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Metaphysical personhood and traditional South Fore mortuary rites

by

Jerome T. WHITFIELD*, Wandagi H. PAKO** and Michael P. ALPERS***

ABSTRACT

Ethnographic studies on Melanesian concepts of the human body and religion have expanded our understandings of the concept of personhood. Melanesian ethnographers have used a number of descriptive words to describe the metaphysical components of the person, including: soul, spirit, life force, ghost, and vital and spiritual essence. By investigating the traditional mortuary rites of the South Fore people in Papua New Guinea, which included the practice of endocannibalism, investigators were able to distinguish the 5 souls of the composite metaphysical person and their relationship to the humors of the body. An understanding of the South Fore cosmology and its relationship to its human inhabitants was required to understand these deeply embedded concepts. The South Fore person was found to be composed of 5 souls and bodily humors which together formed a composite individual, yet partible through division. We elucidated the concepts of the 5 souls of the Fore person, which revealed a strong correlation between the landscape with its overlying cosmology and the cultural bodily humors, and demonstrated their relationship to the power of the land.

KEYWORDS: personhood, soul, mortuary rites, South Fore, cannibalism

RÉSUMÉ

Les études ethnographiques sur les concepts mélanésiens du corps humain et la religion ont élargi notre compréhension de la notion de personnalité. Les ethnographes mélanésiens ont utilisé un certain nombre de mots descriptifs pour décrire les composants métaphysiques de la personne, y compris l'âme, l'esprit, la force de vie, le fantôme et l'essence vitale et spirituelle. En enquêtant sur les rites funéraires traditionnels du peuple du Sud Fore (PNG), avec une pratique de l'endocannibalisme, les enquêteurs ont été en mesure de distinguer les cinq âmes de la personne métaphysique composite et leur relation avec les humeurs du corps. Une bonne compréhension de la cosmologie du Sud Fore et sa relation avec ses habitants humains ont été nécessaires pour comprendre ces concepts profondément ancrés. La personne du Sud Fore est donc composée de cinq âmes et humeurs corporelles qui, ensemble, forment un individu composite, encore divisible. Ici est donc élucidé le concept des cinq âmes de la personne Fore, qui révèle une forte corrélation entre le paysage avec sa cosmologie sus-jacente et les humeurs corporelles culturelles, et la preuve de leur relation à la puissance de la terre.

MOTS-CLÉS : personnalité, âme, rites mortuaires, Sud Fore, cannibalisme

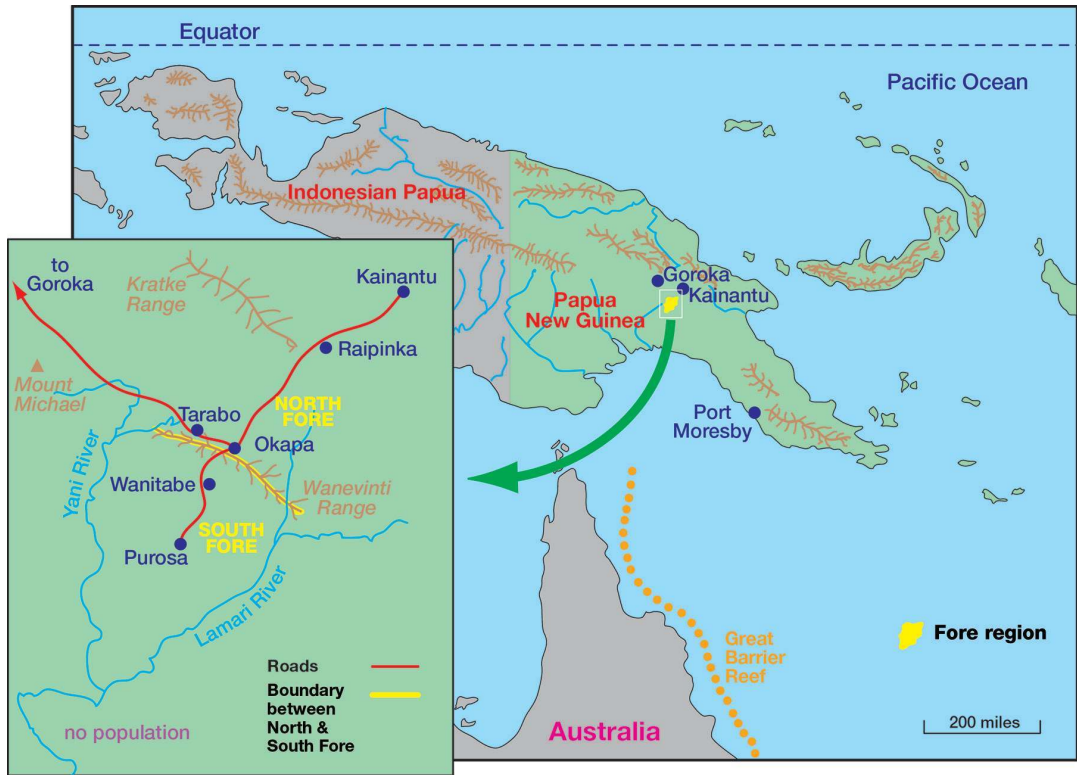
This paper examines concepts of metaphysical personhood of the South Fore people in Papua New Guinea (PNG) by examining the 5 souls of the person that are released from the body at death (see map 1). This approach follows the lead of Stephen

(1989) who has convincingly advocated for an understanding of indigenous concepts of souls to understand Melanesian personhood. The difficulty of elucidating such concepts has been highlighted by Strathern (1990). We have contextualized the

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MAP 1. – Papua New Guinea. The insert shows the location of the Fore linguistic group who inhabit the Okapa District of the eastern highlands of PNG, and have been divided administratively and geographically into the North and South Fore. There are three dialects of the Fore language, *ibusakamana* spoken in the North Fore, and *atikamana* and *pamusakamana* spoken in the South Fore

souls in a rich ethnographic description of South Fore mortuary rites to avoid imposing exogenous constructs on indigenous concepts, and avoided the overuse of analytical language, so the unity of South Fore cultural concepts could be revealed.

This approach elucidated a relationship between the humors of the body (Stewart and Strathern, 2001) and their counterpart souls (Whitfield *et al.*, 2008). The extension of the deceased person in mediated and unmediated exchanges (Strathern, 1990) during mortuary rituals contained power through the 5 souls of the person. This power originated in the overlaying cosmology written into the landscape (Tilley, 1994), which was part of the overall cosmos (de Coppet and Itéanu, 1995) and capable of penetrating a person's personal space through the power of truth (Weiner, 1983). In this case cosmos is defined as:

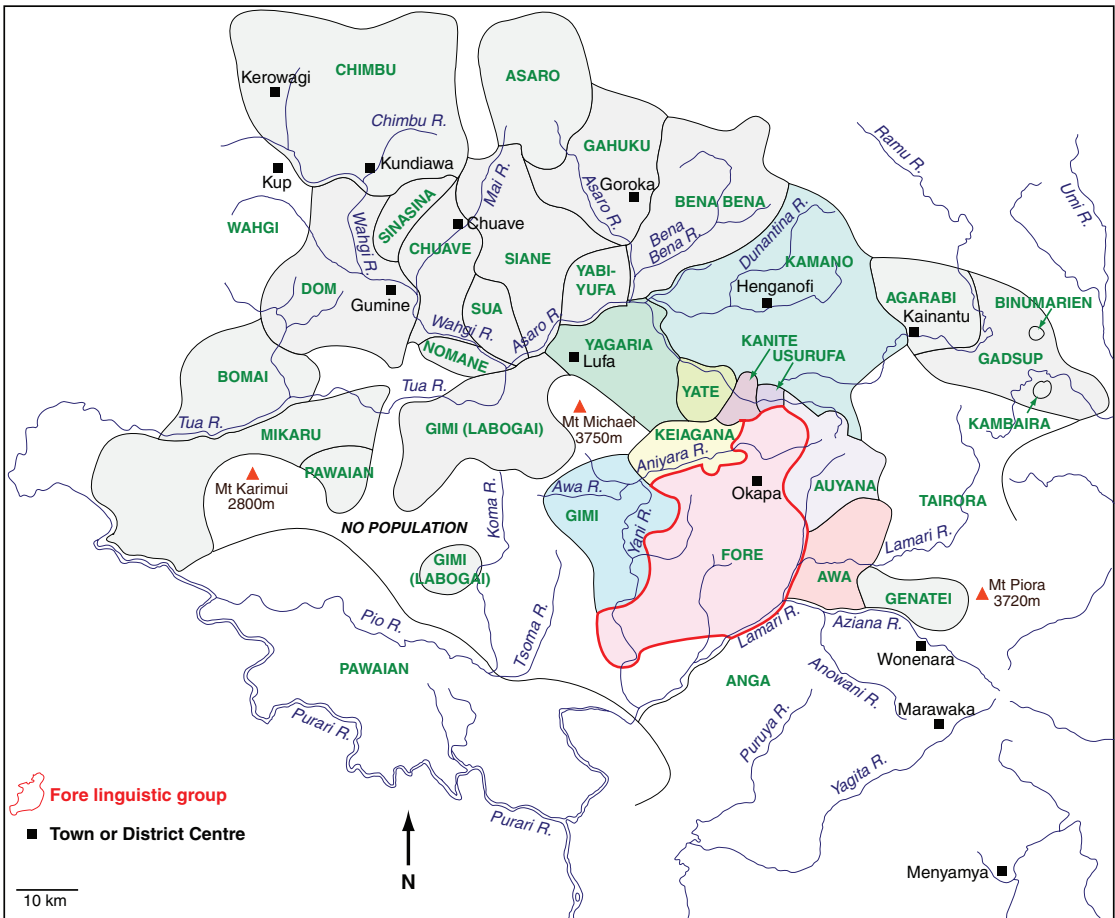
« [...] cultural ideas in general set into overarching notions of a world beyond each individual person to which the body belongs. » (Stewart and Strathern, 2001: viii)

Metaphysical personhood in Papua New Guinea

Metaphysical components of personhood have been described by anthropologists in relation to dreams and death. In this exposition we examined

ethnographic descriptions of Melanesian concepts of embodied souls and spirits to further our understanding of personhood. Rivers (1920) wrote about soul-substance in Melanesia, and described the belief in two souls found amongst the inhabitants of the Tami Islands. Malinowski (2008) described the spirits of the dead in the Trobriand Islands called *baloma* and *kosi*. Rosalind Moss (1925) brought together data from a variety of sources about mortuary customs in Polynesia, Melanesia and Indonesia. She used the terms ghost, soul and soul-substance in her descriptions. In New Ireland, life-force was transferred from the corpse to a Malangan sculpture and finally released during the rotting of the sculpture (Kuchler, 1988). Panoff (1968) provided a deep description of the notion of the double self among the Maenge, who inhabit the south coast of New Britain. Panoff was cautious in his definition of these entities, avoiding the use of "soul" which stresses spiritual faculties and "substance" that would undermine the dual nature of the Maenge.

Schieffelin (1976) described the Kaluli concept of *mama*, which meant shadow or reflection of a living person, which inhabited a world on the slopes of Mount Bosavi. Here the *mama* of a man appeared as a pig, and of a woman as a cassowary. The souls of the deceased followed rivers west from Mt Bosavi, and these rivers appeared as broad



MAP 2. – Map showing the linguistic groups of the eastern highlands and bordering central highlands. The Fore linguistic group is highlighted with a red border

roads to the souls. Eventually the roads converged in an all-consuming fire called *imol*, where the dead were consumed by flames and reborn as *ane kalu* (Schieffelin, 1976).

In the western highlands region of PNG descriptions of the metaphysical person were found for the Huli, Kyaka Enga and the Mae Enga. Robert Glasse (1965) wrote about the immaterial essence of human personality of the Huli, which survived death in the form of a ghost which could affect the living. The Mae Enga believed that a person’s spirit was in some way implanted into a child from the totality of the ancestral spirit pool. When a person died the spirit became a ghost and remained with the corpse till burial, after which it wandered through the clan’s land (Meggitt, 1965: 110). The Kyaka Enga believed that a person’s soul, called *imwambu*, became a ghost after death. Shadows or reflections of the deceased were also called *imwambu* (Bulmer, 1965). Stewart and Strathern (2001: 131-136) summarized descriptions of *noman* amongst the Melpa, *nomane* amongst the Maring, and the Kuman term *nomana* and its variants: *noman*, *nomane* and *nomanao*. The Kuman words were translated as opinion, feeling, belief, intellect,

soul, insight, heart, thought and custom. Their discussion highlighted the difficulty of translating metaphysical meanings, and how different words are used by different linguistic and dialect groups which may or may not share a common meaning.

In the eastern highlands of PNG descriptions of the souls and spirit components of the person were found for the Simbari, Siane, Daribi, Asaro, Gadsup, Tairora, Gimi, Yagaria and the Fore (see map 2). Herdt (1977) described the mediating role of shamans and their spirit familiars between ghosts of the dead and the souls of the living, and how male initiates acquired spirit familiars. Salisbury (1965) wrote about the Siane, who believed that men, pigs and certain other animals had a body and a spiritual aspect which he called ‘spirit’ and described as a ‘non-discrete spiritual essence’. The Siane called the spirit *oinya*, which turned into *korova* at death and during a later ceremony joined an undifferentiated pool of *korova*, from which *korova* subsequently entered another body to become *oinya* (Salisbury, 1965: 55). According to the Daribi, a person was not born with a soul (*noma*); instead it developed within them as they grew. After death the *noma* became an *izibidi* (ghost) (Wagner, 1967). When

a person died in the Asaro his vital essence took the form of a ghost called *foroso*, which remained in the vicinity of the living (Newman, 1965). Du Toit (1975) stated that amongst the Gadsup the soul had a visual dimension called *timami*, and a manes dimension called *aumi*. The *timami* departed from the body at death, but the *aumi* remained near the corpse and after burial it departed to become an ancestor. Watson (1983) mentioned an afterworld in the Saruwaged Range to the north of the Tairora. The land of the dead was called *bānamāqa*, and ghosts (*bana*) could return and frighten humans or assist them.

Anthropological studies were conducted amongst the northwesternmost Gimi by Glick (1963) and Gillison (1993). Glick translated the term *aona* as vital force, shadow or soul. He regarded the use of the word soul as misleading as it suggested immortality, a concept that the Gimi rejected. *Aona* also meant familiar spirit, and a human might take on the *aona* of an animal, which then became his familiar spirit. Glick used the single word 'power' to define *aona*. Gillison described *aona* as:

« *auna* is the life force that motivates people, pigs and other sentient beings including the *kore* or ghost. It arises in the head and moves in the blood to the heart, producing pulse and heartbeat. *auna* fills the lungs, liver, and other organs with 'wind' and is exuded in breath, voice, sweat, tears, intestinal gas [...] » (Gillison, 1993: 108)

The Hua, a dialect group of the Yagaria, had the concept of *aune*, the positive aspect of *nu*, described as 'vital essence' (Meigs, 1995: 18). Meigs described *aune* as a possible cognate of the Siane notion of *oinya* identified by Salisbury (Meigs, 1995: 125).

In Graham Scott's Fore dictionary *naumāwé* refers to spirit, breath or soul. The departed soul or spirit of the deceased is called *amanane*. *Kweraye* means evil spirit, devil, demon or Satan in Fore (Scott, 1980: 216). *Eségenáyé* is the word for strength, might, power, toughness, courage and authority (Scott, 1980: 34).

The indigenous concepts have been described in a variety of ways, including soul, spirit, life force, ghost, vital essence and spiritual essence. The data highlight the importance of ethnographic investigation to elicit understandings of indigenous concepts within the unity of their context, rather than the meaning of isolated words. Strathern (1990) has emphasized the importance of the correct translation of indigenous concepts:

« The task is not to imagine one can replace exogenous concepts by indigenous counterparts; rather the task is to convey the complexity of the indigenous constructs in reference to the particular context in which they are produced. » (Strathern, 1990: 8)

At the same time she cautions against the dangers of analytical language:

« Analytical language appears to create *itself* as increasingly more complex and increasingly removed from the 'realities' of the worlds it attempts to delineate, and not least from the languages in which people themselves describe them. » (Strathern, 1990: 6)

Finally, Strathern acknowledges that it is important to recognize that Melanesians have their own whole unities that can be obscured by our own analysis (Strathern, 1990: 11-12).

These three points raised by Strathern are relevant to the choice of words used to describe Melanesian metaphysical aspects of the person that depart from the body at death. The term soul is avoided by some anthropologists (Gillison, 1993; Glick, 1963; Panoff, 1968), and used by others (Herdt, 1977; Herdt and Stephen, 1989; Schieffelin, 1976). Herdt pointed out that in the past it had been assumed that the word soul needed little translation, and was analogous to the Christian theological definition, a misconception Herdt and Stephen (1989) have removed. Previously, we have used the term soul (Whitfield *et al.*, 2008), and continue to do so in this paper. We define it as the part or parts of the person that depart from the body at death. The Fore describe 5 departing souls, which differ widely in their detailed attributes. Other terminologies are less satisfactory. The term 'spiritual essence' suggests an undivided entity (Panoff, 1968), and the term 'spirit' is often associated with ghosts (Parrinder, 1989). To understand the concepts of the 5 souls of the South Fore we discussed the matter in depth with many Fore people and to place these concepts in their universal context we have turned to ethnographic descriptions and not relied on analytical language, whilst acknowledging the difficulties of matching exogenous concepts with indigenous ones.

Although there are ethnographies about the South Fore's neighbours in the eastern highlands, as mentioned above, few contain detailed descriptions of cosmologies and mortuary rites necessary for the investigation of the partible person apparent in death (Bonnemère, 2014: 740). Meigs (1995) understood Hua religion in terms of the regulation of an individual's vital substance, but does not mention mortuary rites. Her understanding of mortuary anthropophagy was based on food rules (Meigs, 1995: 40). Gillison (1993) interpreted Gimi beliefs in terms of myth, allowing her theoretical analysis to ignore statements made by her informants (Lipset, 1994: 164). More recently, preliminary investigations throughout the eastern highlands do suggest that many of the linguistic groups of the Eastern Family and the East-Central Family of the East New Guinea Highlands Stock might share similar beliefs in the five souls of the person (Whitfield, 2011).

Melanesian personhood

The subject of Melanesian personhood was invigorated by Leenhardt's '*Do Kamo*', which became available in English in 1979, and contributed to the early literature. Leenhardt often recounted his proposal to Boesoou Erijisi, his oldest convert:

« In short, what we've brought into your thinking is the notion of spirit » [or mind: *spirit*]

To which came the correction:

« Spirit? Bah! We've always known about the spirit. What you brought was the body. » (Clifford, 1992: 172)

Leenhardt struggled with the Cartesian mind-body dualism, and saw the centre of a Melanesian's relationships as empty: there was no separation of the outside from the inside defined by the body (Clifford, 1992: 185). However, Strathern disparaged the idea of an empty centre where western imagination puts the self (Strathern, 1990: 269). Strathern saw the person as objectified through the relationships that constitute him or her, which she referred to as the partible person. During mediated exchange the objects of the transaction, such as shells or pigs, were conceptualized as part of the person, and seen as extracted from one person and absorbed into another, carrying influence in the part. In unmediated exchange people had a direct effect on the lives and bodies of their relatives through substances such as semen or blood (Strathern, 1990: 178). The internal body was composed of the relationship of substances, and the external was concerned with relationships with people, thus making the body appear as the result of human actions (Strathern, 1990: 208). However, the notion of the partible person is a western conceptual approach to investigations of relationships and exchange, and not one that the South Fore would recognize in their daily understanding of the embodied person. It is only in death that the South Fore person becomes the partible person that is so amenable to the analysis of personhood (Bonnemère, 2014: 740).

The discussions on Melanesian personhood have been well summarized (Biersack, 1990; Bonnemère, 2014; Lindenbaum, 2008; Wardlow, 2006). Not everyone agreed with Marilyn Strathern, and some viewed her approach as static and believed that an actor-orientated and ethnohistorical approach would expose more complex shifting modes of personhood (Stewart and Strathern, 2000a). Melanesians also valued individual achievements and self-assertion (Stewart and Strathern, 2000b). It is now generally accepted that both relationality and individuality exist together, but with varying

emphasis in different cultures (LiPuma, 1998; Lindenbaum, 2008).

More recently the debate about personhood has moved to new forms of individualism, as modernity has transformed traditional understandings (LiPuma, 1998: 53). Robbins (2004) has written about the transformation of the Urapmin by local charismatic Christians, which led them to abandon their traditional religion, sacred houses and ancestral bones.

Another approach to investigations about Melanesian personhood was advocated by Stephen (1989), who convincingly argued her exposition that concepts of personhood and self need to be understood through indigenous concepts of embodied souls. The concepts of souls were linked to sacred ancestral powers from which the living gained access to knowledge and power. Consciousness was found in these souls, which were part of the person's body yet distinct from it.

Stewart and Strathern (2001) wrote about humors of the body (blood, fat and water) and substances, such as bone and spittle. In Papua New Guinea bodily fluids were seen to modify behaviour, whilst bodily thermal states were seen to modify health. Anna Meigs (1995) wrote about the bodily states of the Hua in the eastern highlands of Papua New Guinea, and how they maintained a bodily balance between hard and soft substances. In trying to understand how the souls of the deceased person extend out from humors or objects during exchange, Herdt suggested that:

« The self invests in these particular concepts and narratives. The I/me extends out beyond the boundaries of one's skin through imagination into a world of symbolic objects indexed in the discourse of others. » (Herdt, 1989: 27)

Such an approach removes the false analytical dichotomies of natural-supernatural and religious-profane. As Geertz pointed out:

« the world as lived and the world as imagined [...] turn out to be the same world. » (Geertz, 1973: 112)

These concepts in turn needed to be understood within the wider understanding of the cosmos, its power and its relationship to the human inhabitants. Cultural ideas were set out in an overarching view of the world which were beyond the individual, yet to which the body belonged. This world was not static but undergoing constant flow and change as experienced by the environment and its inhabitants, and the bodies and souls of the inhabitants were part of this process. The person was part of the cosmos, yet maintained an individual aspect (Stewart and Strathern, 2001). To understand the process it was necessary to

understand the relationship between personhood and cosmos through the souls and humors that constituted the composite person at birth, during initiation and throughout adulthood, and those that were released at the death of the person.

To investigate further the concepts of personhood we turned to Morphy (1990), who divided Yolngu myths into two categories, those of creation and those of inheritance. Myths of creation were about the creation of the landscape, and the ancestral beings, and those of inheritance were about the humans who inhabited the landscape and their rights to the land. The myths of creation help us to understand personhood. The close relationship between personhood, the landscape and its overlying cosmology has been well documented for indigenous Australians and others (Tilley, 1994).

Tilley (1994) pointed out that places are both empirical and the result of the inhabitants' social practices. The physical and sensory resources of the landscape were drawn on for the creation of cosmologies, social identity, social relations and social reproduction. As the landscape was drawn on in daily activities its power permeated its inhabitants and their social and cultural activities (Tilley, 1994). We define power as the capacity to influence abilities, emotions, actions and outcomes.

The power found in the landscape came from the overlying cosmology, which explained the creation of the world and its inhabitants. The durability and rarity of mythological locales in the landscape were the foundation of the truth of these events which gave power to these myths and their interpretations. Power itself was evident in the truth of the past and could be traced through the clan ancestors to the mythical creator. The power of the cosmology and landscape were evident in the power of speech to destroy and create, and nothing was more powerful than the speech of the ancestors and the creator. The power of truth entered an individual's personal space and this was the basis of its power. As Weiner (1983) pointed out, truth could disrupt and destroy, as well as bring order and create.

In the mediated and unmediated exchange of South Fore mortuary rituals we followed the atomization of the double self and followed the transference of the souls and their corresponding humors. We investigated South Fore understandings of personhood in relation to the cosmos, and traced the power of these exchanges back to the cosmology in the landscape.

Although not the focus of this paper, the ethnographic data shows the vital role played by women in rituals in a male-dominated society (Bonnemère, 2004). In the South Fore women were often referred to as the wombs of the men's cult houses, and the importance of their female reproductive powers recognized in the agnate-affine relationship. The most powerful warrior

skills were endowed by the souls of deceased women to male initiates or warriors.

The data presented, which included field notes and transcriptions, were collected between 1996 and 2010, and based on interviews with 65 men and 11 women. The gender imbalance is very apparent in the South Fore, with many villages having no elderly women. The gender imbalance of the interviewees was the result of the epidemic of kuru, a neurological disease found amongst the Fore and some of their neighbours, which devastated the older generation of women (Alpers, 2007). Although we present a predominantly male viewpoint based on the larger number of male interviews there was congruence with the narratives collected from the elderly women.

Although adult males did not participate in eating the dead, the men who were interviewed had participated in or witnessed mortuary feasts as children, and some ceased to participate at the age of about 14. At the height of the kuru epidemic 2% per year of the population of villages in the epicenter of the disease were dying of kuru (Mead *et al.*, 2009), and those interviewed are likely to have participated in or witnessed at least 10 mortuary feasts. The team conducted interviews in 20 different villages with members of 24 different clans.

The anthropologist (JTW) lived and worked in Papua New Guinea for 7 years and continued to conduct fieldwork on a regular basis for a further 7 years. The anthropologist was also a qualified nurse with a background in emergency and tropical medicine and these skills were used to benefit the communities. The project also sourced funding for community development projects and oversaw the establishment of schools, water supplies, a village birth attendant program and malaria control. The project employed 14 local full-time staff and casuals when required. Long periods were spent visiting communities within the South Fore and other kuru-affected communities, as well as many others throughout the eastern highlands. There was a close relationship during this time between the anthropologist and staff whose extensive kinship ties enabled the team to work in many different communities. MPA has worked within and as part of Fore communities for 50 years in a relationship built of mutual respect and trust (Alpers, 2014). The importance of time in the field and relationships of mutual indebtedness and trust have already been described by Mallett (2003: 273) in relationship to reciprocal entrustment with customary knowledge.

Local staff, especially David Ikabala and Sena Anua, conducted initial interviews with elderly people who had participated in or witnessed anthropophagic practices, based on their kinship ties. This allowed the team to gauge the participant's willingness to divulge traditionally

secret information and the response of the local communities. Once the team concluded that the participants were delighted to talk about their traditional way of life and experiences, in-depth interviews were conducted by the anthropologist and other team members using group interviews. During these interviews WHP contributed extensively with the translation of concepts, and the team used Fore, Tok Pisin and English languages to develop understandings of the mortuary rituals and their concepts.

Interpretations of South Fore mortuary practices by colonial patrol officers, kuru investigators and anthropologists have not been uniform, and their historicity has been accessed diachronically in a separate paper, which also takes into account the colonial encounter and the traumatic kuru epidemic (Whitfield, 2015).

South Fore cosmology

The people of the Fore linguistic group inhabit the Okapa District of the eastern highlands of Papua New Guinea, and have been divided geographically and administratively into the North and South Fore. There are two dialects spoken in the South Fore, the *atikamana* spoken by the *atigina* and the *pamusakamana* spoken by the *pamusagina*. The names used here are those of the *pamusakamana* dialect, and may be slightly different in *atikamana*.

To understand South Fore concepts of the metaphysical person it is necessary to start by investigating South Fore cosmology. The mythology explains the connection between the land (*bagina*), the creation of the sacred ancestors (*amani*) whose descendants make up the clans found in the Okapa region today, and the eschatological beliefs behind their traditional mortuary rites.

The South Fore have their own traditional explanations for the origin of the universe, as they experienced it prior to the colonial encounter. Their myths are located in time through genealogies which connect the living to the founding ancestors of the clans and finally back to the *bagina*.

The rivers are the blood, the stones the bones, the ground the skin and the plants the hair of the *bagina*. The *bagina* is the land, and it created the *amani*, the sacred ancestors of each clan, from whom men are descended, and once the *amani* were created the *bagina* changed back to its original form – the land. Everything came from the *bagina* and was eaten by the *bagina* when it died. According to the South Fore, their creation myth and that of other linguistic groups was called *kalukalu*. In the myth an old man, the *bagina*, cooked a bone with wild green vegetables

in a bamboo tube and created the *amani* at a place called Andai (Whitfield, 2011: 152-157).

Another myth told the story of a male and female *amani* who travelled from Andai (the place of creation in Ivaki in the previous myth) up the Lamari River Valley to Manyavindi. The *amani* settled in Manyavindi (which is near the village of Okasa) and the population grew until eventually the offspring of the founding *amani* spread out into their own lands, and their descendants make up the human clans of the region today. The *amani* were the guardians of the *bagina*, and the portal through which humans interacted with the hidden powers of the *bagina*. They were similar to humans, but physically more powerful and more knowledgeable about the powers of the *bagina*. The term *amani* was also used for the sacred grounds of the *amani*, which consisted of a cave that led to *kwelanamandi* (the land of the ancestors), a lake, a mountain, a pine grove and palm trees (Whitfield, 2011: 158-175).

All the founding clans of the South Fore had a tunnel from their *amani* ground that led into *kwelanamandi*, through which the souls of their dead clansmen and clanswomen travelled after death. It was very similar to the land of the living, but there were no wars, sorcerers or famines, and the dead lived a much pleasanter life than the living. It was like a dream world where time did not exist, and when people dreamed of the dead they visited *kwelanamandi* (Whitfield, 2011: 175-176).

The five souls of the South Fore

The South Fore metaphysical person consisted of 5 souls connected to corporeal humors (Table 1). There was no single term to describe the souls in the Fore language; however, today the South Fore use the word soul to describe the 5 traditional souls. The Fore members of some Christian denominations, such as the Seventh Day Adventists and Salvation Army, retain their belief in the 5 traditional souls.

The Fore believed that a person's *auma*, *ama*, bones and patrilineal blood are formed from the father's sperm. Furthermore, the South Fore emphasize patrilineal blood as the substance that defines patrilineal descent from a clan's *amani*. The matrilineal blood and flesh are a source of pollution for initiates and men and become the dangerous ghost called *kwela* after death. The Fore do not deny human biology, but have their own parallel social construction of the person which also explains human biology.

A Fore adult man or woman had 5 souls contained within the body of the living that dispersed after death. A person was born with *auma*, *ama* and *kwela*, and these three souls eventually reunited after death to become an ancestor in *kwelanamandi*. The

The partible person of the South Fore person apparent at death		Intermediate period	Final ceremony
The five souls of the South Fore Person and their corresponding bodily humors		Period between death and the final ceremony.	This marked the end of the mortuary rituals and the departure of the deceased's souls to the land of the ancestors.
Souls	Humors		
<i>auma</i> The I/me, consisting of a person's good and distinguishing qualities	Located in the centre of the body	The <i>auma</i> travelled to the land of the ancestors and awaited the <i>ama</i> and <i>kwela</i> .	These three souls were reunited in the land of the dead, where the deceased was reborn as an ancestor.
<i>ama</i> A simulacrum of the <i>auma</i> with magical powers to help the mourning family members	Located in the bones (patrilineal substance)	The patrilineal bones were separated from the matrilineal flesh and blood. The <i>ama</i> assisted the family during the mortuary rites.	
<i>kwela</i> The dangerous ghost of the deceased.	Formed from the deceased's flesh and blood, consisting mainly of matrilineal substance, but also some patrilineal substance	The dangerous <i>kwela</i> consisted of mainly matrilineal substance at the start of the intermediate period, but by the end it was transformed into a benign soul consisting of patrilineal substance.	
<i>aona</i> A person's abilities which are also apparent in their spirit familiar.	Found throughout the body	The <i>aona</i> remained with the <i>ama</i> and the <i>yesegi</i> with the <i>kwela</i> .	These abilities were inherited by the deceased's eldest child of the same sex.
<i>yesegi</i> The power/aggression of a person, also apparent in the character of their spirit familiar	Located on a person's skin		

TABLE 1. – The five souls of the South Fore person, their bodily humors and their manifestation during mortuary rites

aona and *yesegi* were transmitted during initiation and mortuary rituals. The following are descriptions of the five souls. However, to fully understand the 5 souls of the South Fore and to apprehend these allusive indigenous concepts it is necessary to analyse them in the context of traditional mortuary rites.

Auma

The following are descriptions of what *auma* means to the Fore.

- « It's your love. »
- « It's the inspired thought from your heart. »
- « A character who smiles at you from afar when he sees you. »

- « Whatever good we have comes from our *auma*. »
- « Free-willed speeches that we make. »
- « Mutual friendship is inspired by *auma*. » (Whitfield, 2011: 177-178)

The closest comparison is to the contemporary western concept of the I/me, and consists of the person's good qualities that distinguish the person from other individuals.

Ama

The *ama* is a simulacrum (an immaterial double of the living person with magical powers) of the *auma*, which remained with the family until

the obsequies were completed. An apparition of the *ama* would appear to relatives after death allowing them to see their loved one for the last time. It assisted the family during the mourning period by detecting those responsible for the death, in avenging the deceased's death and by enhancing food presentations. A dying person would tell their loved ones that his *ama* would assist them after his death, as he realized that the funeral was a great burden on the family, and believing that he could help after death eased the pain of separation. The *ama* gave endowments of *yesege* and *aona* to family members, or other mourners who consumed the body of the deceased out of love. After the departure of the *ama* to *kwelanamandi* it could still be called upon to assist the living through the relics of the deceased.

Certain bones had a strong connection with the *ama*, especially the collar bones and jawbone, and the hair of the deceased. The relics acted as talismans by providing a portal to the deceased's *ama*, which assisted the family members with their requests. These requests might include help in battle, protection from sorcerers, a cure for an illness or to find a lost pig. Gradually, the link between the living and the deceased faded as the next generation passed away, and the *ama* no longer assisted the living. The ancestor had forgotten the living, and their hair and bones were then left by their sepulture.

Kwela

The *kwela* was the dangerous soul of the deceased which could harm the deceased's family members. The *kwela* formed from the matrilineal flesh and blood, and as the body decomposed it became more and more powerful. The smell of decomposition was the *kwela* that travelled on the wind, as a cloud of pollution in the form of a human, and harmed the women and children of the family of the deceased if the obsequies were not performed correctly.

As the body decomposed the *kwela* became immensely dangerous; so exposed sepultures, which were baskets or platforms built in sugar cane or bamboo groves, were built far away from human habitation to ensure that people did not come into contact with the *kwela*. If the body was buried most of the pollution from the decomposition remained in the burial pit, so the *kwela* was not as dangerous. Finally, if the body was consumed the *kwela* remained in the female affines, called *anagra* in South Fore, for an equivalent period of time to decomposition on an exposed sepulture, thus rendering the *kwela* even less dangerous. The *kwela* of the deceased would not harm those of the same matrilineal

blood, so the affines could safely consume the body.

Although we have used the term soul to describe the *kwela*, it is important to understand that the *kwela* undergoes a transformation during the liminal period from a dangerous soul, with ghost-like behaviours, to a benign soul, as the matrilineal blood and flesh are removed during decomposition. Finally, the *kwela* is purified when it crosses the red river at the entrance to *kwelanamandi*. The benign *kwela* that makes up part of an ancestor at the end of the mortuary rites is the part that arose from the patrilineal blood of the deceased, purified of matrilineal substance.

Yesege

Yesege was the term used to describe a man's aggression, way of thinking, lack of fear and the supernatural power of his *aona*. It was a man's *yesege* that made him a great warrior or a powerful sorcerer. *Yesege* was the power of a person's *aona* and the two were intimately linked. It came from three possible sources: firstly it was received from the *amani* with *aona* during initiation rites; secondly it could be inherited from a deceased family member; and thirdly it could come as a powerful endowment from the *ama*. *Yesege* was part of a person's skin when he was alive and it departed from the body with the *kwela* after death. The *yesege* of the deceased was normally transferred to one of the deceased's sons, and this gradually became apparent as he grew older. Women who helped carry shields or wielded clubs during battles also had *yesege*. Not everybody had *yesege*, but it was evident in those who possessed it.

Aona

Aona can be described as a person's abilities, and came from three possible sources: as an endowment from the *ama* of a deceased person, inherited from a person's deceased parents, or from the *bagina* via the *amani* during initiation rituals. People's *aona* might make them good gardeners, hunters, raisers of pigs, distributors of food, warriors, bilum makers etc. People were not born with *aona*; it was something they gained during their lives. When people became old their *aona* dissipated, and they would say that it was time for them to die as their *aona* was weak. The *ama* transferred the deceased's *aona* to his favourite child, who was normally the oldest child of the same sex. As well as the *aona* of the deceased, a child or other relative might receive *aona* from the *ama* in the form of an endowment during mortuary rites.

The opportunity for initiates to acquire *aona* and *yesege* from the *amani* happened at the following initiation rites: *kokana*, *andamana* and *akitona*. It also occurred on the night before a man was married. During *akitona* initiates had a vision of an animal or plant, which became their familiar spirit – the connection between a man and the *bagina*. A man's character was also affected by his familiar spirit, so if the familiar spirit was an aggressive animal, then the initiate would be aggressive, as he had also received *yesege*. Men never ate their familiar spirit, as it would destroy their *aona*.

Once a man had a familiar spirit (*aona*) he received visions from the *bagina* when under the influence of a hallucinogenic drug mix made from the bark of the *agora* tree and *ileleva* (wild taro). The drugs released the *ama* from the body, so it entered the world of dreams and visions, and the user's *aona* connected with the *bagina* to receive its assistance. The familiar spirit would appear in dreams or visions and assist a man by warning him of dangers, or tell him where to find pigs or possums when hunting (these are just some examples).

Contact with a decomposing body through touch, smell and ingestion would contaminate a warrior or an initiate, and damage his *aona*. The men avoided those who ate the dead, so that their *aona* was not damaged. Food taboos were designed to protect a man's *aona*, as were many of the rules of the men's cult houses. There were also rules to protect a young woman, in particular those who were newly married, from the pollution of a corpse. Although this rule was to protect the woman, in reality its principal purpose was to stop her from becoming a danger to her husband's *aona*.

Ivaena was the first ritual where women might gain *aona* from their patrilineal *amani* or the *ama* of an ancestor. This was performed the night before a woman was sent to live with her husband's family (Whitfield, 2011:177-190).

Transumption in the South Fore

The term 'transumption' for these mortuary practices was first used by Alpers in 1999. It is defined as:

« the mortuary practice of consumption of the dead and incorporation of the body of the dead person into the bodies of living relatives, thus helping to free the spirit of the dead. » (Alpers, 2007)

This practice had deep religious significance for the people of the kuru-affected region and surrounding groups. It was therefore not appropriate to use the term 'cannibalism' or

even 'endocannibalism' for these practices, to which contemporary members of these societies give such good witness, because of the strong negative and derogatory connotations of these terms (Fisher, 2010: 91).

The journey of the auma to kwelanamandi

When a man was dying his familiar spirit would come and grieve over him and then die. The family would find a dead snake, lizard or whatever was the dying man's familiar spirit near their village, and they then knew that the man was about to die. The familiar spirit was the connection between the *bagina* and the initiated man, and this connection was broken just prior to death.

His favourite maternal uncle would open the door to *kwelanamandi* by exonerating the deceased for any offences he had caused the affines during his life. As death approached a man would tell his relatives that the ancestors had come to accompany him on his journey to the land of the ancestors. To reach *kwelanamandi* the deceased had to look aggressive, so he could frighten away the wild ghosts, *kavugi*, and open the road to *kwelanamandi*. The *kavugi* inhabited the *amani* and were omens of death and protectors of the road to *kwelanamandi*. The deceased's *auma* was escorted by his *ama* and *kwela*, and the *ama* and *kwela* of the ancestors, to ensure that it arrived safely.

The deceased man's clothing was hung up inside the clan's *amani* ground, as an offering, and the *amani* asked to assist the *auma* on its journey to *kwelanamandi*. A senior man from the family performed this ritual called *autavana*.

During the night after the death an agemate would shoot one of the dead man's arrows towards the clan's *amani* with the deceased's bow shouting out the name of the clan's *amani*. This informed the *amani* of the death, and requested its help to avenge the death. Firstly, the deceased's hair was wrapped around the arrow and the arrow was placed in the corpse's hand. When lit the arrow was guided by the *ama* of the deceased to the *amani*.

Then the *ama* was asked to assist finding those responsible for a sorcery-related death, in a ritual called *bakana*. This soul possession involved the *ama* of the deceased entering the body of a male family member. The man ate hallucinogenics, performed certain rituals, and as he hyperventilated on tobacco he became possessed by the *ama* and was able to see the *kwela*. Once possessed he would explain the cause of death to the other family members. The possessed man followed the *kwela*, and it showed where the man had died, what had been used to kill him, and who was responsible.

After death the *auma* walked across the *bagina* and said farewell to it. When it reached the *amani*, the *amani* asked why he had died, and after feeding the *auma*, the *amani* showed it the road to *kwelanamandi*. The shadows of whatever was put on the body would go to *kwelanamandi* with the *auma*. The shadows of the funeral items were simulacrum of mortuary items that could be used by the deceased in *kwelanamandi*. After 2-3 days the *auma* and the escorting ancestors crossed the red river at the entrance to *kwelanamandi*, and after being welcomed by the ancestors settled on its allocated ground. The deceased's *ama* and *kwela* turned back at the red river, and returned to be with the body.

Sites chosen for the disposal of the body

Once the body started to decompose the relatives knew that the *auma* had entered *kwelanamandi* and it was time to dispose of the body before the *kwela* became too dangerous. Traditionally transumption was the most common method of disposal of a corpse in the South Fore, and many of the bodies that were placed in graves, baskets or on raised platforms were later removed and eaten out of love and respect for the deceased. Sepultures were normally next to a bamboo, sugar cane or casuarina grove, as they provided shade and marked the sepulture. They also needed to be far enough from the village to avoid polluting it. There were a few cases when the body was not consumed, such as when the person died of a 'natural disease' such as epidemic dysentery, or where the agency responsible for the disease, such as leprosy, was thought to be contagious. A few people requested burial as they wished to be eaten by the land, and an even smaller number wished for their bodies to be placed in a basket or on a bamboo platform in their favourite place. However, these bodies were normally removed and consumed by the women who did not want the body to be subject to the process of decomposition.

Participation in transumption

Ideally, corpses were meant to be eaten by older women who were no longer able to bear children, as their *aona* was fading. Women with two or more children could participate but were only meant to eat muscle. However, these rules were not enforced and nearly all the females from the age of 3 upwards took part in transumption. There were some prohibitions on newlyweds, but these were removed after the birth of the first child.

Boys participated in transumption with their mothers from the age of 3 until they moved to the men's cult house and became initiates between 6 and 8 years old. Besides the *ilevino*

ritual, initiates and warriors did not participate in transumption. There were a few old men who took part with the women, but this behaviour was frowned upon by the other men.

Ilevino was the name of a secret male ritual that involved eating a small piece of the cooked vagina of a dead female relative by an initiate under the supervision of a male warrior. Only a few chosen initiates took part in this ritual in the hope of receiving *aona* and *yesegi* that would make them a powerful warrior. Some male warriors with powerful *aona* and *yesegi* from the *ilevino* ritual continued to perform this secret rite throughout their lives.

A woman's sexual organs were regarded as a shameful source of pollution, in the form of menstrual blood, which endangered the whole community. For this reason both adult men and women colluded in trying to hide the truth about sex and sexual reproduction from the unmarried youth and children. Open discussion about birth, menstruation and sex were forbidden subjects, and men never witnessed childbirth or menstruation. It was the duty of an *anagra* (female affine) to eat the vagina, and the *ama* might bestow an endowment on her; however, when a man ate a piece of vagina the *ama* would hopefully endow him to be a great warrior. This was the most powerful endowment a man could receive. When the woman's *ama* saw the man's humility and courage when he ate, it would endow him to become a great warrior.

Rules for claiming and distributing a male body

The body of a male belonged to his matrilineal affines, and normally the senior uncle on the matrilineal side claimed the corpse and oversaw its care, transport to the sepulture and disposal. Sometimes the duty fell to another matrilineal uncle that the deceased was particularly close to. If the body was to be disposed of by transumption he would transfer the duties of division, dismemberment and cooking to the senior female *anagra*, who was normally his wife. He would stay and witness the transumption of the corpse to ensure that the *anagra* carried out their duties diligently, and to see if there was any behaviour amongst the guests which might indicate their families' involvement in a sorcery-related death.

In the case of a married man there were at least two groups of *anagra*: one from his deceased's mother's family and another from the man's wife's family. Ideally, both families came from the same clan, but in reality they were often from different clans.

The oldest son's wife of the deceased man would make a request for part of the body on behalf of the family. This request was not a right, and was made on behalf of the daughters-in-law and other women in the family, who were called

anatu. Normally, the *anatu* were given the head and the right arm of the deceased. The arm was symbolic for food, support and protection, and was consumed by the *anatu* out of respect for the deceased person's good actions to their family. The head was requested as it was symbolic of the deceased's individual humanity: the face was the visual aspect of this individuality.

Rules for claiming and distributing a female body

If a married woman died her body was claimed by her eldest brother, but this right was transferred to his male cousins who would transfer the right to their wives for the purpose of transumption. Those who had rights in the body of the deceased had also received her bride price. In the distribution of the body the *anagra* and the *anaso* (an older woman from the same clan as the deceased, who had married into the deceased's husband's clan, and acted as her godmother) had the rights; the senior *anatu* would request the deceased's arm, head or both, and the *anagra* normally agreed. The deceased woman's daughters who had married out would attend the obsequies with their families and participate in transumption with the *anatu*.

The rights to an unmarried girl belonged to her oldest brother but these rights were transferred to his male cousins who would have received her bride price if she had lived, and they transferred it to their wives if the body was to be disposed of by transumption. This was compensation for not receiving the bride price that would have been received if she had grown old enough to marry, and the corpse was consumed by their wives. The female cousins always claimed the head as that was regarded as the most important part of the body by the family.

All the women who had rights to part of the body would receive an equal share. The women held the part that they claimed, marked it with red earth or tied vines around it. Once the body was claimed, and those claims had been mediated by the senior *anagra* in charge of the obsequy, dismemberment began.

The dismemberment and preparation of a male and female body for transumption

On arrival at the designated sepulture the body was placed on a bed of wild green vegetables on 2 bark cloths resting on banana leaves. The bed was designed so that none of the body was lost during transumption. The *anagra* surrounded the top of the body and the female members of the family, if they remained to witness the dismemberment, sat down about a metre away around the lower half of the body. When the body was about to be dismembered the women chased the young

children away and told them that if they did not leave the *kwela* would eat them.

The body was not normally dismembered with close family members present, as it was unbearable for them to watch, so the agnates normally moved away when the *anagra* dismembered the body. An appointed male family member witnessed the transumption, remembered how the body was distributed and ensured that the body was treated properly. The family recorded the first division of the body then other senior women who received parts of the body recorded each subsequent division, so all the women who took part in eating the body would receive correct purification and compensation payments during *aindu*, *aluana* and *igoghana*.

The senior *anagra* in charge would start dismemberment of the body with her bamboo knife. It was believed that when the first drop of blood from the body touched the *bagina* it welcomed the *kwela* and *ama* and comforted them.

The body was dismembered by the old *anagra*: that is, women with grey hair who could no longer bear children. The *aona* of the older women were already fading, so they were not affected by the pollution of the body. The younger *anagra* who had rights to part of the body would ask the older ones to cut their parts for them. The younger women were not allowed to cut the body as they would be polluted by the blood and this would pose a danger to their husbands' *aona*. These men were the warriors who protected the community, and if the pollution reached them through their wives their *aona* would be damaged, and they would not be able to carry out their defence successfully. Women over the age of sixteen assisted by holding the body during de-limbing. They did not assist for the torso of a man or woman as they were forbidden to see a man's intestines full of excrement and the genitals of either sex, and this part of the obsequy was hidden from all except the elderly *anagra*. There were two groups of *anagra* for a married man, one on each side of the body. When a woman died the women of her patrilineal line dismembered the body. Firstly, they cut off the feet and then filleted the legs. The hands were cut off at the wrist, the arms filleted and the bones removed. The leg bones were cut off and the body sat down on the tapa cloth with the back of the torso downwards. The chest and abdomen were cut open and the intestines removed and given to the widow, who hid them in a bilum full of greens. In the *pamusagina* the widow received nothing, as they believed that if she ate part of her husband his *kwela* would remain with her forever. In the *atigina* the widow had to eat part of the body to help her forget her dead husband, and the internal organs were shared amongst the *anagra*. A woman's body was consumed by her patrilineal line and the older women claimed her



FIGURE 1. – Mr Anderson Puwa, community liaison officer for the Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research and MRC Prion Unit kuru project, and community leader of Waisa village in the South Fore, overseeing a funeral feast in honour of his deceased uncle, Mr Papan Agaya, in 2006 (picture by J. Whitfield)

internal organs and genitals. The older *anagra* cut the body so that the intestines and genitals remained hidden from the other mourners, and to ensure that this happened they crouched down and made a wall around the body with their bark capes so that the other participants could not see what was happening. The head was then cut off and finally the backbone divided up. As the body was dismembered the person who claimed a particular part took it and put it on a banana leaf plate with a breadfruit leaf on top containing wild ferns. The bones were divided up and placed on top of each pile of meat belonging to the recipients. The daughters-in-law of the *anagra*, or their own daughters, would assist them in subdividing the meat, so it could be shoved inside the bamboo tubes with wild green vegetables, and once cooked shared with the *ename* (unrelated female guests who lived in the same or neighbouring villages). Wild green vegetables symbolized that the deceased had departed to another world – to a wild place where he would forget the living.

The intestinal contents were emptied into a hole under the fire where the body was to be cooked, while hidden by the capes of the *anagra*. The gall bladder was also buried under the same fire. The intestines were washed out, cut up, dried on the fire to make them softer, and then stuffed into bamboo tubes with wild green vegetables and spices. Certain women mixed spices in their

mouths and then spat them on the meat so that it tasted better. Ginger, traditional salt, and other herbs and spices were used. The body was always cooked in bamboo tubes as it was imperative that the whole body was eaten and if a traditional earth steam oven (picture 1) was used fluids from the body would have seeped into the ground.

Transumption: subdivision and consumption of the corpse

The bamboo tubes were placed on the fire, and turned frequently by the women, so the meat cooked evenly over a period of about 20 minutes. Breadfruit and banana leaves were heated on the fire to make them soft by the *anagra* and their assistants, and then a large plate of banana leaves was made on the ground. Breadfruit leaves were prepared to act as separate plates for the distribution of the cooked meat. Each *anagra* and the *anaso* would empty half of her tubes' contents onto the communal leaf plate, the contents of which were given to the other female guests who came to mourn the deceased. The *anatu* did the same, and half of the tubes that contained the brain were contributed to the communal pile.

The body was shared with the female visitors from surrounding villages (*ename*) who had a connection with the deceased. Piles of food were prepared for women from particular villages or

clans and the senior woman from each group controlled the distribution. All the female participants received part of the body as they had come out of sorrow, and the family and affines had to ensure that they were treated well. The intestines, spine, internal organs and genitals were not shared with the *ename*. When women attended the obsequies, they showed that they and their families were not involved in the death since, if they did not eat, their husbands would have been suspected of being involved in a sorcery-related death. If a woman's husband had been involved in the death the deceased's *kwela* would attack her. This attack often took the form of stomach ache, which was interpreted as the *kwela* attacking the woman in revenge. Some women relished the opportunity to eat the cooked meat, and had a reputation for this in their communities.

The *ename* were fed from the end of a sharpened piece of bamboo, and the women from the same lineage as the deceased received their meat on a banana or breadfruit leaf and ate with their hands. This protected the *ename's* families from the *kwela*. If the meat touched the woman's skin the *kwela* might remain on her skin, and then harm her family if a member had upset the deceased when he was living. The *kwela* would not harm the women from the family who ate the body as they ate out of love, so they could eat with their fingers from a banana or breadfruit leaf. This ritual showed the ideal group loyalties: those from the same community were trusted and ate with their hands and those from other communities ate from a stick. However, it was also a way of protecting the *ename*, who were welcome at the feast, from harm.

The *anagra* and *anaso* shared their meat with their daughters-in-law and their children, their 'poromeri' (Tok Pisin for agemates) who supported them at this time, their daughters and their children, and their mothers if they were still alive.

If the *anatu* received an arm, a finger would be given to each of the children of the deceased to eat if they were still small. The fingers were cooked in bamboo with greens and the flesh eaten, and then the bones crushed, cooked with greens in bamboo and eaten. A woman or child might receive an endowment (*aona*) by eating a parent's or grandparent's finger; in this situation the endowment was given by the *ama* out of respect for the person's sorrow.

In the *pamusagina* the mother-in-law would eat the dead man's penis and the senior mother's brother's wife would eat the testicles; it was believed that if the younger women ate them they would become ill. The older women might receive an endowment from the *ama* of the deceased by eating the sexual organs. The brain, sexual organs, spine and internal organs were meant to be eaten by elderly females, but in practice the

rules were not enforced. Newly married women from the agnates and affines who took part in transumption received part of the body on a stick, so they did not pollute their husbands.

The mourners ate at the sepulture and when evening approached took their remaining bamboo tubes back to the house of one of the *anatu* in the women's area of the hamlet (*kami*). The tapa cloth used to carry the corpse was put on the ground and breadfruit leaves placed on top before the meat was emptied from the remaining bamboo tubes. The *anagra* shared the meat on the tapa cloth with the close female relatives who stayed in the mourning house that night.

The head was not always eaten with the body, as the family tried to keep it for as long as possible, so they could continue to look at the deceased person's face. Once the face changed, that is, when it started to decompose, it was eaten as this signaled that the *auma* had reached *kwelanamandi*, and from then on only memories would remain. In the morning, the head of a man was taken to the boundary between the *kami* and the men's area, and shown to any of the men who wished to see the deceased person's face for the last time.

The head was then placed on wild green vegetables on a large concave stone to retain any fluids. Firstly, the hair was pulled out, and this required little effort. A cut was then made with a bamboo knife from the forehead to the back of the head and the skin peeled off. Next, the jaw and tongue were removed, and then the rest of the skin and meat. A large hole was made in the top of the skull using another stone from a river, and fingers wrapped in greens were pushed into the hole and the brain loosened from the skull. The brain hemispheres, cerebellum and brain stem were then pulled out through the hole. The skull and the broken parts from the cranium were browned by the fire. The brain was mixed with wild green vegetables and put in bamboo tubes. The meat from the skull was shared amongst the *anatu* and the other women of the deceased's family. The hair that was not kept to contact the deceased's *ama* was burnt and the ashes mixed with greens and cooked in bamboo tubes and eaten. Fluid left in the tubes when the contents were removed was drunk and grease on the hands wiped on the participant's hair and skin. The brain tissue and meat were cooked separately. Finally, the two stones used to process the skull were taken to the sepulture and placed next to it.

Pregnant women rubbed fluids from the cooked body on to their abdomens, and later checked their newborn children for signs that indicated that their babies had inherited a physical feature, such as looks or a birth mark, from the deceased. The *ama* transformed the baby to have the behavioural mannerisms and general appearance

of the deceased. This was an endowment from the *ama* of the deceased, and was called *andagosa*.

Ikwaya ana

The flesh from the corpse was consumed on the first day and night, and on the following day any remaining flesh was consumed with the bones. The women departed from the widow's house with the bones, any leftover meat, and bamboo knives and containers used during transumption.

The bones were placed by the fire to dry, so they would break into smaller pieces without sharp edges. Then the women crushed them with stones in *nase*, a wild green vegetable, covered in *ikwaya* (another wild green vegetable), which had been chewed, so the bone dust stuck to it; the greens were then wrapped up, placed in bamboo tubes, and cooked. They were eating a loved one, and the deceased's *ama* and *kwela* witnessed the obsequies, so the body had to be treated with respect.

After cooking the bones the women started to eat them, and as evening approached they returned to the mourning house and remained there till transumption of the body was completed. The process of consuming a body could take up to three weeks.

An appointed family member watched over the eating of the bones during *ikwaya ana* to ensure that the rituals were carried out correctly. All the leaves, bamboo containers, knives and anything else used during the mortuary rituals were burnt on fires and the ashes mixed with wild green vegetables and eaten. This ensured that the entire body was eaten, and the deceased became an ancestor. The ashes were prepared in the same manner as the bones.

At the end of *ikwaya ana* the fireplace was covered up with earth and became the temporary sepulture for the *ama*. The stones used to break the bones were cleaned with banana skins which were then burnt in the fire, and the stones returned to the bamboo grove or sugar cane grove which marked the sepulture.

After the body was eaten the *anagra* felt as though the deceased was within them, and this reduced the grief of the participants. Even though the person had died, he or she was still with the living, and had not yet departed; the souls only departed when the grief had subsided and people had accepted the death. Transumption reduced the grief of the mourners and shortened the mourning period.

Once the fireplace was covered up the family would light a small fire by the side of the sepulture in the morning and afternoon. Food and water were placed there as the *ama* was cold, hungry and thirsty. This started after transumption and continued until *aindu*.

Mortuary rites following the transumption of the deceased

Isooana

This feast was held after the deceased's bones were consumed and included the *pepatakina* ritual. This feast was for all those who grieved and was held in honour of the deceased. Women from the village who were not in the mourning house collected vegetables and prepared an earth oven inside the hamlet of the deceased.

Pepatakina

The women left the mourning house in a ritual called *pepatakina*; this required the use of the leaves from the earth oven used to prepare *isooana*, a feast of vegetables, some of which were prepared for the women when they came out of the mourning house. The cooked leaves were placed on the ground from the entrance of the mourning house to the piles of food for the women who had consumed the body. When the women walked on the leaves the steam purified their bodies. The next day the women started to prepare for *aindu* as *pepatakina* freed them to move around the *kami* -- except for the widow, who remained at the back of her house.

Aindu

Aindu was the name of the second purification ritual after the completion of transumption. This ritual was normally performed three days after *isooana* to remove the pollution from those who had taken part in transumption. The ritual freed the participants to carry out normal domestic duties again, such as gardening, and most importantly allowed them to engage in activities to assist the obsequies. The women collected wild and domestic green vegetables and hunted garden rats, and the men hunted tree kangaroos, possums and wild pigs. Everything was taken to the *kami* where the women gutted the animals and placed them on the fire in the mourning house. The burning fur and fat gave off a strong smell that purified the *kami*. The women then purified themselves by rubbing the carcasses over their bodies, grass skirts and bark capes. Finally, the women cooked the carcasses in bamboo tubes and ate them. If a bark cape was used to carry human meat it too was purified. Sometimes children took part in *aindu*, but it was not as important for them to be purified as they did not possess *aona*. This ritual purified the bodies of the participants of transumption and the village, and ensured that the whole body was consumed.

Kavunda

Isooana marked the start of *kavunda*, the grieving period. When grass started to appear on the grave it signalled the end of *kavunda* and the family then started to prepare for *aluana*. *Kavunda* meant 'eating of wild greens'. It lasted for one or two months when the mourning was still intense, and friends and relatives continued to visit the grieving family. The *anatu* collected vegetables from their gardens in the village and continued to feed the guests, and when the garden foods were finished they collected wild ferns, sweet potato leaves and grasses. Every few days a steam oven was prepared full of sweet potatoes to feed the family and guests, and visiting male relatives brought wild meat to bolster the mourners' diet. During the night the mourners sang and expressed their grief.

The stems of the consumed wild plants were heaped in a pile, and at the feast called *aluana*, which marked the end of *kavunda*, they were burnt. During forays into the forest to collect wild green vegetables, edible plants that the deceased had seen or touched were collected, cooked and eaten. By eating items connected to the deceased the mourners remembered their loved one and this helped them to overcome their grief.

Aluana

Aluana was the last feast to remove pollution from the mourners (except the widow) and consisted of wild meat presentations. Sometimes a domestic pig was added to thank the affines for consuming the body. Normally, the feast took place a couple of months after the body was consumed, and marked the end of *kavunda* and the public mourning of the community.

The men hunted possums, wild pigs, cassowaries and eels, whilst the women and children hunted rats and collected grubs. The food was presented to all the women who had participated in the transumption of the body.

At the end of *aluana* the *kwela* departed from the temporary sepultures, which were the bodies of the *anagra*, and joined the *ama* at the sepulture, which was the fireplace where the body was cooked. After *aluana* the women were free of pollution and able to concentrate on preparing gardens and raising pigs for *agona* and *igoghana*. It was a tremendous relief for the *anagra* when the *kwela* departed from their bodies. However, close family members continued to mourn the loss of their loved one, and the widow remained in mourning and under certain prohibitions until after *agona*.

Igoghana

Igoghana often required the rearing of pigs, so it took place two years after transumption when pigs

had been specifically raised. *Igoghana* consisted of presentations of cooked pigs and vegetables given to the families of those who consumed the body, as a payment for the service of eating something that was not meant to be eaten (the body was a source of pollution and not meant to be consumed). The payment was made to the senior males of the families who had participated in transumption, and not to their wives.

Agona

Preparations for *agona* took between two and three years, as it required ten to twenty-five pigs depending on the importance of the deceased. This payment was for the matrilineal blood that allowed the patrilineal line to reproduce and continue. The payment was known as 'head pay' and consisted of: bows, arrows, headdresses, crops, salt, toea shells, stone axes, and cooked and live pigs. These items were not equivalent to the life of a person, but a means of thanking the affines. It is important to recognize that this redress were never equivalent to the loss of a loved one for the family. It was a material apology, and the aggrieved family did not privately forget, or forgive the perpetrators. All the affines received part of the *agona* payment, and other participants who had various rights received small payments of food.

The *kwela* and *ama* were told by the mourners that life was much better in *kwelanamandi* with their ancestors, and told to depart. Firstly, they said goodbye to the *bagina*, then ate with the *amani* and continued on the road to *kwelanamandi*. The shadows of all the food and items used at the mortuary feasts went with the *kwela* and *ama* to *kwelanamandi*. After *agona* the family was sad, as the deceased had finally departed forever. Once the *kwela* and *ama* arrived in *kwelanamandi* they were reunited with the *auma*, and the deceased was reborn as an ancestor. The shadows of all the food and goods used during the mortuary rituals allowed the deceased to prepare a feast for the ancestors.

Conclusion

The person's connection to the cosmos was made apparent at birth and death. The South Fore understood the conception of the person, composed of patrilineal and matrilineal humors brought together, as the result of social and biological processes. The transumption of the physical body and the departure of the souls followed Hertz's theory of secondary burial (Hertz, 1960). Detailed ethnographic descriptions of South Fore mortuary rites proved fruitful in eliciting an indigenous understanding of personhood.

However, the ethnographic data also highlighted the conundrum facing Stewart and Strathern (2001) in understanding indigenous concepts of *noman* amongst the Melpa and their neighbours. To understand the meaning of the 5 souls of the South Fore it was necessary to contextualize them within the cosmos. Single words or phrases were inadequate to describe such entities. Indeed, the *kwela* changed from a soul with ghost-like behavior to a benign soul by the end of the mortuary rituals. The South Fore gave different descriptions for the *auma*. The *aona* could take multiple forms, such as a plant or animal familiar spirit, and was also described as a person's abilities in combination with *yesege*.

The humors of the body were divided into the bones, and the flesh and blood. Their soul counterparts were the *ama*, which represented social ideals of behaviour, including exchange and reciprocity, and the ambiguous *kwela*. *Yesege* was found on a person's skin, and the *aona* in the body. Only after death was the person reconstituted as a socially ideal person, in the form of pure patrilineal substance, as an ancestor. For this to happen, the *kwela*, which was initially ghost-like in its behaviour, had to be purified of matrilineal blood and flesh that manifested from the putrid substances of decomposition to become a patrilineal soul formed only of patrilineal blood. Once transformed, the souls of the deceased returned to the *amani*, from whom they originated, and finally to the *bagina*, the creator, when they entered *kwelanamandi*. This cosmology allowed for a number of ways to dispose of the deceased, including platforms, baskets, burial and transumption, all of which achieved the same end results, and precluded the consumption of enemies within the same cosmological context.

The very notion of cosmos as described by Stewart and Strathern (2001:145-146) flowed through the embodied South Fore person. The souls and humors of the person came from the *bagina* via the *amani*, and all were returned to the *bagina* at death. The South Fore cosmology was written into the landscape and both were part of an overarching cosmos that covered the relationships between its inhabitants, and between the inhabitants and their living environment, in this case the *bagina* and its metaphysical creations. It was from locales in the landscape, which were sites of mythological events, that power emanated and penetrated a person's personal space (Weiner, 1983).

People were hubs of wider relationships and the souls and humors of a deceased person carried influence and power during mortuary exchanges, which came from the truth that was written into the landscape. This power flowed, in mediated and unmediated exchange, in the objects and humors of the deceased. The

correct performance of the mortuary rituals was rewarded with endowments and assistance from the *ama*, and the incorrect was punishable by the *kwela*. The deceased's *aona* and *yesege* were inherited by their children. Bones and objects, such as bows or arrows, that belonged to the deceased maintained a connection to the *ama* and acted as talismans. The correct performance of the rituals was the way of the ancestors and expressed the power of truth.

Embodied persons were part of the cosmos and linked in both moral and physical terms through their souls and humors. This meant that a person's social interactions were informed by ideas of cosmology, morality, ancestry, mythology and power that emanated from the landscape, as part of an overall cosmos. Culturally approved behaviour followed the way of the ancestors, and thus contained their power of speech. This meant that all social acts contained the power of truth if performed within a group's culturally prescribed norms of correct behaviour. A person's *auma* was evident in their moral behaviour, *aona* in their abilities, such as dividing food at a mortuary feast, and *yesege* in a warrior's abilities when the community needed defending. When people failed to abide by the way of the ancestors they were punished by the *bagina*, or the *kwela* during mortuary rites.

In the South Fore the embodied person was perceived as an individual composed of humors and souls which were imbued with the power of truth, which emanated from their cosmology and landscape, as part of an overarching cosmos. At death the embodied souls separated from the humors and yet remained linked to them for the duration of the mortuary rites and beyond, revealing the partible person and South Fore concepts of personhood.

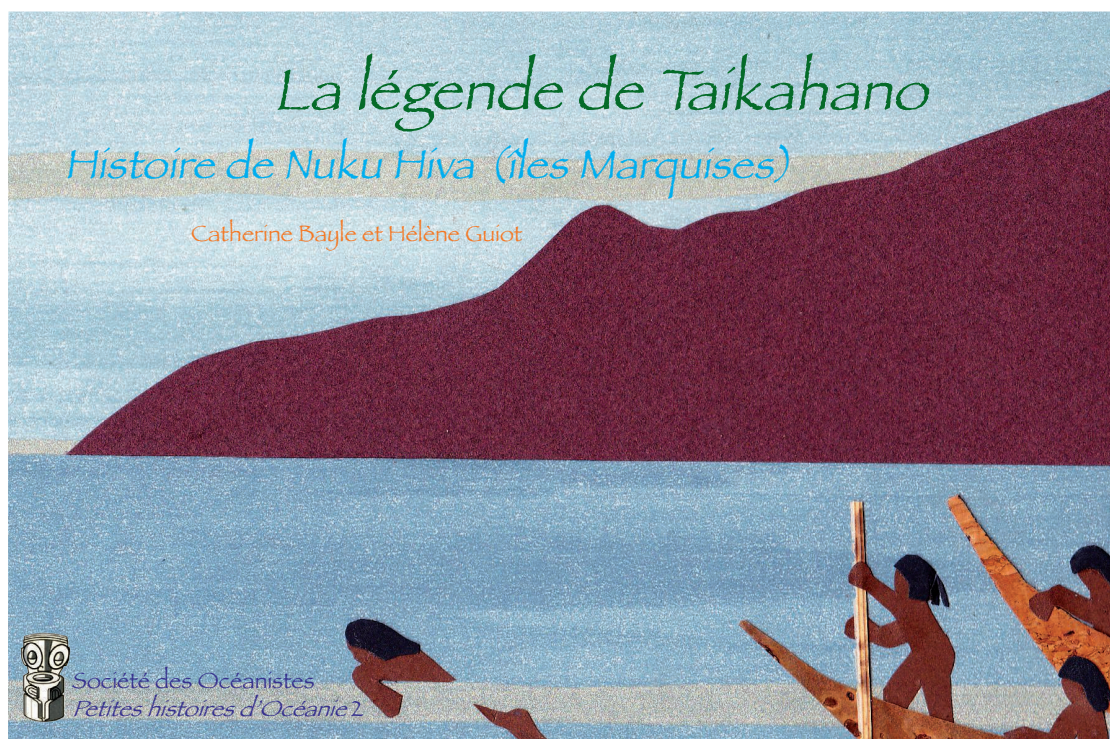
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