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# Kinship and Place: The Existential and Moral Process of Landscape Formation on the Rai Coast of Papua New Guinea

James Leach

There are myriad ways in which people are connected to places (Feld and Basso 1996). For most, these connections are practical, the foundation of livelihood and economy. Some are ideological. Many are political (e.g., Bender 1998; Rowlands 2008). There are less conventionally familiar, but sometimes more experience proximate emotive connections of affection, awe, (dis)comfort, succor (e.g., Brody 1983; Shephard 2008). Narratives of individual or collective history combine experiences of being in particular places with memories of events (Basso 1988). Places are not only *where* things happen, they are part of what happens. More than merely traces of past activities, places often enter into relations between people affording common or divergent activities in fundamental and vital ways (Ingold 2000).

This is a chapter about a particular place and people, and about the existential connection between them. I will be clear about the scope from the outset. It is not a survey chapter collecting together different archaeological, historical, geographical, and anthropological perspectives on places and kinship in human history (see e.g., Tilley 2006). Neither is it a history of the way place has been understood in anthropology (see e.g., Hirsch and O'Hanlon 1995; Ingold 2000: 190–193). Rather, the aim of the chapter is *suggestive*. Suggestive, that is, of an open investigation into the creative aspects of kinship, of self and other formation, and ultimately, of

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the process of making human life in particular ways *with* particular places. This will be through the prism of one group of people's connections with land and place.

The location is the Rai Coast of Papua New Guinea; an out of the way, little known area of the otherwise densely investigated island (see Sillitoe 1998). Melanesia, and New Guinea in particular, has provided a wealth of opportunity for the anthropological study of kinship, and especially the role and scope of kinship in providing principles for the organization of economy, exchange, warfare, and ritual. It has also been seminal in understanding peoples' connection to place (Weiner 1991) and of the relation between land and kinship (Strathern 1973). Here, I draw on my own ethnography from the region to offer a description of how people are connected to places and how kinship itself enfolds (Wagner 2001), makes alive, and is given its reason, by these connections.

People do not arise *sui generis* from places. They work with others to grow each other and in that process the differences between places come to have value and meaning. Imagine for a moment that everything you are, your very flesh and blood, your body and all you know, come from specific other people. (Is this so far-fetched?) It is those other people who have labored to produce you, who have dedicated their capacities and efforts towards the production of your body. The substance with which that body is made and sustained, the foods that give it solidity and have grown it, the knowledge that allows you to do anything at all, this is what connects you to those others and to the place in which you have grown. It is in them in which you have your origin. And your status as a human being is dependent upon the recognition of this reality. You are a transformation of the potential of a place through others' labor and nurture into a specific product of this work. In turn, what you do with your body, what motivates "you" to create or make or choose is not only influenced by the ongoing history of your emergence *in relation* to other people and powers of the place, it is actually *only possible* because of these relations. They are always placed.

The differentiation of places is the difference between people that make marriage and procreation possible. Close family take different roles in constituting the very body you operate. More distant kin provide other elements appropriate to their relation and interest in you. Your body is always their interest, and whatever you can produce has to be thought about in terms of what and how you can acknowledge and reciprocate. In this situation, knowing and acting around the potential of places and lands to grow people is what it is to be a human being. And just as you are grown by others, all those whom you yourself - in your extended form of already being many other people - nurture, feed, advise, offer company or land or labor to, are parts of you.

Focusing on how people are connected to places is necessarily a focus on how they figure in each other's lives, how human worlds grow out of human activities and efforts. In what follows, I draw attention to how

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people from the hamlets of Reite on the Rai Coast of Papua New Guinea take responsibility for making a human world in their actions. Their endeavors are practical in the sense of being existential. They make the Reite world and Reite persons with and from places.

Children take the place of a generative nexus in Reite. Being the focus of growth action, they simultaneously are the reason for actions that draw forth the potential of places and kin groups and a pivot point in relations between places. Their position constitutes the relations that give places existence. The birth and growth of children is the reason for different people and groups working together in a common but distinct set of interests. In pursuing these interests, landscape (that is, what is known about land and its places, its human potential and meaning, its history and form) is created.

## 9.1 Relations

Recently, Marilyn Strathern has re-formalized some of her earlier conceptualizations of types of relation (2012). One type that she calls “mode 1 relation,” or “relation1,” takes as given the entities that are related. That is to say, while putting things into relation reveals new aspects of them, provides different uses, or potential combinations, the entity itself is prior to the relation. It exists as potential for relation. Relations in turn draw out different aspects of its qualities or potentials. This mode 1 relation is the familiar mode of Western science and sociality. Entities are given. The classification of entities reveals their inherent similarity to or differences from other entities. The discovery of further properties or elements through new organization, knowledge, or equipment, reveal further aspects and connections. “Relations1 bring into new positions of stability the properties of the (pre-existing) terms they conjoin, the combinations they create, demarcating (old or new) categories of existence” (Strathern 2012: 10).

Mode 2 relations, or relation2 is of a different order. In this case, the entities themselves are given form by the relation. The terms come to have their properties as an element of the relation itself. The relation takes precedence and forms its terms. The difference is perhaps difficult to grasp, but illuminating. Relations2 are not between pre-given entities with potential properties internally, waiting to be drawn out by specific relations1 (approaches, combinations, perspectives, etc.) but rather are brought into being in relation2. “Relations2 are indeterminate as to the pre-existence of the terms.<sup>4</sup> ... the terms (their qualities and capacities) are evident less as categories of existence than as functions or effects of a relational facility” (Strathern 2012: 10).

Relation2 is another way of expressing one of the core insights of Strathern’s approach to Melanesian ethnographic materials (see 1988).

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The distinction is one that (has already) informed many analyses of the ethnography (Wagner 1975), and is worth recalling in the context of kinship rites as ways of being in landscape. The insight here is about the difficulty we tend to have, conditioned to relations<sup>1</sup>, to keep indeterminacy in mind. That as anthropological observers we are likely to view the development of the child as the stage-by-stage transformation of a unitary self, a body with internal properties and capacities for growth that *put into the right relation* (relation<sup>1</sup> mode of thinking) has different aspects highlighted or focused upon during its inevitable development. There is no formative relation to land, as land is just the place growth happens to occur. This amounts to a dualist view: a naturally given and specified entity (the natural human body) is socialized into different roles and identities in parallel with their ontogenetic development (and see Ingold 2009: 194). Landscape formation is merely a side effect of human subsistence activity.

But what if growth itself were at issue? What are the “contours of a non-dualistic world where mutual embeddedness rather than separation characterizes human–environment relations” (Bamford 1998: 30)? What if achieving the desired form for bodies and kinship were not about moments of reclassification (boys reclassified as men, for example, as their physical maturity demands social recognition) but is about achieving that growth and transformation itself? And what if that growth were also the constitution of a world of distinct places in a particular form? This is to be my contention in the case of Reite people.

## 9.2 The Life Cycle and the Landscape: Growing Human Worlds

I will set out an argument that suggests life-cycle rites in Reite hamlets are existential in this strong sense. That is, they are world creating. The focus on growth and transformation through the life cycle is the mode in which the world is made and remade in human form in each generation. Places come into being as the outcomes of this human effort to sustain the human world. These life-cycle payments are the core constitutive moments of marriage and affinity. They thus also invoke the responsibility for moral behavior. The emergence of places is not a byproduct of other practical subsistence activity, but a moral injunction at the core of human kinship.

Many life-cycle rites in Reite involve the “consumption” of substitutions for the child or person. It is in these substitutions that materials, the things that give specific form to the relation, are deployed. I briefly interrogate the qualities of the substances utilized, exchanged, and consumed in each case. My purpose is to demonstrate how life-cycle rites give a distinct form to the terms, that is the entities, involved. These are not pre-given, and work is required to achieve the correct form of growth and

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transformation in each case. The process has its culmination in marriage exchanges in which a full effigy of the body is constructed by one side, and dismantled and consumed by the other.

Reite people live by horticulture and hunting in rainforest near the north coast of the island. They reside in small hamlets that are based around a meeting house and a cult house. The residential group is named the *palem*, a word that also refers to a platform adjacent to the meeting house on which ceremonial payments to affinal kin are placed. The cult house contains the paraphernalia of different spirits (*kaapu*) that are called upon by men. *Kaapu* are musical, known by their “voices,” which are the melodies of sacred songs. They reside in specific places in the landscape and are called to the hamlet for specific purposes: life-cycle events involving exchanges and ceremonial performances.

*Palem* are the focus of a generative system. Persons become related to one another through living together in a *palem*. All second-generation residents of a *palem* are siblings in Nekgini reckoning. The hamlets are recognized as whole units (*palem konaki*) at the point where they collectively produce a payment to another residential group. These payments are made in recognition of work and input from people from other places.

In Reite, one looks for marriage partners among one’s cross cousins. Categorically, people living in other *palem* are not siblings, and therefore are potentially marriageable. Women move to their husband’s *palem* on marriage. Previous marriages between *palem* mean other *palem* are categorically and actually the places of affines, and thus of cross cousins. As we will see below, there are numerous payments made to affines (other *palem*) during the life cycle.

The archetypal or key payments are those given in return for “bodies.” That is, for women who arrive in marriage, and for firstborn children who are acknowledged to belong to the wife’s originating *palem*. These major payments take the form of an effigy, made up of garden produce, wealth items, and a live pig. These items are explicitly named as body parts. The *kaapu* (spirits) animate this body, giving it voice and calling for the recipients to come. *Palem* as kinship groupings are named after the site of their cult and meeting house, and the effigy is constructed “at their door,” born from their collective work. Places then are combinations of people related as siblings, parents and children, and their land-based spirits. They come to have their social identity, their name, and political recognition through the recognition they gain in producing payments for their affines in life-cycle rituals. Places are explicitly recognized as producers of bodies. The lands in which these bodies arise provide the identifiable materials with which different bodies are made. They thus are also the substance with which human kinship, the morality of affinal inter-responsibility, and inter-group politics, are generated. In this complex, mother’s brothers (MBs) come to represent the affinal *palem*’s input and work.

### 9.3 Life-Cycle Rites: The Making and Remaking of Human Relations

There are at least ten life-cycle rites for boys and girls before marriage in Reite (Leach 2003: 129).<sup>2</sup> It is important to note, as I do elsewhere, that these rites are for firstborn children (2003: 130). This is in keeping with Nekgini speaker's emphasis on the emergence of a *place* (2003: 211–215), that is, a situated nexus of human and spirit/land-based powers. This *place* emerges when a sibling set (2003: 130–131), defined by their differentiation from affinal kin through geographical and thus categorical separation (2003: 84), achieves recognition of their productivity. This recognition always takes the form of producing a body (of one sort or another) for others to see and thus possess. Achieving this effect is to become a named place, a *palem* in Reite terminology, in the regard of those who receive wealth from it.

The recognition of the firstborn child of a hamlet group as the visible aspect of engagement with categorical others (maternal kin) (2003: 151–156) is demonstration of the emergent *palem's* motivation of land and people in productive creation. The emergence of the child is simultaneously the emergence of a place *that is also* the possibility for others to act in regard of that place. As I said above, children are the nexus of activity that re-enacts the separation of places. Maternal kin expect and demand their role in recognizing them. Mother's brothers are made by the actions of the father and mother as much as they make the child grow in specific ways. Far from being unwelcome obligations, these obligations are claimed and guarded because they are vital for all sides.

Why firstborn? Firstborn children lead and carry their siblings (Leach 2012: 35). They do so by being the reason for, and the manifestation of, a transformative relation to affinal/maternal kin.<sup>3</sup> Subsequent children can and do make payments and strengthen the *palem* image. For them to do so before their elder siblings is to “step over” these siblings and relegate them to an inferior position within the *palem* hierarchy. It is the image of productive unity that is important externally, and thus the firstborn child is the focus of life-cycle payments because they are the first manifestation of that productivity.

### 9.4 The Rites

A glance at the list of life-cycle rites as a whole gives an overview of the progression of growth. Two things are obvious. First, the role of the maternal kin, and second the extensive and sustained attention that the rites demand. It is clear that people take responsibility for the growth and emergence of the child. It is not left to chance. More accurately still, particular people take responsibility for the growth of specific others. Let us



Table 9.1 Reite life-cycle rites

Name of payment	Procedure and wealth to be given	Boy	Girl
<i>Eemung uret</i>	"Face them." Woman's bothers come, give decorated spear and coconut to newly pregnant girl. Return of betel nut and coconuts.	—	—
<i>Nek sulitikung</i>	"Washing the child." Mother's brother receives the child from back wall of house. Palieng to MBs.	×	×
<i>Yungyung</i>	"Heavy foods." F and M of child cook post-partum taboo foods and give to MB.	×	×
<i>Unamau pusiraeo</i>	"Not to be carried." Opossum ( <i>pununung</i> ) draped over shoulders, MB removes and eats.	×	×
<i>Maal rongairni</i>	"Fasten loincloth." Eel tied around child's waist, MB removes and cooks.	×	×
<i>Ming kupiret, tari talang'yenda</i>	"First haircutting, rubbing dye into skin." Pig, rawirawi and palieng – to mother's brother.	×	×
<i>Po asumiket</i>	"Spiting [cooking juices of a] pig." Cooked pig with wealth given to MBs. Child spits out juices spooned by MB into his/her mouth.	×	×
<i>Kalawung</i>	"Present." Child cooks a pig for his/her M and F and their same-sex siblings. Small items (household goods) exchanged.	×	×
<i>Yaan utae</i>	"Inside the house." First menses, girl secluded. MB receives tabooed foods to finish her seclusion – as in <i>yungyung</i> . Pig and meat – MB.	—	×
<i>Matopo katiret yuna'wae</i>	"Tie-up [your] body and give them." Pig tied up and given with rawirawi and palieng to MB.	—	×
<i>Kaap wangiret, matopo katiret yuna'wae</i>	"First view of tambaran, tie-up [your] body and give them." Pig, rawirawi and palieng given to MB.	×	—
<i>Yong utae</i>	"Hide in the shade." First view of tambaran of the sea. Pig and palieng to MB who performed initiation.	×	—

Source: reproduced from Leach (2003: 129)

look at them in turn, some more briefly than others, to get a sense<sup>4</sup> of the way the form of the relation is carefully managed to turn indeterminacy into recognizable human forms and relations.

In the pregnancy rite "Face them," a spear and a decorated coconut are passed from the maternal kin to the expectant mother (M) and father (F). Conventional hospitality is returned. This one-sided action mirrors the one-sided redefinition of the relation by the M and F in producing a potential child. Their return here (of hospitality) is a passive acceptance

of the items given. In a simple sense that Reite people would assert, this is a polite way to tell maternal kin of the change in status of their sister/daughter. However, the presentation of the spear (marking hostility), and the decorated coconut (a person's head, a possibly growing person<sup>5</sup>), instantiates a dual claim over the entity now in the belly of the woman. It is not an entity that will be ignored. The child is already recognized as a potential for the maternal kin's own growth and transformation. A strong claim is made over the possibility, and their interest in it. The following rites make this power clear by taking responsibility for the growth of the child at crucial moments.

The first substantial rite is that of "washing" the child for the first time. Once the umbilical cord is dry and the baby's "skin is strong," maternal kinsmen are called upon to come and receive the baby from a newly made opening in the rear wall of the natal house. In a clear image of birth, one that I have argued elsewhere asserts an image of the mother and father (that is, the *palem* body) as jointly responsible for the child (Leach 2003: 147), the first *appearance* of the baby is limited to his/her maternal kin. They (not the M and F) become responsible for showing the child publically, as the rear of the house is not a public space, and not the usual "door" at which valuable entities are offered. The mode of presentation is particular. The child is placed upon a wooden plate (mirroring how ceremonial food is served) and surrounded by dogs-teeth valuables. Taking the wealth and plate, the maternal kin remove the baby to a nearby stream, and wash it for the first time. Only after this washing do they move into a public space. Reite people emphasize coming back to a frequented and open area by a path, where the maternal kin begin a pantomime of adult life. They cut small trees and clear scrub bush as if for a garden. They climb small trees, mimicking adults climbing huge forest trees when hunting birds.

Two aspects merit particular attention. Firstly, the alimentary image. The maternal kin receive, as from a birthing body, a baby. But they do so on a food plate, surrounded by teeth. Instead of actually consuming the child<sup>6</sup> they consume the wealth, and facilitate the first appearance of the child by cleaning it, and then very publically demonstrating their expectation that this is an entity that will become capable of human activities.

Secondly, the materials and actions including the house give a particular form to the transaction. They make real the emergence as a planned, elicited act by maternal kin. The parents place the child in the position, quite literally, of an item to be consumed by those others. The child is taken in seclusion away to the water, just as game animals would be, to be cleaned and prepared. But what returns to the house is a potential human child, made so by the actions of the maternal kin.

I suggest that mother and father can anticipate this result for their firstborn, but the responsibility for making it happen is ceded, as it must be, to those who are in a position to give a human form to the

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emergent body. That form is of one who has maternal kin who do not consume it, but will support its emergence. By their actions they make it human, not game. Their categorical otherness as *affines* and MBs is not there prior to the rite. It is achieved by *not* consuming the child, by accepting their difference from it, by taking the substitution for it. The differentiation of MB from M and F is made real by placing the child in a public space. Public space has to be *made*. It is not a stable geography, but somewhere that emerges because of the presence of the child. “Public” means not hidden in, or consumed by, one or another *palem*, but as something in between them. The child becomes the object of their common concern.

It is clear that the seclusion in the house is an enactment of the state of pre-partum integration of the child. The relationship established is between the mother/father as a unit, and mother’s kinsmen, prior to the emergence of a first child. Mother and father take the role of the *palem* unit itself, producing something “at their door,” thus demonstrating their powers of productivity. But the child emerges from a “new” door at the rear of the house associated with menstruation. Unlike menstruation, when women are secluded and nothing emerges, in this case the host *palem* ask for witnesses to their productivity.<sup>7</sup> One could suggest here the transformation achieved by the form and materials is from a hostile claim to possess and consume a product of another’s actions (in “*eemung uret*”/face them) into a nurturing role, activating the potential human possibilities of both themselves, and their sister’s child in the action. Their role is already different from the M and F, and thus a future trajectory is sketched out.

Analyzing Highlands material, Marilyn Strathern writes,

[a] Hagen child is created through a metonymic transaction between parents, each contributing a part of their substance while retaining their distinctiveness. The *relationship is reified in the child who substitutes for it*, and who duplicates the identity of neither parent but combines them both within itself. Its androgyny symbolizes a completed transaction. As an inert objectification of a relation it cannot be further reproductive but it can be added to a male or female person/collectivity.

(1988: 262 *my emphasis*)

She goes on to state the conceptualization of the child as wealth “holds only to a limited extent,” and then to liken the propagation of children in Hagen to the propagation of food (1988: 262).

This perception of the child as *added* to a person or collectivity may be accurate for the lineal system of Mt Hagen. There, recruitment to group is given, as it were, and children are added to the lineage. They are, “visible as increments to others with whom they are related,” in, “agnatic regimes of the Hagen kind” (1988: 260).

Reite, with their emphasis on place, and incorporation of persons into productive units as places, rely on a different mechanism of value recognition. *Palem* units come into being as such based on their members' ability to produce from a place. (Firstborn) children are not increments (of an existing "clan," as Strathern tells us they are in Hagen), they are the manifestations of a newly productive combination in/of a place. Each *palem* generation regenerates the form of the human world through these activities. But they cannot, in themselves, constitute the world as human. For that they need others, and those others are engaged exactly by the production of things from that place that are not consumed by their producers.

"As long as a product is encompassed within its source it grows; but evidence of it having grown can only be given when it separately embodies the growth in an independent form. It is such visible evidence of separation and growth which both ceremonial exchange and initiation cults seek to display" (Strathern 1988: 266). What seems different in Reite is that the increment can only be recognized as *between* the *palem* groups. It is valuable as and when it is recognized by both sides. And its value seems to be that its existence allows the two sides to see each other at the same time as see the product of their combination.

In the Reite case, the image of the rebirth of the child from the house likens it to the production of other items of value, other items of *palem* labor. That is, in particular, food items: tubers from a garden. These everyday food items are *also* mythic transformations of ancestral persons (see Fortune 1932; Gudeman 1986; Malinowski 2002 [1935]). And these grown things constitute the persons who consume them, weaving complex relations of kin dependency and obligation in their movements. But the myths make the tubers inert, as it were. They go from ancestor to tuber, from active person to item appropriate for consumption. That is, made to be consumed by others as elements of existing relationships. They do not *make relations* in themselves. They are appropriate food items because they are grown for consumption.

So, to make the child an entity born of a place, and to demonstrate that its appearance is the outcome of a combined labor by mother and father that is *of* the place it is grown in, the mother/father unit produce it as an entity that could be consumed by others. The hope is that the wealth and bowl will be taken as substitute for the child. The child then can be returned with an addition, from the external gaze as it were. That addition is to recognize its potential for human development in the future. But the offer is made for the MB to consume the child. The offer challenges them to act towards the child, and thus to the M and F, as affinal kin, as human kin who make the human world again in their action of accepting the substitution. It is a key moment. It "stimulates a flow of messages about the calibre of the relationships in question, through what appears to be the vehicle of mediated items" (Strathern 1988: 264).

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The next rite is to release the mother and father from their post-partum taboos on foods deemed “heavy.” These are the foods that were given to Reite people by powerful ancestors and mythic characters. Their revelation allowed the world of yam and taro gardening, which in turn was the inception of the male spirit cult, and thus of human existence as an emplaced mode of being. These foods are cooked by the M and F (along with hunted game<sup>8</sup>) and given to the maternal kin, who “carry the weight” of these foods for them, releasing them from their taboo.

We might interpret this as follows. These are moments where the simple, everyday staples of life become unstable, dangerous, and uncertain. Real foods are grown with, and in the image of the powerful first beings to be human. Moreover, human foods always come from somewhere, and from someone. They connect kin and kin bodies, and they connect those bodies to a mode of existence that implies knowledge and obligation. Their manifestation is a moral matter. To eat them without acknowledging their generative role at the nexus of human life is to act amorally, and to risk reverting to an inhuman state of being. The “uncertainty” surrounding relations<sup>2</sup> is palpable in such moments. Because the mother and father have entered a different phase of their development in relation to the maternal kin on the birth and acceptance of the child, their constitution is ambiguous. As parents of a child to be human, they require their own constitutive relations to others to be remade. That is, for others who are human to take responsibility for their re-emergence into the moral human world of taro gardening.

To just eat is to be nobody. To eat taro and other ancestrally revealed foods, and to eat game animals, is always to be in relation to those other people. That, in turn, amounts to a remaking of both parties, with MB as much as M and F transformed into the particular human forms of their association through the emergent child. The MB carries, that is, gives back to the M and F their state of human consumption, which is to be in relation to others, to be exchanging real foods with them. To eat of oneself is to collapse these relations of humanness and become monster, other than human. The danger post-partum is a sense of autonomy (“we can produce for ourselves and our consumption”) that must be counterbalanced.

It is said that in the (mythic) past, the firstborn child of some Reite people was consumed by their mother’s brother. In grief and anger, the child turned into a pig, and pigs became an acceptable substitute for human children. A fundamental item in affinal exchange (the pig) is what humans use in order not to revert to the nonhuman world of myth in which beings ate their nephews and nieces. This is mirrored in the Reite myth of yams, for example, in which a man was being eaten by his children until he made the transformation into a yam, and thus transformed the mythic world where people ate each other into the human world where people eat tubers.

The next two rites are focused on carrying and clothing the child for the first time. Before a child can be carried on the shoulders of its parents, M and F must hunt a large marsupial (a cuscus). Maternal kin are then asked to attend the child, who is presented to them with this marsupial draped over their shoulders. The MB takes the marsupial and returns the child to the parents, who may then carry the child in a similar fashion. The transformation is quite clear. The child is recognized as a human child, but this recognition comes in the form of substituting them for a game animal that carries its young in its body, against its chest. Now the child carries the marsupial. They are not carried as a marsupial, held against the breast of the parents. Here the “terms” of the relation remain MB and M+F. However, now in addition there is a child and MB relation, which is mediated through a game animal. This animal also substitutes for the possibility of consuming the child as marsupial prey. The object here becomes the transformative element between both M and F and MB, and MB and child.

The child’s emergence has commenced once this complex is established. The child reifies the affinal relation. Marsupial or other objects (see below), transform the MB/ZS relation. The object substitutes the child, allowing them to stand forth from the relation of M and F and MB as a distinct entity. As such, a new aspect of equivalence and exchange is introduced. The F and M prepare a small bracelet of dog’s teeth and small shells that the child will wear during the rite. The MB removes this bracelet and replaces it with an identical one that he has prepared himself. This wealth does not go back to the M and F, but remains on the child’s skin. This type of exchange (where things are replaced like for like and remain on the child’s body) becomes a part of each of the subsequent rites, up until the final payment to the MB.

To take stock: each stage of growth and development is made to happen as an aspect of the relation with the MB. This involves a dual differentiation. Differentiation of the child from the item to be consumed by the maternal kin is also the differentiation of the maternal kin from the child itself. And that process of substitution and differentiation remakes the maternal kin in regard of the child as much as the child in regard of the maternal kin. This dual aspect, of substitution that creates the child as a party to the relation, and of the exchange between MB and M and F, is very clear again in two subsequent rites that further the emergence of the child as a growing human child. The exchange of wealth and of substitutes for the child in each case generates and sustains exactly the tension of the human world *in the specific instance* of this child. Because *at this moment* the two groups take responsibility. The exchanges are necessary, they are *moral*, because they create the human world as such.

The first time the child eats pork is understandably an important moment. To be able to eat pork meat, the father must cook a pig, and present the cooked meat on a plate with taro and yam to the maternal

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kinsmen. The MB takes the child, and using a shell valuable, spoons the cooking juices from this plate into the child's mouth. The MBs now take the cooked pork and consume it themselves, freeing the child to eat pork in the future.

Cooked pork is not just taken as substitute for the child, but is also used to make possible their future consumption of *that which stands for them*. The significance of the MB giving soup to the child is that as an emergent person, it is affines who will be the source of pork in the future. (People do not eat their own pigs, just as they do not marry their own children.) Places stand apart. But pigs and children are different entities. The one can substitute the other, but the equivalence is not two-way. By feeding the child with pork, the MB acknowledges it is not a pig. And it is specifically not a pig because it is in a relation to them in which humanity on both sides is being constituted. (They give pigs, we return them.)

Consumption in this form is a version of obligation. Eating is to be in relationship to other powers and people. What you choose to consume shows what the relationship generates. The complexity of these rites is complexity around this emergent obligation. To be a human, not a monster, to be a mother's brother, not a father. One eats what one eats in order that other humans can come into being and provide the necessary other for the self. Responsibility is to keep the world as a human world. And that leads us to particularity. Particular mother's brother, particular emergent child. Place is unique. There is no generic place, only the existent ones that people have taken responsibility for bringing into being as emergent human possibilities. Hence the appearance of newly created places in each generation that is so characteristic of Reite sociality.

We have seen that it is the child who becomes the pivot for the relation between MB and M and F. The transformation manifest in the body of the child is a transformation not of his relation to his MB, but of the transformed relation between MB and M and F. The child's body, their growth, is the evidence of this transformation. And that is why it makes sense to say the rites are only partly "about" transforming the child. They are generally "about" the relation between affines. And that in turn makes the position of the child, and its substitutes, interesting. Once the child has grown to the stage of having the first hair cut, and putting paint on the skin for the first time; once grown to the point at which there is a real reason for a full substitution, that is, once the child can emerge as a person who causes effects in others through displaying their strength and wealth on their skin, a body payment is made.

Let us look now at the archetypal "body payment," the *palem* itself. *Palem* is (also) the name for a presentation of garden food, accompanied by a live pig and substantial wealth. It is made from a pile of taro (grown especially for the purpose) that is supported at the center by a bamboo tube. This tube is placed there by the male cult, with ceremony. The taro pile is called the viscera. It is surrounded by a wooden frame, upon which

large yams are hung. These yams make the ribs. They are further fleshed out with ancestral bananas and sugar cane. The whole construction, as I have said, is thought of as an effigy, a substitute body for the person who presents it. The *palem* is accompanied by a live pig, given “with a rope.” That is, with a series of other items of wealth that make up the “body pay” for the person.

The *palem* is the form that affinal exchange takes in Reite. The first *palem* was made by the characters of a central Reite myth about the origins of kinship and exchange. It is the archetypal substitution that keeps the world as a human world of kinship and exchange. *Palem* construction was a direct result in the first separation of gender, the resultant separation of siblings into cross cousins living in different places, and the subsequent appearance of exchange as the result of these two differentiations.

*Palem* construction begins with producing a large garden of taro. From the very outset in the garden, it is a man’s knowledge of local names, myths, and animating spirits that allows him to grow the elements that are finally given away. Reite people plant taro with much skill: they have garden magic involving the names of taro deities (*pel-patuki*), and secret procedures for ensuring that the taro grows correctly, replenishes itself in the garden, tastes sweet, and so on. These procedures are vital, as the first responsibility of a man and wife who need to produce an affinal payment in the form of a *palem* is to produce abundantly from garden land. In addition in these presentations, there ought to be dried marsupials and other wild meat caught through hunting on a man’s land, as well as some left over to feed spirits when they are first called to the hamlet. Hunting successfully involves the knowledge of names of places and events in the land on which a man hunts. Growing pigs likewise is accomplished speedily when a man has knowledge of esoteric names, procedures and specific mythic places from which to draw substance for the pigs’ growth (Leach 2008).

When his garden is ready to be harvested, a man enlists the support of the *kaapu* (spirits), which reside in pools formed by springs in the limestone hills. These *kaapu* are summoned from their different pools on land owned by close kin. They are brought to the hamlet’s men’s house, where they are kept out of the sight of women. Spirits actively contribute to the preparations for the *palem* from there.

At the time when the child is decorated with paint and has their hair cut for the first time, they are decorated with wealth items by their F and his kin. These items are substituted like for like, by wealth items supplied by the maternal kin, before the child appears in public. The *palem* is then pulled apart by the maternal kin, and distributed among themselves. The pig is taken back to their hamlet where it is killed and distributed.

The *palem* is explicitly a substitute body. It is consumed. It is appropriate to be consumed. In that guise the appearance of the *palem* is the



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culmination of the efforts at moral action by the two sides in the growth of the child.

From this time on, the child may wear paint on their skin, and participate in ceremonial occasions. Another result of the payment is that the affinal kin do not claim the bride payment of the child on her marriage if she is a girl, or that they will assist gathering the required marriage payment if he is a boy. In other words, the payment is for a body, which then can stand on its own as part of the place of its emergence. Note again the balanced replacement of wealth items of child's skin.

Each payment made as a *palem* constitutes the work of the *palem* as the work of producing its children. Such children are siblings because they embody elements from the same place. They are differentiated from one another, just as *palem* themselves are, through the relationships they have external to the *palem*. It is in these relationships that the particularity of the person/*palem* emerges because of its unique position (name) and unique set of constitutive relations to other places, affines, or maternal kinsmen. This is a system that generates new *palem*, new named social groups, and new spirits (and designs to accompany them) through the work of growing crops, growing animals, and entering into complexly structured exchanges that are ultimately focused upon the becoming of subsequent generations.

Sandra Bamford points to the fact that in many Melanesian societies, sociality and landscapes are a “becoming” (after Wagner 1974) in which distinctions are actively sought and created through (ritual) and everyday action. She demonstrates that for the Kamea of the Eastern Highlands of Papua New Guinea,

the resources upon which they depend for a living – the land and the different species of flora and fauna which they utilise – are not simply appropriated via pre-existing social ties, but instead furnish an important venue through which social distinctions are created in the first place. Gender and different categories of social relationship *sediment out* of the different uses to which the non human environment is put.

(Bamford 1998: 29)

Bamford describes how Kamea operate in their lands to generate the key differences that make human life possible. Children are gendered – that is, go from an undifferentiated and ungendered state (see 2007: 66) to being girls and boys – through different life trajectories that are centered in the social and geographical origin of the foods they consume. Girls are actively fed and thus grown by food provided by their future in-laws, foods that their male siblings are prohibited from eating. In this way, affines grow reproductive difference (capacity) into the bodies of their future spouses through moving foods and game from their lands into her body. Boys on the other hand gain their reproductive potential from feeding

on particular foods (restricted from their female siblings) from their own lands. The landscape, dotted with different resources and shaped by the activities geared towards making gender appear, to making kinship possible, is thus actively present in the core processes of social life. Kamea, unlike Reite people, do not consider that they share substance by being fed from the same places, but they do consider that land and its produce are pivotal in shaping and making the human world of kinship possible.

## 9.5 Conclusion

Bamford's work builds on and extends other studies of Melanesian sociality that demonstrate the impossibility of thinking about kinship without reference to connections between people and land, and to the active constitution of human moral worlds that make the emergence of places a part of that moral endeavor. The two parts of my exposition here, that pertaining to relations<sup>2</sup>, and the emphasis on generating a human landscape, feed into this endeavor. The world is not existent until made human by human activity. If entities are emergent from relations, then so, too, are the worlds that those entities populate. This is the focus of the work of Reite kinship, the reason for taking responsibility for the form and growth of specifically human entities.

Four more points emerge. First, the life cycle in Reite is not a series of spontaneous developments in the body of the child or person, that then gain social recognition as an overlay or addition of meaning. The series of developments in the body of the child are things that are caused to happen by other people. Second, that these deliberate moments of transformation are established on the premise that the transformation of the body is also and always the transformation of the relations that constitute it. The processes engender recognition because they are actions that are always for, directed towards, or instigated by, those who will acknowledge the transformation. Third, the "relations" we are discussing here are those Strathern called "mode 2 relations." That is, they are relations that dynamically transform the entities *in their constitution*. That in turn results from the fact that the actions of life-cycle rites are always *in regard* of someone else. What is done, demonstrated, made present is not a generic form but a particular form that already highlights certain connections and attributes that are of interest to, and are already part of, we might say, those who receive them. Fourth, this means something important logically. That is, the process of life-cycle change for one person is also the transformation of those persons who grow and recognize the growth of the child. If the relations constitute the entities, and the purpose of rites and actions is to advance the innovative differentiation of entities, reinventing, as it were, the meaning of being human in each turn (because each appearance of the human is a deliberate act of some

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in regard to particular others), then the transformation is of both terms to the engagement.

In my analysis of this Reite material I have previously called this visibility. That to be visible, or make visible, is an act that both requires and demands things of other parties. What we have seen here is that those others are party to the emergent entity in a way that is explicitly dealt with through mechanisms that keep separate, as it were, the entities and the emergent object. It follows that these rites are not “about” the initiate or child development. That is to think in mode 1 relational terms. These rites are about maintaining the world. They are “about” ensuring the continued production of places as the moral mode of human being.

Growth and nurture, and the labor involved in nurture is always focused on the elicitation of power and substance from the land. This is the basis of kinship, but the work is not just laboring to make others, it is laboring in places to elicit kinship as a form of the world that is human and appropriate. Ceremony then becomes the crucial and life-generating endeavor. Cycles of life and work are centrally organized around these moments of place-based generation. Relations are remade and regenerated as life giving in each generation. This is an endeavor in land and with land that culminates in a human world.

We often imagine that people are attached to places or connected to them through familiarity or sentiment. But here people are attached to places because they share something substantial with them. An anthropological approach to kinship that takes account of place must take account of the very many instances in the world where people and places are connected *bodily*.<sup>9</sup> That is to say, that people are from places, not in the sense of departing from or originating in them, but in the sense of being them, their very bodies made from, grown out of, or being, land in another form.

In some Melanesian modes of life (as elsewhere), places “figure ... significantly in the ongoing elicitation of social identities and relationships” (Bamford 1998: 30). In this part of the world, engagement with land and place is literally vital (Leach 2009). Melanesian people’s relational and existential attachments to land are how human life is known and experienced (Telban, *in press*). Paths, movements, and places are also the engagement of others in a coming into being for all.

## Notes

- ~~1 “We could say the relations are pre-existing (taken for granted: Wagner, Weiner) but I am not sure they are the same kinds of categories of existence” (Strathern 2012).~~
- 2 Rather than go through the list in full, I will examine three of them in depth. I will then compare their form to the form of a marriage

- payment: another act of substitution and consumption that acknowledges transformation while cementing it.
- 3 See Leach (2003: 145) on the “affinal” nature of the role of the Mother’s brother.
  - 4 And a different sense to my analysis in *Creative Land*, which was focused on an argument about lineality and payments for substance in this cognatic, place-based kinship system.
  - 5 There are at least two senses in which coconuts are associated with people in Reite. The *palem*-effigy is decorated with a mast of piled coconuts, alluding to a myth in which a man became a coconut. Heads are piled up. A shooting coconut is one of the items that passes from the wife’s family to the husband’s on marriage, indicating its growth will be mirrored by the growth of children.
  - 6 Which was perhaps anticipated by the pregnancy rite, where knowledge of the entity in their sister’s belly, and an indication they will use force to claim it, is demonstrated.
  - 7 The production is not actually “at their door,” as the body-payments for incoming wives are, but from the very body of the house, as it were, into a private space where the maternal kin are also hidden. They maintain this hidden state until the child has been washed, at which point, it is no longer received/carried as food, but as a potential human child.
  - 8 In many Reite myths game animals are kinds of person, or transformed persons, or live in parallel nonhuman worlds into which people sometimes descend through amoral behavior. Game animals are valued as protein (of course), but have special significance as entities not unlike people but available for consumption.
  - 9 There is, of course, often a political aspect to this assertion, and sometimes a disturbing or exclusive claim attached. The ways that different ideologies invoke or rely upon connections between substance, race, and place is not within the scope of this chapter. Suffice it to say that my description of Rai Coast practices is intended to demonstrate the very real interweaving of person and place in this instance, and that far from being exclusionary, given, or essentialized, Rai Coast people practice connection to place as inclusive, achieved, and mutable.

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