

## THE RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND RITUAL OF THE RAIAPU ENGA

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### I. THE RAIAPU ENGA

THE Raiapu Enga inhabit the valleys of the rivers Lai, Tare and Minyampu in New Guinea's Western Highlands District.<sup>1</sup> They number approximately 30,000 and are administered from Wapenamanda. Together with the Mae Enga, of the Wabag region, they make up to the Central Enga, with a population of about 80,000. To their north, round Kompiam, live the Sau'i Enga; to the north-east, at Baiyer River, live the Kyaka Enga (see Bulmer, 1960a, 1960b); to the south-east, in the Tambul region of the Upper Kaugel valley, live the Kakoli (see Bowers, 1965, 1968); and to the south-west live the Kandepe Enga. In the east, on the far side of the Mount Hagen Range, live the Melpa (see Strathern, 1971, 1972 and Vicedom and Tischner 1943-8).

In many aspects of their culture, social organization and agriculture, the Raiapu are similar to the Mae who have been well described in the extensive writings of M. J. Meggitt (see particularly 1964 and 1965). Raiapu social institutions are recorded in Westermann (1968) and their agricultural system has been outstandingly researched by Waddell (1969, 1972a, 1972b). This paper is based on field work in the Saka Valley (the valley of the river Tare) during 1971 when I resided with the Tombeakini clan of the south-eastern Saka.<sup>2</sup> Unless I have definite evidence to the contrary, I am treating my data as if it applies to the whole Raiapu region. This is almost certainly an over-simplification since there will be slight variations in religious belief and ritual between different Raiapu groups.

The Raiapu form patrilineal, segmentary, descent hierarchies comprising phratries, clans, sub-clans and patrilineages. All are named after their putative founders and, in any hierarchy, the founders are agnatically related so that the sons of the phratry founder are usually themselves clan founders. The clan is ideally exogamous (in practice also except in the case of very large clans of perhaps 800 people) and clan members reside in a continuous stretch of territory which is deemed to be a clan possession.

Population densities often exceed 80 per sq. km. and in some areas rise to over 300 per sq. km. Neighbouring clans frequently experience hostile relations (despite the high probability that they belong to the same phratry) and borders are often

<sup>1</sup> The administration is considering the creation of a new Enga District.

<sup>2</sup> The Saka valley is also known as the Tsak, Sark, Tchak etc. The people of the Saka are sometimes referred to as Syaka Enga but this is not a meaningful ethnographic distinction and I shall treat them as Raiapu.



contested in the courts and ultimately in fierce warfare. The Raiapu value privacy and scatter their houses about the clan's territory. The men traditionally lived in clubhouses with older male children, while their wives lived apart with infants, female children and pigs. Today this separation is breaking down and, in 1971, 33% of houses in Tombeakini territory were inhabited by elementary families and their pigs, and contained 48% of the clan population.

The Raiapu staple food is sweet potato grown in large mulched mounds. They also cultivate a range of vegetables, sugar cane and bananas which provide them with a fairly varied diet (see Waddell, 1972b). Pigs are kept primarily for exchange and ceremonial purposes and pork is not a regular item of Raiapu diet. In recent years they have turned enthusiastically to the cash cropping of coffee, and introduced vegetables, as described by Waddell (1972b) and by Meggitt (1971) for the Mae.<sup>3</sup>

The religious situation which is described below is that obtaining in 1971. Both Catholic and Lutheran missions have been operating in the Saka for almost twenty years and this has naturally caused some changes in belief and ritual. Bulmer (1972: 158) reports that, as early as 1955, the Baptist mission had made considerable inroads into the traditional belief of the Kyaka and that several practices had disappeared. No such impact has been made on the Raiapu. While all Raiapu believe in the existence and power of God<sup>4</sup>, they have retained all, or nearly all, of their traditionally-held beliefs and very few of them could be said to have a Christian outlook.<sup>5</sup> God and Satan have merely been added to the existing spirit beings and their roles have been interpreted in terms of existing perceptions. The purpose of this paper is to present Raiapu religion as it was, in the Saka in 1971, but to exclude those aspects which are definitely Christian in origin. I will record elsewhere (Feachem, 1973a) some data on the effect of mission teaching on Raiapu beliefs.

Recently the problem of the validity of statements about religion has been raised by Lawrence (1971). Where possible, information about belief has been linked to observations of behaviour in real situations. In the case of belief about sky people this was not easy since there is little conceived interaction between humans and the people of the sky world. Ghosts, however, are an ever-present factor in Raiapu daily life and there were innumerable opportunities for observing beliefs about the dead being translated into action. While it is true that Raiapu over thirty years of age have a more traditional outlook than younger people, the beliefs I describe are by no means limited to the older members of the community. Many of my informants were age-mates of my interpreter (and myself) and these young men confirmed that they share much of the belief of their fathers. Only those who have received some secondary education seem to have broken out of the

<sup>3</sup> For further information on the Raiapu see Feachem (1973b, 1973c).

<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Bulmer (1972: 158) says that probably all Kyaka "whether church members or pagans, 'believe' in the Christian God (*Anatu*), Jesus Christ and Satan, in the sense that they do not dispute their existence".

<sup>5</sup> This is certainly true for the Saka, but it may be that, in the Lai valley, Christianity has become more established. The Saka is in some way a back-water and has not received as much attention from Europeans as the Lai.

traditional belief system into a new world which is more Christian than Raiapu in orientation.

The religion of the Kyaka and Mae have been described by Bulmer (1972) and Meggitt (1972) respectively. Existing material on the Raiapu is limited to a brief account by Westermann (1968) and to various reports by the staff of the New Guinea Lutheran Mission contained in N.G.L.M. (1968) and Brennan (1970). The account by Wagner (1970), of the causes of fear amongst the Enga, is particularly noteworthy since it is the first paper to question the assumption that the Raiapu place little or no importance on religious ritual and magic.

## 2. A FRAMEWORK FOR THE DESCRIPTION OF RAIAPU RELIGION

Religion will be defined, after Lawrence and Meggitt (1972: 8), as "the putative extension of men's social relationships into the non-empirical realm of the cosmos". It is sub-divided into belief and ritual to express the basic dichotomy between what men believe about the non-empirical world and how they translate those beliefs into action. Clearly all actions are, to some extent, a reflection of religious beliefs and so ritual here can only embrace those acts which are specifically designed to communicate with, or influence, the non-empirical world. In addition ritual will include acts which are deemed to be a substitute for, or a supplement to, the appropriate empirical action.

Belief is described under sub-categories which follow those proposed by Lawrence and Meggitt (1972: 6). A distinction is made between belief in totems, occult forces and spirit beings and the latter category is further divided into beliefs about deities, demons and the dead.

The treatment of ritual is rather more complex. There is (despite the impression given to the contrary by other authors) a wide variety of Raiapu ritual and the Raiapu themselves do not categorize different types. The Raiapu use the word *nemongo* to designate a magic spell or incantation but the word is not usually used to describe the ritual in which the spell is used, nor to describe magic which does not involve a spell.<sup>6</sup> I would suggest that, if the Raiapu further classified their rituals, they would do so according to its purpose or goal. As will be discussed later, Raiapu ritual is crisis-induced and is aimed at achieving very specific ends. A functionalist classification, according to the stated purpose, therefore appears reasonable and splits ritual into classes whose members display considerable uniformity of content and can therefore be well described. Another possible sub-classification would relate the ritual to that area of the non-empirical cosmos with which it was dealing. This method yields a less satisfactory division for descriptive purposes but I have included it (under the heading "spirit association") in Table 1.

All Raiapu religious ritual is goal-orientated and I have firstly divided it on the basis of whether the goal is short-term or long-term. Since most ritual then

<sup>6</sup> Bulmer (1972: 154) records the Kyaka Enga having the word *nimungka* to designate "spells with associated rites". *Nimungka* and *nemongo* are almost certainly identical words which have been rendered differently in the respective orthographies.



falls under the heading short-term, this serves to emphasize the stress placed on immediate results from crisis-induced behaviour. Short-term goal ritual will be defined, quite arbitrarily, as that which anticipates that most or all of the benefits of the ritual will accrue within one month. This corresponds to the Raiapu view only in as much as short-term goal ritual, which did not produce the anticipated results within a month, would certainly be regarded as a failure and alternative solutions would be sought.

### 3. RAIAPU RELIGIOUS BELIEF

I shall give only a brief account of Raiapu religious belief. Beliefs about ghosts and sky people are substantially similar to those of the Mae Enga, which have been described by Meggitt (1972). Westermann (1968: 205) gives a brief account of Raiapu beliefs from the Lai valley and Wagner (1970: 245) records some aspects of religion from the Lai and Saka.

Religion for the Raiapu, as for other preliterate peoples, is not a separate institution but rather an integral part of the total activities of the group. Every individual shares the religion of the group and religion forms an essential part of the overall world-view. This is not to say, however, that there is complete agreement about religious matters amongst individuals.<sup>7</sup> While individual views of the cosmos, and spirit-beings, will be almost identical, there is some divergence of belief when details are discussed. The Raiapu are not theologians or philosophers, and are not concerned to clarify the exact nature of their beliefs or their reasons for holding them. On several occasions, when interviewing a group of men, I have observed them become quite angry when attention is drawn to discrepancies between their accounts. They consider theoretical, or hypothetical, debates over details to be pointless and "hair-splitting" in character. They will retort, "we are warriors; we defend our land, we work in the gardens and we organize the *tee*<sup>8</sup>; we have no time to waste on these questions".

The degree of consensus, and the degree of complexity, of belief are closely related to the every-day significance of the particular belief concerned. For instance, the ghosts of dead agnates are of vital importance for all Raiapu and so, not only is there a wealth of belief and myth concerning them, but also there is a high degree of consensus of belief about ghosts. Ghosts are frequently the subject of conversation, and debate, and hardly a day will pass without some reference being made to them. Sky people, on the other hand, are remote and do not figure largely in the daily affairs of the Raiapu. While men will readily agree about them in general terms, differences in belief are soon exposed when details are discussed.

Raiapu thought tends to focus on the "here and now", and is not concerned with abstract deliberations.<sup>9</sup> Their belief system is not a general philosophy but

<sup>7</sup> Lawrence (1971: 151) contends that in "non-literate societies complete doctrinal orthodoxy probably does not exist".

<sup>8</sup> The *tee* is a major pig exchange cycle and the primary preoccupation of many Raiapu men. Early accounts of the *tee* will be found in Bus (1951) and Elkin (1953).

<sup>9</sup> Westermann (1968: 132) comments: "Enga are interested in things. They have few, if any, abstract concepts".

rather provides explanations for certain, selected phenomena. There are many matters (such as the nature of clouds) about which they admit ignorance and lack of interest.<sup>10</sup>

I encountered no evidence to suggest that the Raiapu believe in totems or occult forces. Wagner (1970: 264) tells of *yuumi nenge* or the "destructive ground force" which is used to account for deaths from exposure in the forest. He also reports (1970: 284) two rituals concerned with this *yuumi nenge*, but my informants stated that these were, in fact, connected with ghosts. It is an aspect of Raiapu belief which requires further investigation. Belief in spirit beings will be treated under the headings of deities, the dead and demons.

#### 3.1 Deities

In this category fall the sky people (*yalyakali*), whose way of life, and environment, are facsimiles of the Raiapu's. They garden, raise pigs, organize the *tee* and form patrilineal phratries and clans. There is some dispute about whether they fight and they are sometimes characterized as a happy people, who live in a demi-paradise where there is always peace and plenty.<sup>11</sup> This is in contrast to the Raiapu view of their own condition which is described as tough, violent and full of sadness.

The sky people are fair skinned (early European intruders were commonly identified as sky people), and are sometimes said to have long hair springing from the tops of their heads and falling around them ("like a maize cob"). They are sometimes said to be beautiful.<sup>12</sup>

The world, and the sky world, have always existed. The sky people were created by the sun and the moon and they, in turn founded the Raiapu phratries on earth.<sup>13</sup> When the sky people came to earth to establish phratries, they brought with them the stones (*yainanda*) which are now the residence of clan ancestral spirits and are associated with clan potency.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Similarly McArthur (1971: 186) reports that the Kunimaipa are not bothered by the inconsistencies, contradictions or lacunae (*sic*) in their religious belief.

<sup>11</sup> This concept may be new. It could derive from equating the sky world with the Christian heaven. The equating of Satan with ghosts will be discussed later.

<sup>12</sup> There are many stories concerning sky people. The sky world contains many of the plants *takai* (*Oenanthe javanica*), *awa* (*Brassica* sp.) and *ambano* (*Cordyline terminalis*). (*Takai* and *awa* are edible greens which are cooked with pork and *ambano* is used as a male buttock covering and also in pig cooking.) The sky world also contains colourful parrots which are sent, at the same time each year, to earth for the Raiapu to catch and eat. (Clearly an explanation for bird migration.) Some very high-flying birds, which the Raiapu can never catch, are thought to be inhabitants of the sky world.

Sky people are also believed to ride on clouds and pluck leaves from trees as they pass. People, seeing a fallen leaf, will sometimes remark, "the sky people dropped it". Twinkling stars are said to be the fire-lights shining through the doors of the sky people's houses.

<sup>13</sup> There is considerable divergence of opinion about how this occurred and only the older men are still convinced that their version is correct.

<sup>14</sup> Most clans, or large sub-clans, had at least two of these stones. Many were stolen by missionaries in the fifties and those clans which still possess them, keep them well hidden. Tombeakini clan (of the Saka) have two. A large "female" and a small "male". They are mushroom-shaped and about 250 mm. x 100 mm.



Belief in sky people relates an individual to the creative beings. He is descended, through the sub-clan founder and the clan founder, from the phratry founder who, in turn, is descended from a sky person, who may have actually allocated the land on which the phratry now resides.<sup>15</sup> Further, the social organization and way of life on earth is not simply a product of the whim of men, but rather a model of the behaviour of the sky people.

The sky people are clearly creative deities and, in a limited sense, they are also regulative. They are generally considered to be remote and indifferent to the affairs of men and do not interfere in everyday matters. However, they are responsible for meteorological phenomena<sup>16</sup> and are also believed to control men's ultimate fate and destiny. Inexplicable good, or bad, fortune is often attributed to them but they are not conceived as being deliberately helpful or wicked.

The sky people are seen as being remote and unapproachable and the Raiapu generally regard their actions with complete fatalism. If a heavy rain storm causes extensive damage, it is just the way of the sky people and one does not ask "why?" or try to influence their behaviour. One major exception to this rule of unapproachability is a ceremony (called *yalyu saa yawenge*) which aims to obtain the assistance of the sky people in promoting the well-being of the clan.<sup>17</sup> This will be discussed later.

### 3.2 The Dead

While the sky people are remote, indifferent and unapproachable, the ghosts of the dead are an ever-present factor in Raiapu life. Meggitt (1972: 110) comments that "much of Mae behaviour remains inexplicable to anyone ignorant of the pervasive belief in ghosts". The same is undoubtedly true for the Raiapu.

All men, and some animals,<sup>18</sup> possess an individual spirit (sometimes described as a shadow) which is essentially male and is given to the foetus by the clan ancestral ghosts. Upon death, this spirit leaves the body and becomes a ghost (*timongo*)<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Four clans in the Eastern Saka (including Tombeakini) originate from above Tambul in the Kaugel valley. They have to recognize therefore, that the land they now occupy was won by conquest and not given by the sky people.

<sup>16</sup> For instance, rain is said to be caused by sky women (*yalya enda*) swimming in a lake in urinating. Thunder and lightning indicate that the sky people are angry. Earth tremors (*akulyai miningi*) are sometimes said to be caused by the sky people driving a long stick into the earth and shaking its end.

<sup>17</sup> Neither Meggitt (1972: 108), nor Westermann (1968: 207), refer to such a ceremony, and both maintain that the sky people are completely unapproachable.

<sup>18</sup> Men say that animals such as pigs, dogs, cassowaries and possums (all economically or ritually significant) have a spirit while alive but that this does not become an active ghost after death. In the Eastern Saka dogs are sometimes differentiated from other animals. It is claimed that dogs' ghosts do live after death and that they can attack living dogs. It is claimed like men because they have *timongo* and therefore we don't eat them.

<sup>19</sup> There is some confusion between the words *timongo* and *imambu*. The former is always used to describe the ghost of a recently dead person but it is also sometimes used to mean the spirit of someone who is still living. Wagner (1970: 247) claims that an *imambu* is a man's "life principle or breath" which becomes a *timongo* upon death. My informants did not make this clear distinction.

Bulmer (1972: 138) reports the Kyaka word *imwambu* for the soul of a dead person.

which wanders freely in the clan territory and is a source of continual fear and alarm for the living. All ghosts are malevolent and most misfortune is attributed to ghostly attack. The ghosts act out the individual animosities they possessed while alive and are likely to attack anyone who has offended, or angered, them. In practice, this probably means their immediate family, since the family situation is fraught with tensions and is a breeding ground for bitter grievances. The living are fearful of all ghosts, but especially of domestic ghosts. These ghosts are likely to attack at any time by causing sickness or death, by damaging gardens, by injuring pigs or in other ways causing trouble. Men often say, "my father attacks (and may kill) me and I will attack (and kill) my children when I am dead".

The relationship between the victim and the putative attacking ghost has been the subject of some discussion. Meggitt (1972: 112) reports that the Mae identify the ghosts of mothers and siblings (as well as fathers) as the sources of attack, although his data from actual cases indicates that maternal attacks are rare. He notes that, since the paternal role is a punitive and disciplinary one, one would expect most fear to centre on the father's ghost. Strathern (1972: 29) indicates that ghostly attacks amongst the Melpa are commonly attributed to the mother and suggests that the Melpa contrast in this respect with the Mae who attribute most supposed attacks to agnatic ghosts.<sup>20</sup>

Con conversationally, the Raiapu definitely stress father-son attacks. In practice, however, I believe that misfortune is commonly attributed to a mother or sibling although I have no data to gauge the relative frequencies of different diagnoses. It is said by men that women are cantankerous and tend to take offence easily over trivial disputes. One ghostly attack I observed was attributed to the victim having stolen a chicken from his uncle's wife just before she died. There is widespread agreement that the ghost of a young man is the most to be feared. It is totally vengeful and ruthless and feels cheated out of life. It may attack any clansman, but is especially likely to harm its immediate family, and particularly its father and siblings. I estimate that, on the basis of the frequency of maternal ghostly attack, the Raiapu might lie midway between the Mae and the Melpa but I would also say that, in terms of the stress placed on patriliney, they are far closer to the Mae.

Ghosts wander restlessly about their clan territories and are especially active at night. For this reason, Raiapu will seldom move about at night, and certainly never alone. If a man has a particular reason for anticipating a ghostly attack (he may have seen a *kongalu* or sign) he will huddle in a corner of his house, keep his fire burning brightly, and wait till dawn in a state of extreme nervousness. Any whistling sound, or rustling, especially at night is believed to indicate the presence

<sup>20</sup> Laterality of ghostly attack is clearly not simply a product of the agnatic emphasis, or otherwise, of the particular descent system. It may, however, reflect situations of interpersonal tension, or jural capacities to punish wrongdoing, in the world of the living. McKnight (1967), cited by Lawrence (1971: 144-5), has reported malignant maternal ancestors in patrilineal societies and sickness-causing paternal ancestors in matrilineal settings.



of a ghost,<sup>21</sup> and a man expecting an attack will almost die of fright if he hears such a sound.

Reptiles of all kinds are still believed to be the home of ghosts. Even the most innocuous looking lizard is regarded with horror by most Raiapu and some young men will make displays of foolhardy bravado by catching one. The white man is not considered protected from these dangers and I have been forcibly restrained when my companions saw that I intended to pick up a lizard.

A white fungus growth, on the walls of houses, is identified as ghostly faeces (*timongo ii*). This is taken as a definite sign (*kongalu*) that misfortune is about to overtake someone connected with the house concerned. A magician may be employed to help identify the ghost and the source of its anger.

These ghosts are the spirits of recently dead clansmen. It is generally thought that, when a ghost has killed a human being<sup>22</sup> (it may have caused much sickness or injury prior to this) it retires to join the ancestral ghosts who act as a corporate group without individual identity. These ancestral ghosts are believed to attack collectively and cause widespread disruption to clan life. Crops may fail, babies (human or porcine) may die, a war may be lost or any generalized misfortune may overtake the clan. This will be attributed to the ancestral ghosts who have been offended by some serious misdemeanour on the part of the clan.<sup>23</sup> This corpus of ancestral ghosts is, however, not an object of fear and apprehension in the way that the ghosts of the recent dead are. Ancestral ghosts are slow to anger and attack rarely. They also attack the group, and not individuals, and therefore a victim does not feel alone and vulnerable to the degree that he does when attacked by his own close relatives.

In general, when misfortune occurs, it will first be attributed to a domestic ghost. If appropriate magic fails to relieve the situation, and if the misfortune is clan-wide, it will be attributed to ancestral ghosts and the whole clan will engage in ceremonial magic to alleviate the situation. The influence of sky people, demons or sorcerers is only identified in very particular, or totally inexplicable, circumstances.

### 3.3 Demons

The Raiapu also believe in a class of demon, or sprite, usually referred to as *pututuli*. They are autonomous beings and not associated with a particular clan or group. They can appear in many strange guises but are often described as being extremely tall and having two-fingered claws. They are evil beings who live in the forests and will attack and eat a lone, or sick, traveller. The Raiapu are gardeners

<sup>21</sup> The presence of a *timongo* can also be sensed during dreams when the dreamer's spirit is wandering (see Meggitt, 1962). Wagner (1968: 248) reports that the cry of certain birds and the shadowy appearance of a dog, can also indicate a ghost. The Raiapu world at night, with the murmuring of the wind and the eerie light of the moon, is a thoroughly frightening place if you believe that you share it with scores of invisible, malevolent and powerful ghosts.

<sup>22</sup> Some informants maintain that a ghost can kill more than once and only retires when it has revenged all its grievances.

<sup>23</sup> Allowing clan boundaries to be violated, breaking the rule of clan exogamy, failure to revenge a homicide committed by another clan etc.

and feel ill at ease in the upper forests which they consider to be hostile places. Their belief in *pututuli* expresses their fear of the forests and any death or injury occurring while a man is in the forest, or even after his return, is usually assumed to be the work of a *pututuli*. Men travelling through the forest will stop at intervals and erect barriers of branches across the path, and recite appropriate spells, to discourage the *pututuli* from stalking them.

*Pututuli* are generally thought to dwell in the forests but are also linked with caves and pools. Scratchings on the walls of caves (of which there are numerous examples in the Saka) are often said to be the claw marks of *pututuli*. A smooth, worn groove on a limestone outcrop in the Saka was identified to me as being made by a *pututuli* who masturbated by rubbing his penis along the groove. There were two sacred pools (*yaka pete*; or *yalya pete* because the *yalyakali*, or sky people, made them) in the Eastern Saka and while they were generally considered to be the home of ghosts (*timongo*) it was also stated that *pututuli*, and female demons, lived there. A few years ago a boy was drowned in one of these pools ("because a *timongo* dragged him in") and the local clansmen dug a ditch to drain it while a magician exorcized the place with spells.

The Raiapu also believe in female demons who are particularly renowned for stealing babies and replacing them with *pututuli* babies. These babies are deformed, or mentally retarded, and often die from parental neglect.

### 3.4 Summary

The Raiapu certainly derive no joy or comfort from their religious beliefs. The sky people are remote and not inclined to intervene positively in the affairs of men. The remaining spirit beings (ghosts and demons) are an aggressive and bellicose group who are mercilessly engaged in an endless cycle of revenge and mischief. Missionary teaching about a God of love and mercy falls largely on deaf ears. The Raiapu prefer the concept of a wrathful Old Testament deity who smites the wrong-doer with terrible severity. However, even here, there is a conflict over the notion of a wrong-doer. Raiapu religion provides no code of ethics which is analogous to that of Christianity. Raiapu ethics are defined pragmatically within the ubiquitous tensions associated with the individual's efforts to attain status without impairing the fortunes of his descent group. A "right" action is one which promotes prestige (either for the individual or the group but not for the individual at the expense of the group), secures (or reinforces) land tenure, promotes exchange activity or in other ways satisfies the basic goals of the male Raiapu.

### 4. THE TOPOLI

Before discussing ritual activity, it is necessary to introduce the Raiapu ritual specialist—the *topoli*. Writers on the Enga refer to various experts, specialists, mediums, sorcerers and others who are associated with the performance of particular rituals. The Raiapu class all these together under the name *topoli*.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> The word *topoli* is often associated with a tag which indicates the *topoli*'s particular speciality. Thus a *kapana pingi topoli* is a *topoli* who specialises in the magic known as *kapana-pingi*.



Anyone who possesses secret knowledge of spells, or magical procedures, and who has been proved to be effective and powerful, is a *topoli*. *Topoli* engage in all types of ritual but tend to specialize in a particular ritual, or group of rituals. Thus the name of a *topoli* will be associated with particular activities, and he may be described as a healer of broken limbs, or a catcher of lost ghosts. Also associated with a *topoli*'s name is a concept of his fame and greatness. There are *topoli* whose names are known over a wide area and whose skills are the subject of public discussion and marvel; there are others who may be only known to their own clansmen or who are ridiculed as "quacks" by people in other clans. Generally, a famous *topoli* will be considered competent in a range of rituals, although people will often comment on his own particular speciality, while lesser known practitioners will be associated with one specific ritual.

A famous *topoli* will almost certainly be over forty years of age and may be a great deal older. It takes time to build up a reputation and it is not likely that a young man could become prominent. *Topoli* need to be physically active and will usually lose their status when they can no longer move around easily. Most, but by no means all, *topoli* are male and I have never encountered a famous *topoli* who was female. Females tend to specialize in magic which is connected with women, but again, this is not always the case.

A *topoli* will usually inherit his skills from a parent (a son from his father and a daughter from her mother) and the practice therefore runs in families. The sons of a famous *topoli* may compete fiercely for the inheritance of his knowledge, though it is stated that this should pass to the oldest.<sup>25</sup> A young man, inheriting from a famous father, will take some benefit from his father's reputation but he will have to prove himself by his own work and build up the stature of his own name. The knowledge is inherited but the status, associated with a great *topoli*, is not.

*Topoli* are paid for their services and the amount of payment will depend on the magician's reputation, how far he has travelled, the seriousness of the problem (and the complexity of the solution) and the wealth, and status, of the client. Payment is made with pork, axes, string bags, men's aprons, salt ash, money and any other item of value to the Raiapu. Many of the more complex rituals involve the killing and cooking of a pig and, in these cases, the *topoli* will receive a half-side of pork. Payment is made whether or not the cure is successful and *topoli* are not blamed, or castigated, for a negative outcome. However, their reputation suffers and their services will not be sought again by the disappointed individual or group. *Topoli* can receive high prices for their work and they are characterized, by the rest of the population, as men of considerable wealth. People say, "he is a *topoli* and his house is filled with valuable things".

<sup>25</sup> The rivalry among those who may receive the wisdom of an old *topoli*, seriously hampered my efforts to interview *topoli*. On several occasions the *topoli* was quite prepared to discuss his work with me, but his heir would intervene saying that he had not yet received the secrets and they could not be told to me first. It was also usually suggested that this impasse could be overcome if the sum of perhaps \$30 were paid by me, to the heir, as compensation.

*Topoli* are notable for being specialists in a society of generalists. The Raiapu, like most Melanesian societies, have few specialists and little knowledge that is role-specific. There are wig-makers and others who are considered expert in the manufacture of particular artefacts. There are also Big Men (*kamongo*) who are often considered to be in possession of certain spells for attracting pigs and ensuring success in the *tee* exchanges. These areas of role-specific knowledge are limited, however, in comparison with that held by *topoli*. They not only have much wisdom that is not possessed by the general public, but in addition, it is wisdom that is held in high esteem and for which the public is prepared to pay dearly. The *topoli* is not necessarily a Big Man and nor must he be active in the *tee*<sup>26</sup> (which is the most common road to status for the Raiapu). He can achieve much status simply by the sale of his talents as a magician and can build a name that is known to people up to thirty kilometres away.<sup>27</sup>

I detect little, or no, element of hoaxing in the work of *topoli*. They operate within the world of men and ghosts which all Raiapu perceive and they approach their tasks on the same intellectual level as those who employ them. In a few specific rituals they may indulge in a small amount of drama in order to heighten the excitement, but generally they perform with the same serious deliberateness that typifies most Raiapu behaviour. They are in no sense confidence tricksters.

Sweet flag (*Acorus calamus*) is a plant which is very prominent in Enga ceremonial, and religious, ritual. It is used in much of the magic performed by *topoli* and they are considered to be specialists in its cultivation. People believe that a *topoli* will have special secluded places where he will grow many varieties of sweet flag, each with different properties and powers. He will guard these places carefully.<sup>28</sup>

A brief note on two *topoli* will illustrate this section. X is a woman of about thirty-three who is married with one son. She is a *topoli* specializing in abortion and contraception and has a clientele almost entirely restricted to her husband's clan. Her name is not well-known and she will never travel far to perform her

<sup>26</sup> However, it should be noted that the nature of a *topoli*'s job provides many opportunities for *tee* activities. He is continually travelling, and meeting men from other clans, in a situation in which they are likely to be obligated to him. These are excellent circumstances for establishing new exchange relationships or ratifying old ones.

<sup>27</sup> This is comparable with the very greatest of *kamongo*. I was unable to ascertain what influence a great *topoli* exercises in local clan politics and how his power compares with that of the clan *kamongo*. There were no great, or even well-known, *topoli* in the clan with whom I lived and a minor *topoli* enjoys little status and certainly has no special influence.

<sup>28</sup> Sweet flag is also referred to in the literature as sweet sedge and bog iris. The Raiapu have many names for sweet flag and the name appears to be related to the intended use of the plant. I have recorded *repe*, *yangupai*, *kuniani*, *pereme*, *tara* and *mena hare* (pig's ear). It is also often called *akaipuwai* which appears to be a class name for all plants used in magic. *Repe* is its common name. Raiapu ethno-botanical taxonomy appears to relate to the use to which a plant is put. I have often asked an informant for the name of a particular sweet flag and been told, "that belongs to X. I don't know why he planted it and so you'll have to ask him for its name." Alternatively, there may be a connection with the significance of names themselves. If my informant tells me the plant's name, its magical properties may be reduced and so X will be angered. Or X may give it an unusual name to prevent others from identifying it. This is purely speculative.



services. She receives small payments of a few dollars, a string bag or a *kuta*<sup>29</sup> skirt. Her work leads her into frequent conflict with other members of the clan since, when a man's wife does not become pregnant for a long period, he suspects her of visiting X and will chastise X's husband, who will then punish X.

Y, on the other hand, is one of the foremost *topoli* in the Saka and is undoubtedly the leading practitioner of medicinal magic. He specializes in healing abdominal pains but he also does a variety of other work including the preparation of young men for marriage by protecting them from the contaminating influence of their brides. He is about fifty years old and has one wife and several children.<sup>30</sup> There are no distinguishing features about his dress, house or style of life, although others say that his house is full of wealth. His name is known in the Upper Kaugel valley (above Tambul), in the Minyampu valley and in the Lai valley from below Wapenamanda to Wabag. He works throughout this area (approx. 900 sq. km.), although the great majority of his clients are from his own valley—the Saka. He makes at least four professional visits per week and sometimes many more. He can often be seen walking through the valley accompanied by his eldest son (who expects to inherit his knowledge) and a small retinue of men who help to carry his payment home and who defend him from possible attack in hostile territory. He can receive large payments for his work<sup>31</sup> but he never nominates the amount. He says it is up to the client to decide the fee. If he is not satisfied with what is offered he will simply walk away in disgust and thereby shame the client into offering more.

##### 5. RAIAPU RELIGIOUS RITUAL

Having discussed religious beliefs, and *topoli*, it is possible to describe the main features of Raiapu religious ritual. Ritual will be considered in the categories discussed earlier and an example of each type (preferably one which I have witnessed) will be given. One could attempt to distinguish between ritual utilizing spells (*nemongo*) and that which does not; ritual conducted by *topoli* and that which is not; and ritual which is ceremonial as opposed to private. The first two distinctions are difficult to draw because the situation is extremely flexible. A particular ritual may be performed in different ways on different occasions depending on the personality of the instigator. The distinction between ceremonial and private ritual is more straightforward. Some rituals are performed by large groups of people (perhaps a sub-clan or clan) and will often be conducted in front of spectators from other clans. These I will call ceremonial rituals. By contrast, most ritual is conducted by a family unit in the privacy of their own compound and ferns will be erected across the path leading to their house as a warning to others to keep away. If the ritual does not require a *topoli*, or the cooking of a pig, the other clansmen will

<sup>29</sup> *Kuta* (*Eleocharis dulcis* and *E. sphacelata*) is a reed-like plant grown by women for skirt manufacture.

<sup>30</sup> A *hamongo* of equivalent status (of whom there are very few) would need to have several wives to support his pig herd.

<sup>31</sup> On a visit to Wabag in 1971, he was paid two half-sides of pork, four hens, five metal axes and \$30. By contrast, for treating a poor man in the Saka, he accepted \$1 and one string bag.

probably be unaware that it is taking place. However, if a *topoli* is seen to arrive, or if the column of smoke (that is characteristic of the stone heating that precedes pig cooking) is seen, then word will quickly spread that magic is underway.<sup>32</sup>

The bachelor's seclusion and purification ceremony, called *sandaru* by the Raiapu and Kyaka (Bulmer, 1972: 151) and *sanggai* by the Mae (Meggitt, 1964), is a complex procedure which might well be included under the heading of religious ritual. It is still practised, although less frequently than in the past, and one *sandaru* took place in the Eastern Saka (pop. 2,679) during 1971. It is substantially similar to the *sanggai* and I will not include it here.

##### 5.1 Short-term Goal

Short-term goal ritual is that which is expected to yield results within a month from the date of its enactment.

*Anti-theft.* Ritual intended to locate a lost, or stolen, article—usually a pig. This is a private ritual, always conducted by a *topoli*, and sometimes requiring the use of *kyangari* (*Piper* sp.). Many Raiapu are somewhat cynical of this and say that the *topoli* simply enquires into the whereabouts of the pig before arriving at the client's house.

*Cosmetic.* Cosmetic ritual includes ritual designed to enhance personal appearance and also that intended to promote health and general well-being. It is private and usually will not require a *topoli*. It may involve the eating, or rubbing the body with, bespelled sweet flag prior to a dance, or it may require the smelling of an *elyamuni* leaf (*Coleus scutellarioides*) to prevent face paint from running during a ceremony. A more complex procedure requires a *topoli* to pour bespelled water over a young man's head to encourage luxuriant growth of hair and beard. Mothers will often carry their babies with bespelled sweet flag to ensure healthy growth and good-looks.

*Divination.* Divination ritual is a most important aspect of Raiapu religious ritual. The Raiapu believe that they share the earthly world with the ghosts of dead clansmen and that these ghosts form an extension of the human social order. They remain members of a particular group and intervene readily in clan affairs. Their ghostly powers (especially their invisibility) enable them to intervene effectively and ruthlessly, but it is often suggested that humans would deal with each other in a like manner if only they possessed the necessary ghostly attributes. Because the ghostly world is an extension of the empirical world it is necessary to maintain communications between the living and the dead and this is achieved through ritual.

It is only desirable to establish communication when some misfortune has occurred. If ghostly attack is thought to be responsible, then it is necessary to know the identity of the attacking ghost and the source of its anger.

<sup>32</sup> Men may try to "gate-crash" a private magic gathering simply in order to receive some pork. Conversely, one of the reasons why the family will be so strict about keeping strangers away, is that there will then be more pork for those present.



A man who feels he is subject to ghostly attack will call a *topoli* to his house and ask him to discover which ghost is attacking, why and what should be done to placate it. (Some *topoli* will answer all three of these questions while others will only answer one, or two, of them). Similarly, if a man has lost a pig he may call a *topoli* to decide which ghost has taken the pig and where it is being hidden. The *topoli* will very often sleep the night in his client's house and perform his magic late in the evening. Such ritual is always extremely private.

In one example the *topoli* will sit inside his client's house with a bespelled arrow, which rests in his hand with the tip buried under the floor covering.<sup>33</sup> An assistant will stand behind and say, "I think that it is the ghost of the client's father who is attacking". If this is a correct identification the arrow will be jerked downwards so that the point sticks firmly into the floor. If this does not happen, the assistant will continue to make tentative identifications until the arrow responds. When the correct ghost has been named the assistant quickly adds, "no it can't be him, it must be someone else". This releases the arrow from the floor and prevents the ghost becoming enraged. This procedure is then repeated with the assistant saying, "I think the ghost would like the client's large spotted sow to be killed". This continues until the arrow's response indicates that the correct offering has been identified. The pig is then killed and dedicated to the appropriate ghost so that it may eat the pig's spirit and be content. The *topoli* is paid half the pig.

This ritual corresponds closely to a Melpa practice. Strathern (1968: 547-8) writes, "a household head may then divine by pushing a stick through the wall or in the floor of his house. He calls the names of dead relatives until the one responsible seizes the stick and holds it fast. The diviner then suggests possible sacrifices until the stick is seized again in assent to a particular offer."

A second type of magic, which comes under this heading, is that used to catch and transport a ghost which is wandering outside its own clan territory. The Raiapu are so afraid of ghosts that it is of the utmost importance to know exactly where they are. Generally it can be assumed that a ghost is living in its own territory, but if a man dies far from home, his ghost may be unable to return. This is especially true in the case of men who die while hunting, or travelling, in the forest. It is believed that their ghosts will remain wandering in the forest in a state of extreme anger, and will attack anyone who passes their way. To keep the forest as safe as possible it is necessary to hire a *topoli* to go to the spot where the man died and retrieve his ghost.

The *topoli* is taken to the scene of the death where he cooks some pork over a fire. The ghost smells the cooking meat and approaches making whistling, and rustling, sounds. The *topoli* hears the approaching ghost and places the meat inside a bamboo tube while reciting spells. The whistling goes inside the bamboo, which becomes heavy, and the *topoli* quickly closes the entrance and announces that the ghost is captured. It is carried down to the dead man's grave and a hole is made

<sup>33</sup> Enga house floors are covered with a layer of chewed sugar cane pith.

through the grave covering. The bamboo is opened and the *topoli* blows the ghost down the hole to join the corpse.

Divination magic (and especially the ghost catching magic just described) is highly valued. A *topoli* specializing in this magic will gain tremendous prestige and be well paid for his services.

*Garden.* Raiapu garden ritual takes the form of various prohibitions and taboos. If one intends to visit a taro, yam or *kuta* garden, one should not do the following; eat pandanus, possum, sugar, or old sweet potato; step on, or over, pig faeces, a banana tree or a tree fern (*tambu*); touch the plants *enambo* (?*Pipturus* sp.) and *kanamai*;<sup>34</sup> see dead animals or have sexual intercourse. In addition many people will mutter spells while walking to these gardens.

*Hunting and Travelling.* This ritual is of two kinds. The first kind seeks to protect an individual from the dangers associated with visiting the hostile world of the forests. It has already been mentioned that the Raiapu feel at home in the cultivated, and ordered, valleys, while regarding the upper forests with apprehension and fear. The forests are visited either by those who are hunting possum, or by those travelling to a neighbouring valley.<sup>35</sup> The magic is designed to protect the traveller from attack by ghosts or demons (*pututuli*) and is always private. It does not require a *topoli* and usually involves the recitation of spells and manipulation of sweet flag.

The second variety is used to promote good fortune in hunting. Again it is private and does not require a *topoli*. One example requires the huntsman to chew sweet flag and spit it into the nose of his dog. This will enable the dog to locate the scent of many possums.<sup>36</sup> Another example requires the huntsman to take a bunch of *itarumbi* (*Hymenophyllaceae* sp.), secure it to the end of a stick, and place this on the path which he is following. He bespells this and associates it with a particular member of his family. He repeats this for each member of the family. This prevents his family thinking about him and wondering if he will be successful or not. If they forget him he will catch many possum.

Hunting and travelling magic is a male preserve since women do not hunt, and seldom travel.

*Medicinal.* The vast majority of Raiapu short-term goal ritual is designed to cure individuals suffering from all manner of ill-health. Since sickness is usually associated with ghostly attack, many medical rituals are concerned with placating, or frightening, ghosts. Meggitt (1972: 125) notes that, for the Mae, there is a "continuum comprising rituals to placate an attacking ghost, magic to drive off the ghost (albeit temporarily), magic that simultaneously repels the ghost and

<sup>34</sup> These plants are used for the manufacture of string for bags and men's aprons.

<sup>35</sup> For instance, the frequently-made journey from the Saka to the Kaugel requires approximately seven hours of walking through thick forest. The journey to Kandepe takes two days.

<sup>36</sup> This is strange, since sweet flag is aromatic and one would have thought that a nose full of it would confuse even the most cunning hunting dog.



alleviates the victim's symptoms, magic that merely treats the illness itself and non-magical remedies for minor disorders". The situation is identical for the Raiapu.

A *topoli* is employed in most procedures and is paid even if there is no satisfactory outcome. If the magic involves the placation of a ghost, a pig will almost always be killed, cooked and dedicated to the ghost that is thought to be attacking. The ghost can then eat the pig's spirit and be content. The pig's liver (*pungi*) and fat (*amenge*) are of special significance and are frequently bespelled, manipulated and fed to the patient. After the ritual is over the pig is usually divided into two parts; one of which is given to the *topoli* as payment while the other is eaten by those present.

Plants also play an important part in medicinal ritual and I have collected over 50 plants used in medicine. Sweet flag (*Acorus calamus*) and ginger (*Zingiber* sp.) appear frequently and are often given, mixed with salt ash<sup>37</sup> and *awa* (*Brassica* sp.), as an emetic to remove poison from the patient's stomach. I have seen violent vomiting induced in this manner which sometimes continues for forty minutes. The vomit is often examined to identify the poison and is then ritually buried.

Another recurring theme is the burying of certain items, which were used in the magic, in boggy ground. If they stay wet, the patient's body will remain shiny and strong; but if they dry, the patient will become parched and withered.<sup>38</sup>

Two examples of medicinal ritual will be given. A man becomes weak and emaciated and a *topoli* diagnoses that his spirit has left his body and gone to the sky world. This will cause him to lose his potency and manliness. The *topoli* performs a private ritual near the patient's home. The *topoli* takes a seedling pandanus (*Pandanus ?giulianettii*) tree, a *pakenana* (*Crinum* sp.) and a *konja* (*Decaspermum* sp.) and plants them while incanting spells. "When these trees grow strong and tall, the patient will become strong also." A pig is then killed and cooked and its heart, lungs and oesophagus are made into a bundle which the patient throws into the air (to attract his spirit down to earth) and then eats. The pig's bones are made into a parcel and buried in a swampy place beside a river to keep the patient's body full of grease. If the parcel dries out, the patient will develop dry skin and probably die. The patient will expect to start improving within a few days and to gradually gain strength. His progress is closely associated with the growth of the three trees and he watches for strong growth of the pandanus' aerial roots which symbolizes the recovery of his legs. This magic is not often performed today.

The second example is frequently encountered. The patient is a young girl with an acute stomach pain. Her brother brings a *topoli* who is renowned for his treatment of abdominal pain. The *topoli* diagnoses poison in the stomach but is not

<sup>37</sup> Salt ash is still produced and traded in small quantities (see Meggitt, 1958). *Topoli* are increasingly using pure salt, purchased at the store, as a substitute. Sterly (1971) gives further information on the medicinal uses of ginger and Strathern (1969) reports that the Melpa use the word *konga* to mean "ginger", "magic" or "poison".

<sup>38</sup> Raiapu associate wetness and greasiness with health and vigorousness. They are contrasted to the dry and wrinkled appearance of an old man's skin.

concerned to elaborate on the nature of the poison, or how it got there. He says "my job is only to remove the poison". A pig is killed and cooked while the *topoli* sits and chats to the patient's family. This is again a private gathering. Eventually the *topoli* spreads out banana leaves on the ground and prepares a mixture of *awa* leaves (*Brassica* sp.) and grated ginger. He then produces, with great mystery and drama, a tiny packet of sweet flag leaves which he dices and adds to the pile of *awa* and ginger. One pinch of salt ash and two pinches of pure salt are added and the *topoli* then spits chewed sweet flag and saliva onto the mixture. Five more pinches of pure salt are added and the mixture is covered with leaves. The preparation of the mixture is done with great preciseness and style. The *topoli* works methodically and slowly and the tiniest pieces of dirt, which fall into the medicine, will be carefully removed. Some pig fat is now cooked on sticks over the fire and the *topoli* takes portions of the medicine, wrapped in pieces of pig fat, and places them in the patient's mouth. About an hour after this the patient vomits violently about six times and the *topoli* collects the vomit and buries it. The next day the patient is reported to be in excellent health. Half the pig is given to the *topoli* as payment, and the rest is eaten by the patient's family who, under instructions from the *topoli*, save some pork for the patient to eat later.

*Military.* Military ritual is little practised today. Those forms still found involve the rubbing of the body with bespelled leaves to encourage spears and arrows to miss. There may have been more complex procedures in the past.

*Nuptial.* Nuptial ritual is of two kinds. The first is used by a prospective groom to protect himself from dangerous female contamination. The Raiapu share with the Mae (see Meggitt, 1964) a belief that the menstrual blood of women is extremely dangerous in that it can cause a man to become old prematurely.<sup>39</sup> All men contemplating marriage will therefore hire a *topoli* to teach them certain spells which they then recite. This, if correctly performed and accompanied by other prohibitions and restrictions, will protect a man from contamination during intercourse. This is one of the most important areas of magic since it is practised by all young men in the Saka (with the exception of some secondary school graduates) and provides steady work for *topoli* with this specialization.

The second kind is attractive magic used by the bride to attract a particular husband and to encourage his agnates to donate generously to the bride price. These procedures involve the use of sweet flag or *kainumi*<sup>40</sup> (*Hemigraphis* sp.) and the incantation of spells. A more complex form requires a *topoli* to stroke the bride's thighs with a bespelled cassowary bone.

*Sorcery.* Sorcery is defined here as "any ritual designed to kill or harm human beings" (Lawrence and Meggitt, 1972: 9).

<sup>39</sup> This is usually characterized in terms of wrinkled dry skin, weakness, lack of ability to hunt or fight and loss of hair.

<sup>40</sup> This is a magic plant coming under the heading *akaipuwai*. *Kainumi* is a woman's name amongst the Raiapu and is given "so that a girl will receive a large bride price when she marries". This plant is also called *yakome* and *kondame*, both of which are women's names.



The striking thing about sorcery amongst the Enga is that everyone practises it except the people you are talking to. Thus Meggitt (1972: 123, 128) notes that the Mae "assert that they have much less magic than do the Sau'i Enga and the Ipili near by" and refers to "sorcery-using non-Mae". Westermann (1968: 211) reports that the Raiapu from the Lai valley "told me that Sau'i Enga had many powerful magic spells, and that some men in the Saka Valley were powerful sorcerers". The people of the Saka maintain that Kandepe, Tambul, the Lower Lai, and Baiyer River are the home of sorcerers, while in the Saka there are relatively few. Some of my informants claimed to know a few procedures but denied that they had ever practised them. Raiapu are afraid of sorcery and especially of the introduction of poison into their food or water. A Saka man travelling to Kandepe (for instance) will be most apprehensive about the possibility of sorcery and will take precautions, which may include not accepting cooked food and keeping awake at night.

The most frequently mentioned techniques are the inclusion of menstrual blood, faeces or parts of a corpse into the food or water of the victim. There are also a variety of spells (*nemongo*) used for the purpose and some of these involve the bespelling of a plant or stone which is then lain in the path of the approaching victim. Raiapu will stop and discuss, with concern, anything unusual which they encounter on a track, especially if it is on the private path leading to their own house-compound.

The effect of sorcery is believed to be sickness, or death, and it provides an explanation for disease which cannot otherwise be accounted for. It also serves to exaggerate suspicion and fear between enemy groups (usually between clans with a disputed boundary) since they are continually on the lookout for signs of each other's sorcery. Men believe that women are particularly prone to be sorcerers and are apprehensive about the possible inclusion of menstrual blood into their food. A man convinced that his wife had been guilty of such an act, would probably try to kill her.

Sorcery is practised by individuals against individuals, by groups against groups or a *topoli* may be hired to perform appropriate spells and curses. It is regarded as an inferior, and even immoral, method of handling disputes which should be settled by violence or by recourse to litigation in the local court system. Sorcery is something which other people do!<sup>41</sup>

An example of sorcery between groups follows. Clans A and B are at war and a member of Clan A is killed. Clan A is weak and fears that it will be unable to revenge this killing with a counter-attack. Some blood from the dead man is taken and placed in a bamboo which is then secured at the head of the stream which forms Clan B's water supply. A small hole is bored in the bamboo so that a slow trickle of blood is allowed to leak into the water and flow downstream. A member of Clan B who drinks the water will now die unless a *topoli* comes to perform curative magic

<sup>41</sup> Similarly Bulmer (1972: 155) reports that he has "no evidence that stone-throwing sorcery ever actually takes place, although belief in it is general".

on him. Some say he will die because of attack from the ghost of the dead man, while others say that the blood of a dead man in the stomach is sufficient to cause death (and also maintain that a *topoli* merely has to induce vomiting, to remove the blood, and the victim will be cured). People are afraid of this type of magic and it is one reason why the possession of a spring within one's clan territory is considered valuable. If a clan relies on a water source which originates outside its territory (as most do), it is constantly exposed to the possibility of poisoning.

*Veterinary.* This small group of rituals can be considered as animal medicinal magic. It is used to promote health, and encourage breeding, in domestic pigs and dogs. The ritual is always private, is unlikely to involve a *topoli* and very often requires the use of sweet flag. Men, especially Big Men (*kamongo*) with large pig herds, will possess knowledge of suitable pig, and dog, magic and will grow their own plots of sweet flag for this purpose. Two examples follow.

A man wishes to make a sow go "on heat" to encourage mating. He places small pieces of bespelled *wainape-ambui* (*Ophiorrhiza nervosa*) inside raw sweet potatoes (*Ipomoea batatas*) and feeds them to the sow. This will soon cause her vulva to become inflamed and mating will follow.

A hunting dog becomes thin and weak. The owner takes the dog and holds it near a river with a branch of the tree fern *tambu ita*. A spell is recited and the branch is thrown into the river, thus symbolically removing the poison from the dog's body. Some men say that the dog is sick because the ghost of a dead dog is attacking it.

*Wealth Attraction.* These rituals are designed to attract valuables (pigs, shells, cassowaries etc.) during the course of exchanges and particularly during the *tee*. It makes the exchange partners generous and "pulls them to give much". With the exception of *kope yawenge* they are extremely private and do not involve a *topoli*. Individual Big Men perform the rituals secretly and are reluctant to discuss them or admit that they practise them. The magic, and the plants and other objects required, are passed down from father to son and are restricted to males. (The exception to this is magic used by brides to attract large bride prices which has been considered under nuptial ritual.)

The smelling, or rubbing on the body, of sweet flag or the strongly aromatic *eraia* (*Cymbopogon* sp.) is commonly required and these plants are sometimes carried in a small bag prior to the exchange. Some men will "protect" the sweet flag they intend to use for *tee* magic by planting *kapole* (?*Riedelia* sp.) next to it. Spells are usually recited.

*Tee* magic also utilizes magic bundles of bones and leaves which are believed to be very old and are inherited patrilineally. Only a few men have these and they are considered very powerful in attracting wealth in the *tee*.<sup>42</sup> The bundles are kept hanging in the roof of the house until just before *tee*, when they are bespelled and manipulated.

<sup>42</sup> This bears on the question of whether or not leadership amongst the Enga is inherited. Big Men are believed to derive much power from the possession of these items and they will be inherited by their sons. The four leading men in Tombeakini clan all possessed a magic bundle except for one who had had his stolen during a recent war.



The exception to these generalizations about wealth attraction magic is the ceremony known as *kope yawenge*. It was probably restricted to the part of the Saka east of the River Tame and may also have been practised in the Minyampu, and Upper Kaugel,<sup>43</sup> valleys. It was last performed by the Tombeakini clan in about 1940 and has been actively discouraged by the missions. The ceremony lasted several days and involved all adult male clansmen. A special house (*kope anda*) was constructed where the male clansmen gathered and ate bespelled pork. This took place immediately prior to the arrival of the *tee* and was to ensure success and prestige for the whole clan in the exchanges which were to come.

### 5.2 Long-term Goal

Long-term goal ritual is undertaken as a response to generalized misfortune and seeks to attain an all-round improvement in conditions which may come gradually over a period of several months, or years. It is of three types.

*Domestic Misfortune.* When a family falls on hard times it is usually attributed to attack by a domestic ghost. The attack takes the form of sickness, and death, in members of the family; sickness, and lack of fertility, in pigs, and possibly disappointing crops. The response is to hire a *topoli* to perform placatory magic for the ghost concerned. The ritual is always private, usually complex and will involve the killing of a pig which is dedicated to the attacking ghost. This ritual is very similar to the more complicated forms of medicinal ritual and may well be performed by the same *topoli*. It is a response to more serious, and diffuse, problems than medicinal magic and it anticipates a gradual response rather than a quick recovery. An example follows.

The *topoli* is called to the house of the unfortunate family and a pig is killed. While the family members prepare to cook the pig in the usual way, the *topoli* excavates his own little oven. In this he cooks the pig's liver and sternum and a large package containing kidneys, small intestine, *awa* (an edible green) and much salt, all wrapped in a breadfruit leaf and tied with rope. While these items are cooking, he sits inside the house scraping a cooked taro with a bamboo knife and chanting a long spell. This spell takes approximately twenty minutes to recite and is not repetitive. It contains the names of many rivers, places, paths and mountains in the Raiapu region (including Tambul) and asks the ghost to help the family when they visit any of these places. The spell is chanted very fast and loud and finishes in a climax of excitement. Four cooked taro, plus the taro scrapings and salt, are now made into two packages. These are then placed, with many leaves and herbs, and wrapped into one long package (600 mm. × 200 mm.). The liver, and other items which were cooking, are taken and placed, with the long package, on top of the oven where the main portion of the pig is being cooked by the family. The *topoli* sits facing this pile and performs a fifteen minute recitation ending in a tremendous

<sup>43</sup> People in the Eastern Saka, who originally came from the Kaugel valley, claim that they brought this custom with them. Some of the people in the Minyampu valley also trace their history back to the Kaugel.

climax upon which he cuts the pile into two portions. One of these is given to the head of the family, and the other to his eldest son, who then eat the liver and taro. The climax of this second recitation contains many aggressive demands for the ghost (which, in the ritual I witnessed, had been identified as the mother of the family head) to be peaceful and desist from attacking the living.

*Placation of Ancestral Ghosts.* The two other types of long-term goal magic result from misfortune overtaking an entire clan, or major sub-clan. Misfortune takes the form of disease amongst humans and pigs, and failure of crops. It can also be seen in a major setback to clan prestige, such as a military defeat or an unexpectedly poor performance in the *tee*. The corpus of ancestral ghosts will be usually blamed for clan-wide misfortune and major ceremonial ritual will be undertaken to dissipate the combined ancestral anger. The decision to undertake such magic will be arrived at over a period of many months (or even years) as the important men in the clan gradually reach the conclusion that the male vigour, and potency, of the clan has diminished and that therefore the ancestral ghosts are enraged, or offended.

Meggitt (1972: 116-120) describes a "stone ritual" and a "pool ritual", which the Mae use to deal with this situation. The Raiapu use only the stone ritual (*yainanda yawenge*) and it is similar to that of the Mae. The stones are the clan fertility stones which were brought by the creative sky people and which embody clan potency. Many clans no longer possess their stones and, even those that do, seldom perform this ceremony. I estimate that, at the most, it occurs once every two years in the Saka. It is one of the most spectacular of all Enga ceremonial occasions and many people from neighbouring clans (particularly those in the same phratry) will spectate. It has been actively discouraged by the missions.

*Appeals to Sky People.* Another response to clan-wide misfortune is the *yalyu saa yawenge* ("cooking possums for the sky people") ceremony. This is not mentioned by Westermann, or by Meggitt for the Mae, and appears to be the one occasion when attempts are made to communicate with, and influence, the sky people (*yalyakali*).<sup>44</sup> People say that the ceremony is to "ask the sky people to restore the grease to the clan land and make it fertile again". It is not suggested that they removed it in the first place but simply that it needs restoration. It seems that a clan (or a major sub-clan) would traditionally perform this ritual approximately every thirty years to ensure continued prosperity, but this custom is no longer maintained and the ceremony is rarely performed today.

The ceremony is restricted to adult male clansmen and others are forbidden to attend. As with the stone ritual, the decision making process which leads to a *yalyu saa yawenge* may take months or years. A few days before the ceremony the young men of the clan go into the forests to catch possums. Men from other clans, hearing of the forthcoming ritual, may also go possum hunting and sell their catch

<sup>44</sup> Wagner (1970: 262) states that these ceremonies "have lapsed; in the Saka, before European penetration, in the Yaibos area, soon thereafter". This is incorrect since one of these rituals was performed (and witnessed by myself) in the Saka in September, 1971. Tombeakini clan last held one in about 1957.



to the clan concerned.<sup>45</sup> When the chosen day arrives the clansmen will gather in the compound of an important man and will summon a *topoli*. The same site is always used for successive ceremonies and, if he is still alive, the same *topoli* will be employed. Firstly, the *topoli* will dig to locate some sticks buried in the last ceremony. In the ritual I observed he located the rotten remains of these and declared that their decay was the reason for the decline in clan prosperity and that a new ceremony was called for. The *topoli* then takes two sturdy *naiape* branches, about five metres long and sharpened at one end. He prepares two bundles of bespelled leaves and ties one of these to each branch about two metres from the sharpened end. The clansmen then form a long line with their feet apart and the *topoli* crawls through this human tunnel dragging the branches behind him. The clansmen then gather and help to drive the two branches firmly into the ground on the site where the remains of the last ceremony were found. The two branches are tied loosely together and it is said that the top part of the branches will eventually rot and fall over, but the section in the ground will remain and preserve the fertility of the clan soil. The branch planting is followed by a feast at which traditionally only male clansmen would be present. Today however, women attend the feast and men from other clans may also arrive.<sup>46</sup> The feast consists mainly of possums and vegetables but a few pigs may be cooked. The feast I attended had a menu of 27 possums, 5 pigs, 9 hens, mountains of sweet potato, taro and bananas and 5 cases of beer. The hens and beer are clearly a recent innovation.

### 5.3 Summary

Consideration of the foregoing description of Raiapu religious ritual reveals a dominant theme of pragmatism. The Raiapu do not worship, but rather they react to crisis situations with ritual designed to propitiate the appropriate spirit-being. There is no timetable for ritual activity and neither is it entered into to forestall the anticipated wrath of a spirit. Those aspects of ritual which are prophylactic, or anticipatory, in nature (for instance under the headings, military and nuptial), are not directed at the spirit world. In general, ritual is a response to adversity which is associated with the activities of non-empirical beings.

Table 1 sets out the salient features of the categories of Raiapu religious ritual which have been discussed.

## 6. DISCUSSION

The most notable attribute of Raiapu religious belief, as I have described it, is its similarity to that of the Mae. Westermann's (1968: 205) brief account confirms this, although his data were mainly collected in the Yaibos region (close to the Mae-

<sup>45</sup> The *yalyu saa yawenge* is perhaps the only Raiapu ceremony in which possums figure more prominently than pigs.

<sup>46</sup> The *yalyu saa yawenge*, which I witnessed, coincided with the preparations for the *tee*. During this period all ceremonies were used as an occasion to promote the *tee* and conduct preliminary exchanges between "tee partners". This ceremony was no exception and much *tee* politics were conducted during the feast.

TABLE 1  
Summary of Some Aspects of Raiapu Religious Ritual

Type of Ritual	Use of Sweet Flag	Employment of <i>Topoli</i>	Private or Ceremonial	Spirit Association	Comments
<b>1. Short-term Goal</b>					
Anti-theft ..	Seldom	Always	Always private	None or ghostly theft	
Cosmetic ..	Common	Seldom	Always private	None explicit	
Divination ..	Common	Always	Always private	Communication with ghosts	The most prestigious form of commonly practised magic. A pig is usually killed.
Garden ..	Rare	Never	Always private	None explicit	A series of prohibitions and spells.
Hunting and Travelling	Common	Seldom	Always private	Ghostly or demonic attack	Practised mainly by men.
Medicinal ..	Common especially with ginger	Usual	Always private	Ghostly attack	Largest category of magic. Many different procedures. A pig is sometimes killed.
Military ..	?	?	Private ?	None ?	Rarely practised today.
Nuptial .. (a) protective (b) attractive	Common Common	Always Sometimes	Always private Always private	? None explicit	Undertaken by all men about to marry. Undertaken by brides.
Sorcery ..	Rare	Rare	Private	Sometimes ghosts	
Veterinary ..	Very common	Seldom	Always private	None (Canine ghosts are sometimes identified.)	
Wealth Attraction	Very common	Never	Always private, except for <i>kope yawenge</i>	None explicit	Practised by men.
<b>2. Long-term Goal</b>					
Domestic Misfortune	Common	Always	Always private	Ghostly attack	A pig is killed.
Placation of Ancestral Ghosts ..	?	Always	Ceremonial	Corpus of ancestral ghosts	Many pigs killed.
Appeals to Sky People	Never	Always	Ceremonial	Sky People	Many possums killed.



Raiapu boundary), and therefore a high degree of similarity is not surprising. My data relates to the easternmost Raiapu and in fact to people who are migrants (about 90 years ago) from the Kaugel valley. It may be that these people displayed beliefs not found amongst the Mae, but that these differentiations have become obscured over the past thirty years. The Central Enga (Mae and Raiapu) are unquestionably becoming increasingly culturally homogeneous and it is quite possible that differences in religious belief are fading. Bowers (1968: 281) discusses the expansion of Central Enga culture and agricultural techniques and comments that "Enga behavioural traits—and Enga genes—are expanding from the centre in all directions".

The data presented on ritual, however, create a different picture to that given by previous authors. Westermann (1968: 211) says that, "Laiapu (*sic*) Enga do not appear to either use much magic or to be particularly interested in it". Similarly Meggitt (1972: 123); "the Mae do not rely greatly on magic to attain desired ends". (One might assume that, since the Raiapu and the Mae are so similar in religious belief, social organization and many other cultural facets, their ritualism would also be similar.) By contrast, the people of the Saka use magic frequently and resort to it in a wide variety of situations.

They thus appear to correspond more closely to the Kyaka of Baiyer River who are their neighbours in the north-east. Bulmer (1972: 154) reports that "Kyaka frequently use magic to cure sickness caused by nature demons or human sorcery, to make pigs grow fat and prevent them from straying, to bring luck on journeys and in exchanges, to win lovers and to hold the affection of husbands". This is clearly similar to the Raiapu except that the latter fear domestic ghosts rather than "demons and human sorcery". Bulmer goes on to mention that some Kyaka "specialize in medicinal magic and receive small payments" but there appears to be no real equivalent of the *topoli*. The Raiapu therefore fall between the Mae and the Kyaka. On the one hand they fear the ghosts of the recent dead, while on the other they readily resort to magical ritual.

Accounts of Melpa religious ritual (for instance, Strathern, 1968, 1970 and Strathern and Strathern, 1968) indicate some close similarities to the Raiapu. Sickness-causing ghosts and spirits are feared and ritual experts practise a wide range of diagnoses, cures and divinations. Traditionally the Raiapu had trading connections with the Melpa, but the Saka Raiapu had (and still have) much closer ties with the people of the Upper Kaugel. Future research will probably reveal many parallels between belief in the Saka and the Upper Kaugel.

Lawrence and Meggitt (1972) characterize the Highland cultures as being essentially secular when compared with those of the coast. The Raiapu are no exception to this. Aggressive action is generally considered superior to religious ritual in the achievement of objectives, but ritual is seen as having a definite supportive role. Thus a Big Man does not have to be a magician, and special religious knowledge is not among his stated qualities, but people believe that his own personal spells (and magic objects) have contributed substantially to his rise to fame. The key to success

in agriculture is hard work but, if the correct prohibitions are not observed, this will be in vain. Magic is not the crux of an endeavour but it may be an essential ingredient, without which other effort is likely to be fruitless.

The exception to this last generalization occurs where religious ritual is seen as the *only* remedy for a particular situation. This applies to sickness and widespread misfortune (as described in the section on long-term goal ritual). These situations are attributed to ghostly attack (or, in the case of the *yalyu saa yawenge*, to the need for support from the sky people) and therefore can only be dealt with by the performance of ritual. Morbidity is common and therefore medicinal ritual is frequently practised. No-one in the Saka lives more than three hours walk away from a clinic<sup>47</sup> and yet medicinal magic is performed often and perhaps with growing frequency. I predict that, unless an extensive health education programme intervenes, the incidence of medicinal ritual practice will increase and the fees charged by medical *topoli* will rise.<sup>48</sup>

In the mid-fifties, when the Catholic and Lutheran missions were being established in the Saka, people commonly identified Satan as a *timongo*. *Timongo* are the cause of most sickness and therefore so was Satan. The missions were heard to claim that one of the great benefits of Christianity was its power to defeat Satan and they simultaneously established medical clinics in the valley. The Raiapu put two and two together and deduced that the clinics were the mission equivalent of *topoli* in which the morbidity-causing power of Satan was overcome. Most patients who visited the clinics were very disappointed to discover that there were no miraculous, or even dramatic, cures and in many cases the treatment seemed to have little effect. This caused a renewed interest in *topoli* which is continuing today. A brief visit to Wabag led me to believe that the Mae have suffered a similar disillusionment towards the white man's medicine and are also showing an increasing tendency to patronize traditional healers.

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I have endeavoured to follow the orthography adopted by the New Guinea Lutheran Mission who are responsible for most of the linguistic studies on Enga.

<sup>47</sup> Known as Aid Posts. This represents a high availability of medical facilities by New Guinean standards.

<sup>48</sup> I hope to write elsewhere concerning the choice between visiting a *topoli* or an Aid Post, and response to sickness in general.



However, I have rendered the prenasalized consonants b, d, and g as mb, nd and ng and not simply b, d, and g.

Parts of an earlier version of this paper were read to a seminar at Sydney University and I have found remarks made on that occasion to be most useful. Professors P. Lawrence and A. J. Strathern kindly commented on a draft of the paper but the author is fully responsible for all its shortcomings.

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