 (principle of precedence)。「儀式路徑」一詞指的是崇拜展演由一個群體傳遞到另一個群體的歷史路線，而原始的起點據說即是崇拜知識的發源地。來自這個地區的專家沿途擔任展演的執行者，且可能是有酬勞的。「優先權」則指稱這些儀式專家有優越的權利可以掌控豐饒生產力的神秘知識與力量，而這正是構成崇拜實踐的基礎。一般咸認，非南島語系的高地社會在本質上是屬於平等而且具有競爭性的交換關係。然而，在崇拜脈絡之儀式活動的領域中所顯示出的「優先權」權利，卻改變了這些原有的關係。而且在崇拜活動中所建立的交換關係，讓那些認知到儀式專家優越力量的崇拜參與者重新確立了自己的地位。這樣的高地社會分析架構，提供了一個不同於過去的觀點，並同時呈現出南島語文化中所未知的優先原則在非南島語地區的儀式脈絡當中，亦具有重要的意義。而強調靈力來源的方式，以及靈力在傳遞的過程中如何成功地被分享或分割，更能進一步讓我們有立場來比較哈根與杜納兩地的女性神靈崇拜和台灣相當重要的女神「媽祖」之崇拜。這一個比較的立場乃基於兩個相似點：第一，是以靈力所在之起源地，做為該信仰最重要之聖地的優先權觀點的共同想法。這原則在媽祖信仰叢裡更是非常地明顯。隨著新廟宇的建立，媽祖的靈力亦不斷地跟著被分享和擴張。第二個相似點，是有關神靈或神祇的性別。女性神體的意象代表著流動的理念，而神靈或神祇本身就是帶著新的聯繫與力量來到一個新天地的新娘一般。這種意象在巴布亞新幾內亞與媽祖信仰叢裡都非常地鮮明。而存在於媽祖信仰叢裡精巧的交換，還建立了接受靈力之參與者不同的地位。儘管在歷史與物質文化上有著極為明顯的差異，但這些分析上的相似處還是可以區辨的。因此本文所提供的是一種對於靈力傳遞形式之比較性的理解方法論，同時也精確地指出在有關此類靈力傳送形式的原始理念中，其性別象徵的特殊意義。

本文亦同時記述相關個案間的差異。優先權的概念對哈根與杜納兩地區而言都很重要，不過在實際運作上卻有所不同。在哈根地區，參與女性神靈崇拜的人付給兩類不同儀式專家之酬勞，以重申交換的對等性原則，較杜納地區還來得強烈；相對地，杜納地區大規模的財富競爭性交換，並沒有那麼地明顯。在杜納神話中所

強調的優先權，可以用來解釋為何以身體和資產做為供奉的祭品，是沿著兩條不同且嚴格區分的路徑來傳送的，而二者最後皆以祖靈或神靈所在的同一處石灰岩豎洞為目的地。這兩條貫穿杜納地景的路徑，隱然地將許多不同的地方群體結合在一種對史翠克藍底河(Strickland River)的原始群體之依賴關係當中。儘管崇拜的地點是沿著儀式路徑而建立的，這些攜帶著祭品(有時是處女的經血，有時是以從歐克沙布明 [Oksapmin] 地區橫越史翠克藍底所抓來的男性俘虜之肢體做為祭品)的群體卻並未從其他的群體之處獲得任何的酬勞。環繞著女性神靈本身的基本象徵，使哈根與杜納兩地所呈現出的現象更為一致：女性神靈被視為是結合高地森林、雨水和林中水坑的環境之神，祂並藉由成為一個群體中被指定之男性的「新娘」(在哈根地區甚至是成為一整個群體所有男性的新娘)來展現其強大的動能(agency)。此種流動新娘的象徵，是以姊妹的身分離開一個群體後，再以新娘的身分重新來到另外的一個群體，而在媽祖信仰叢當中也存在著這種具有這樣流動靈力的流動新娘概念。

然而，媽祖信仰叢還呈現出另一種差異：當信徒護送雕刻精美、裝飾華麗的媽祖神轎返回祖廟進香時，各地廟宇乃透過「分香」而從祖廟分得靈力，在這實踐中透露出十分明顯的制度化優先權理念。但此同時，這些朝聖進香活動也提供來自各地客廟與主廟之信徒，一個展示財富與宗教儀式力量的機會。因此在最後的分析當中我們得到以下的結論：進香者所表現之地方間的依賴關係與歷史淵源，就如同在哈根與杜納兩地(即使後者程度較輕)的儀式路徑中，所呈現出的交換關係是一樣的。

關鍵詞：優先權，儀式路徑，女性神靈，新幾內亞，臺灣
