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Introduction: Fringe Area of Highlands in Papua New Guinea

Yukio TOYODA

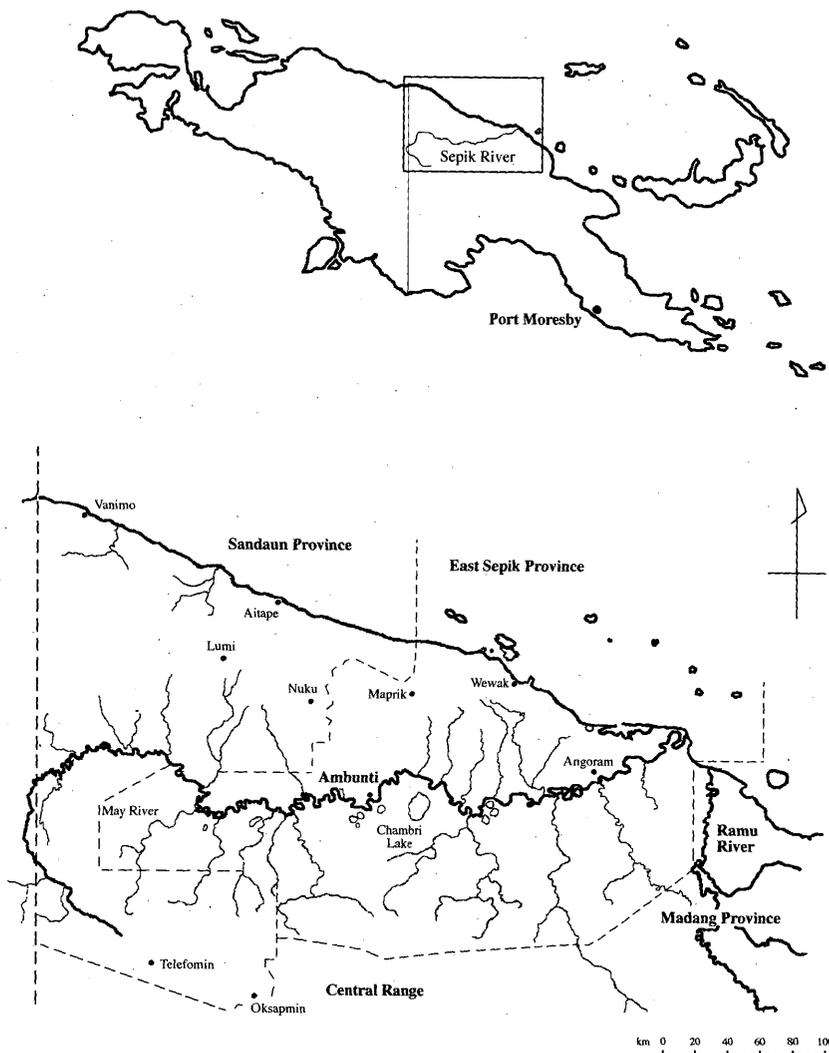
It may be helpful to readers to give some background how this volume has been prepared. It is the result of a joint research project in the National Museum of Ethnology, conducted during 1988–1990. The title of the project was ‘Traditional Cultures in Papua New Guinea’, headed by Shuji Yoshida. But there is a long story leading to the start of the project.

How It All Started

The person who initiated the story was Sachiko Hatanaka, who is a pioneer in the study of Papua New Guinea by Japanese researchers and who has stimulated many of her compatriots to study about Papua New Guinea. Hearing the news of a copper mining project along the Frieda River, which is a tributary of the upper Sepik, she planned to conduct some anthropological research on the people of the Frieda basin. She invited Yoshida and some others to join the research team, and applied for a scholarship. The application was not accepted at first, and when the project was later awarded a scholarship, Hatanaka was not in Japan and Yoshida had to take the lead. He made the team small, because the amount of the scholarship was not as large as had been expected. He invited Hisafumi Saito and Keichi Kumagai, both of whom had had experience studying in Papua New Guinea, and the three went to the Frieda area. The start of the copper mining project in Frieda was delayed, but they thought that the mining would soon start and wanted to study the people before they were influenced by the development. Yoshida worked among the Iwam who live in the basin of the May River, and Saito and Kumagai went to the upper May and studied the Miyanmin. This was in 1984.

The copper mining project in Frieda did not start so soon. After conducting research in Iwam, Yoshida became interested in the Sepik Hills area. This area, located between the Central Range of the New Guinea Highlands and the Sepik area, is linguistically categorized into the Sepik Hill stock and some other stock-level groups, so it was expected that there would be some cultural similarity between the peoples of these language groups¹⁾, but he found that almost no research had been conducted in the area.

Quite a few rivers originate in the Central Range and flow northwards into the mighty Sepik; from the west, we have the August River, May River, Frieda River, Leonald-Schultze River, Wogamush River, April River, Korosameri River,



Map 1 Sepik Area

Karawari River and Yuat River among others. Along these rivers, which are considered tributaries of the Sepik, small villages are scattered. These villages mostly belong to the Sepik Hill stock group, and we call this area 'Sepik Hills' (see Map 1). The altitude of the area ranges from 30 meters to 200 meters. The people mostly subsist on sago palm, supplemented with fish and wild game. In some areas yams and sweet potatoes are grown.

In 1986, Yoshida organized a research team again together with Saito and Kumagai. They added another member, Yoichi Yamada, and conducted their research in the Sepik Hills; Yoshida continued his work among the Iwam, Saito worked among the Yabio in the Wogamush River, Kumagai among the Kapriman

along the Black Water River, and Yamada among the Waxei in the Karawari River. Each member spent three to five months on their fieldwork.

This research team was expanded in 1988. Another three members, Toru Kamimura, Yukio Toyoda and Ipppei Kawasaki, were added to the team, with the intention of covering most of the Sepik Hills area. Kamimura conducted his research among the Kapriman and the Kaningara along the Black Water River, Toyoda among the Mari in the Salumei River, and Kawasaki among the Bahinemo near the April River, and successive researches were conducted by each member in 1990.

After he had conducted the first research in the Sepik Hills, Yoshida organized a joint research project as one of the regular projects in the National Museum of Ethnology, as I have mentioned. This is the project from which we have organized this issue. All the members who had joined the research team were invited to the project, and several other scholars, most of whom have studied the fringe areas of the Papua New Guinea Highlands, joined the project, and we focused on comparative studies of the fringe area of the New Guinea Highlands. The project continued for three years, and involved more than a dozen meetings. The result is this volume.

Why the Sepik Hills?

Several reasons should be mentioned as to why we have paid so much attention to, and are so involved in, the Sepik Hills area of Papua New Guinea.

First, only a few ethnographic research projects have been conducted in this area. Anthropological research in the Sepik area has mostly focused on the Sepik mainstream, and the mountainous area located north of the Sepik mainstream, which includes the Torricelli Mountains and Prince Alexander mountains area. For example, in 1984, there was a Wenner-Gren Symposium in Basel on the Sepik cultures, and those who had experience studying the Sepik area were invited to it. Some sixty scholars read their papers at the symposium, but their interest lay mostly in the area of the Sepik mainstream and the area north of the Sepik [LUTKEHAUS 1990]. The Sepik Hills area attracted almost no scholars.

It is no wonder that this area has remained relatively unknown to the outside world. There are several unfavorable conditions for scholars in conducting field research. First, the area is very sparsely populated. Papua New Guinea is known for its very low population density. But even by the standard of the country, the population of the Sepik Hills area is very small. Most areas have a population density of less than one person per square kilometer. To meet a certain number of people, one has to cover a fairly large area, which is not very easy considering the fact that it is only possible to travel by canoe or on foot.

The second problem is accessibility. The approach to this area from any urban center is very long and inconvenient. To get access to these areas, one has either to take a long journey by canoe from the Sepik mainstream, or use an airplane to a

nearby airstrip. The former can sometimes take two to three whole days even with powered canoes, while if one takes the latter route, one often finds that the airstrip is very far from the destination and that the onward journey must be by river route in small canoes, which often have no engines.

The third unfavorable condition in conducting field research in this area, which we actually found after we began our fieldwork, is that the people often migrate in groups and that they often change the location of their settlement. We did know that their myths relate a long history of migration, but we did not really recognize that this tendency was still continuing (cf. Saito's paper). When we arrived at a destination, we often found that there was no settlement any more and heard the news that the people have moved to another location.

As a consequence of these unfavorable conditions for field research, only a few anthropological researches have been conducted, and we have very little information about the peoples of the Sepik Hills. It is certain, therefore, that this volume offers valuable data in this specific area. The papers in this volume cover a large variety of topics, and it might even be called miscellaneous. But we have tried to cover various topics according to our interests, and to present firsthand data. As a consequence, we offer a variety of papers which present substantial data on many aspects of the Sepik Hills area, which we believe will shed light on the study of the New Guinea and/or Melanesian cultures.

The second reason we have focused on this area is geographical. There is a great contrast between lowlands and highlands in New Guinea, and we believe that the Sepik Hills area provides an excellent opportunity for comparing highland and lowland areas, since it is located between the Sepik area and the highlands.

We would expect some cultural similarity among the fringe areas of highlands in New Guinea, such as the Sepik Hills area, the southern New Guinea Fringe Highlands, and also the basin of the Ramu River, located between the Central Highlands and the north coast of New Guinea. Weiner, for example, argues that the societies in the southern New Guinea Fringe Highlands have some common features in contrast to Central Highland societies; for instance low population density, a complex subsistence system, and the marked elaboration of male cult activity [WEINER 1988]. Besides male cult activity, other characteristics are common in the fringe area. Low population density is a characteristic of the Sepik Hills area, as I mentioned. Subsistence in the Sepik Hills area is similar to the southern fringe area in that it is a complex system including swidden gardening, sago processing, gathering, hunting, and fishing. We also find that there are many similarities between the Sepik Hills and other fringe areas with respect to totemism, magic and sorcery, and so on [GREUB 1985; KASPRUS 1974; FITZ-PATRICK and KIMBUNA 1983].

We also hope that our study will contribute to the study of inter-ethnic relations between highland and lowland areas. As there is a great contrast between the lowlands and highlands, we can observe a scene of transition and/or intermediate places between these areas. For example, the Irakia Awa of the

Eastern Highlands have not yet made the transition to sweet potatoes as staple food [BOYD 1985]. Most places in the highlands grow sweet potatoes for their staple food, but the introduction of sweet potatoes is said to have occurred quite recently, probably a few hundred years ago [GOLSON 1982]. The Irakia Awa are one of the latest people to accept sweet potatoes. Although the Irakia Awa do not belong to the Fringe Highlands, we are able to observe the transition between highlands and lowlands. In a fringe area such as the Sepik Hills, therefore, we can expect to observe the transition and/or intermediate characters between these two areas. According to Feil, there are places north of the Enga, towards the Sepik River, where people can still recall the arrival of pigs and sweet potatoes, only a generation or two ago, when they were brought into the exchange sphere through marriage alliances [FEIL 1987: 34]. This would be somewhere in or at least near the Sepik Hills.

These changes or migrations might be from the lowlands or from the highlands. The people in the southern fringe area, for example, are said to have moved from the southern lowland area to the mountainous area. The impact of modernization, on the other hand, can come either from the lowlands or from the highlands, depending on their location. But whether from the lowlands or highlands, a highland fringe area, such as the Sepik Hills, provides us with good examples when we compare highland and lowland areas and consider inter-ethnic relations in Papua New Guinea.

The third reason to focus on the Sepik Hills area is that this gives us several themes which interest many scholars, such as anthropologists, ethnographers, and geographers.

The first theme is migration. As I have already mentioned, the people in the Sepik Hills have a long history of migration. Their myths relate how their ancestors migrated in the past and came to their present settlement. Even now, they sometimes abandon their old settlements and move to a new location, when they have specific reasons. Migration is not only performed by groups, but also by individuals, as Saito has shown in his paper.

This tendency toward frequent migration might be related to their subsistence. They depend mainly on sago carbohydrate for their food, and also on wild game. As Morren has discussed, this movement of individual members or sub-groups should be one of the important adaptive techniques to environmental change [MORREN 1979, 1986]. Migration in the Sepik Hills, including both long-distance and micro-scale, should be described as a response to the changing man-environment system. We also have to consider socio-economic factors when we deal with the problem of migration. Migration may be an adaptive strategy for people who are only partially integrated into a modern capitalist economy.

Another theme is culture change, or the influence of Western cultures. The history of their contact with Western cultures is very shallow, even by Papua New Guinea standards. For some societies it has been less than half a century since they first came into contact with Europeans, and the inhabitants are still unable to have

close contact with a market economy nor do they have much opportunity to take part in modern social activities. We are faced with their response to Western culture or modernization, which represents the way they perceive their outside world.

Although these kinds of problems in Papua New Guinea have long been discussed, the remote areas have usually been ignored in such discussions. Their expectation for development, however, is being increased by information on modernization carried by radios or visitors. The discrepancy between reality and expectation often discourages the people living in remote areas. Researchers in this area are required to consider the problem of development and its effect on the people.

Totemic belief is another theme which interests us in many ways. The Sepik area is famous for its variety of totemism, as Bateson showed in the case of the Iatmul people [1932]. Each group has a wide variety of names of birds, animals, fish, and plants as its 'totem' or group 'emblem'. The relation between the totems and the group varies. Some groups believe that the totems are their ancestors, and it is forbidden to eat them. Others believe that they are only their 'marks', and claim that they are allowed to eat them. Also in terms of the number of totems, there is a large variety. Although totemic belief varies in many senses, the phenomenon covers a huge area, not only in the Sepik Hills, but also in the Sepik mainstream and in the Ramu Basin, and some parts of the fringe area. It is quite interesting that many societies have some sort of totemic belief, although the belief itself varies in many aspects.

There are some more themes which attract our attention, such as the problem of political leadership, sorcery, cargoism, subsistence, and so on. Not all of these themes are covered in this issue, but some of us have already studied them and published works elsewhere, which I will introduce in the last part of this introduction.

The Sepik Hills Area

Most people in the Sepik Hills area speak languages of the Sepik Hill stock, Sepik super-stock, Sepik-Ramu Phylum. Those who speak Sepik Hill stock languages cover the area between the Wogamush River and the Karawari River (Map 1). To the west of the Sepik Hill stock, we have those who speak the languages of the Upper Sepik Stock, such as the Iwam, and those who belong to the Leonhard Schultze stock group, such as the Yabio. To the east, we have the Lower Sepik Sub-Phylum, and the Ramu Sub-Phylum.

The Sepik area is known for its multiplicity of language groups. In East Sepik Province and Sandaun Province, formally West Sepik Province, a population of about four hundred thousand is divided into 200 language groups. That means the population of each language group is, on average, around two thousand. This multiplicity is much greater in the Sepik Hills area. The population of each

language group is mostly less than one thousand, usually a few hundred. Some groups have a population of only a few dozen.

The people in the Sepik Hills depend on sago carbohydrate as their staple food, supplemented with fish and wild game, including wild pigs, cassowaries, cuscus, wallabies, bandicoots, many kinds of birds, and so on. Most groups rely on gardening, and some cultivate yams and sweet potatoes. But the extent to which they rely on gardening is not so strong.

Only a few studies have been recorded on this area. In their papers on Sepik Hill language, Dye, Townsend and Townsend briefly described the acculturation, subsistence and material culture of the Sepik Hills [1968: 146]. Gewertz wrote on the speakers of Sepik Hills languages as follows [1983: 11]:

Those from whom the Chambri acquire sago live in the region known as the Sepik Hills, extending from the limits of the Sepik's southern flood plain to the Central Range, the hills range in height from 100 to 700 feet and are inhabited by over 6,600 speakers of fourteen or fifteen related languages. These peoples live in tiny hilltop villages and hamlets, subsisting on sago, supplemented with fish and wild game and, among certain groups, on cultivated yams and sweet potatoes. Apart from the Heve, who live in the most southern part of the region [TOWNSEND 1969], they have not been investigated by ethnographers.

Although anthropological research projects in the Sepik Hills are very few, some linguistic research has been conducted in the area. The language of the Iwam, which belongs to the Upper Sepik stock, was studied by Laszlo and Rehburg and Conrad. The Iwam are divided into two language groups, the Sepik Iwam and the May River Iwam. With regard to the Sepik Iwam, Laszlo and Rehburg described the phonemic system of their language [1970], and Conrad discussed it in terms of grammar [1971]. Rehburg also described their kinship terms in his [1974].

Newton is another researcher who has studied the people speaking one of the Sepik Hills languages. In his book on the material culture of the Sepik River [NEWTON 1971], one section is devoted to a brief description of the Bahinemo society, its material culture and an initiation ceremony which was observed on July 18, 1967, not in the Sepik Hills but in Wagu village, a new settlement on a small lake near the Sepik's right bank.

The Miyanimin belong to the Trans-New Guinea Phylum, which is linguistically separated from the Sepik group, but we would expect cultural similarity in that they live on the upper May River. They have been studied vigorously by Gardner [1981a, 1981b, 1983] and Morren [1974, 1977, 1979, 1981, 1986].

These are the few research projects that had been reported when we began our research. Actually, we started our project in this situation, and I believe that the study of the Sepik Hills will be somehow stimulated by our work.

Discussion

The Sepik Hills people have a type of common musical performance. When there are rituals or specific ceremonies, adult and initiated men play bamboo flutes inside the spirit house or men's house, often called *Haus Tambaran* in Melanesian Pidgin. Yamada examines this kind of musical performance among the Waxei who live along the Korosameri River and clarifies the characteristics of their sound perception.

The sound of bamboo flutes played by adult men is normally explained in the Sepik area to those who are not allowed to enter the spirit house as the 'voice' of spirits [TUZIN 1980]. The Waxei, especially, regard the sound as the 'talk' of a spirit. During the performance, the players are in a 'dream', and a female spirit possesses the bamboo, and makes the men play her 'talk'. In this voice, the Waxei recognize the 'talk' of the spirit. The spirit 'talks' the story of bamboo flutes. It tells how and where she gave sacred bamboo flutes to the Waxei women, how they accepted the bamboo, and how the Waxei men fought with the women to get it. It also tells the story of the spirit herself.

The performance of blowing bamboo flutes, therefore, can be interpreted as a process through which a spirit possesses the bamboo and 'talks' to the people. Even if an unknown tune appears, it is claimed not to have been composed by the players but made from the feeling that the spirit gave them.

Yamada contends that the Waxei hear the 'talk' of spirits in the sound of bamboo flutes, and their conception of spirits is realized through the harmony of the flutes. It is not clear that this process in the Waxei can be applied to the other people in the Sepik Hills, or in other areas of Papua New Guinea. This sound perception might be peculiar to the Waxei. Recognition of spirits and their involvement in daily life, however, can be observed in other areas, and the case of the Waxei gives us an elaborate example of the communication between men and spirits.

Kumagai discusses the problem of migration. As we have already seen, the people in the Sepik Hills have frequently shifted their location. The Kapriman, who live in the Black Water river basin, also have a history of changing their dwelling sites. They have their common ancestral place, but they have continued splitting into groups and each group has shifted its location and formed a new settlement.

Kumagai is interested in the unit of migration. Each village of Kapriman has an 'official story' that tells of migration in the form of a village, and actually each village has ancestral stones, which they believe originate in their common ancestral site. These stones are, however, claimed to be owned by clans, not by villages. The distribution of land ownership reflects the migration routes of the founders, since each clan is a land holding unit, those who settled first being entitled to use the land and the water. But there are some cases in which the clan's ancestral site is different from the village's common ancestral site.

Some myths suggests that a split occurred within clans, and that it led to the split of local groups, such as settlement groups. From these facts, Kumagai suggests the hypothesis that the migration unit might not be a village, but a clan, and that the existing villages might be the result of clan unification. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that those clans that have common emblems also have very similar totemic systems. Kumagai argues further that the fact that they emphasize the unity of the village, by claiming a common myth of origin, reflects on their necessity to maintain cohesion as a community lest they should be fragmented into small groups, or lest they should be absorbed by their neighbors.

Kumagai's hypothesis is important in discussing the problem of migration in the Sepik Hills area. It is clear now that the people in the Sepik Hills have a tendency to migrate, depending on a certain conditions, and through the process of migration, we have to consider the possibility of their splitting into sub-groups and also of their uniting with other groups.

Another important point in Kumagai's discussion is that he formulates a hypothesis on the problem of why the Kapriman claim that they have a common ancestor. This discussion is parallel to Saito's argument, which also deals with the reason why the Yabio insist on their unity as a community.

Toyoda deals with the theme of totemism, or totemic belief, in the Sepik Hills. Taking the example of the Mari, who live along the Salumei River, a tributary of the Korosameri, he contends that this totemic belief has several 'meanings' for the people.

First, those who belong to the same totemic group are supposed to help each other. This is reasonable because the totemic groups are often equal to descent groups, such as clan and lineage. But those who have the same 'totems' are also supposed to cooperate with each other, even if they are not members of the same descent group. You will be hosted by someone who has the same 'totems' as you, even in an unfamiliar village. The people explain that acting as a host is the main 'meaning' of their 'totemic' system and the 'real' reason why this totemic system exists.

Secondly, people use totems as the 'mark' of each social group. They use their totemic plants to show their presence, and they have their own rhythm as an identifier, and they use it to communicate names over long distances with a slit-gong. When they decorate their belongings, they prefer to use their totemic colors.

These two 'meanings' of totemism have been reported in other areas in New Guinea. Toyoda argues that the totemism in the Sepik Hills has another meaning. He contends that people use 'totemic' relations in order to extend their social relationships. The Mari people, and the people in the Sepik Hills generally, stress that they receive security in foreign places thanks to their totemic system. They say that even if they go to strange places, they are able to find a sort of 'fellow' by asking for those who belong to the same totemic group (*wanpisin* in Melanesian Pidgin). They also make use of this totemic relation to acquire 'fellowship' and to get social prestige.

Having a large number of fellows in Melanesia gives a person channels through which he can reach authority. He can oblige his fellows to help him by emphasizing this fellowship. He not only obtains security in foreign places, but can also conduct large-scale work with the help of his fellows. To have a large network of personal relationships, therefore, is a symbol of having socially high status.

When a person tries to acquire a friendly relationship in foreign places, the totemic relationship is a handy method. He asks each person which totemic group he belongs to, and if he finds anyone who has the same totem as he, he will say, 'You and I belong to the same totemic group. Now we are fellows (*barata* in Melanesian Pidgin)'.

This use of totemic relation in the Sepik Hills, Toyoda contends, should occur in other Sepik areas and other lowland areas in Papua New Guinea, where we might expect having a large number of fellows to be considered very important in social life. This is to be examined in other areas.

Kawasaki discusses the meaning of the myths of the Bahinemo, who live in the Hunstain Range, south of midstream Sepik. He analyzes one myth which tells the origin of wild animals, and he argues that it represents the meaning of their subsistence and their relationship with another neighboring linguistic group.

According to the myth, two women carrying the corpse of a boy visited many villages to find a place that would accept the dead body, but their request was rejected by all. Finally they reached an island and were allowed to put the corpse there. The villagers made a bed for the corpse. After they put the dead body on the bed, it swelled up and many wild animals sprang from the corpse. Of these animals, the two women ate the meat of a pig, but vomited. The two realized that they had eaten their son, so they set the animals free and let them go into the bush. They then went back to their home village with two pigs, and the two women became rocks.

Kawasaki analyzes the myth using a structural approach, and concludes that it represents the fact that the Bahinemo are dependent on other people for their subsistence. They are dependent for their food on the yam growing people of the Sepik mainstream, the taro growing people of the southern mountainous area, and the other sago growing people of the Sepik Hills area. The Bahinemo are, therefore, not self-sufficient in terms of food production.

He argues further that the dialectic relationship between life and death, represented by the village and the bush respectively, are mediated by the pigs, which indicate resurrection. The resurrection is represented by the island, which is an ambiguous place between the river and the ground. The connection between these three domains is described as the activities of the two women who mediate each domain.

Pigs in New Guinea, or in Melanesia generally, occupy a crucially important position not only in terms of subsistence, but also in the social or cultural domain. They also have an ambiguous character in that they belong to the bush in one sense,

and at the same time they belong to the life of men. Kawasaki's discussion is, therefore, reasonable in suggesting that pigs mediate between the village and the bush. This is related to Akimichi's discussion, which deals with pigs from an ethno-ecological point of view.

While conducting research among the Yabio, who live in the basins of the Wogamush and Leonard Schultze Rivers, Saito had a strange experience. He tried to find a native term for 'family', but could not. First, the people gave him a word which stands for 'a group of close people', but does not mean specifically family, or descent group. When he asked further, they gave him a word which stands for a group emblem ('totem' in other words), because each family has its own emblem. It seems that the Yabio have no equivalent word for family or descent group, and when they need to use one, they express the concept in Melanesian Pidgin (*lain*, *famili*, or *bisnis*). Although they recognize the fact that a village is composed of 'descent groups', they do not use expressions such as family or descent group, but just emphasize the unity of villagers saying, 'we are one flesh'.

Saito tries to obtain the answer to this problem by focusing on their principle of recruiting members to form a local group. He examines the members of each 'descent group', and argues that the 'descent group' among the Yabio has the characteristics of a land holding unit with a patrilineal tendency. But even those who have no genealogical relations with the group members are actually allowed to use their land. It is important for them to live there and to utilize the garden in order to be acknowledged as 'descent group' members.

Saito presents a hypothesis for dealing with this issue. He contends that the reason the Yabio are reluctant to name their descent groups is because there is a discrepancy in forming 'descent groups' between the principle of patrilineality and the actual use of land. They know that group membership is not decided by consanguinity, so they do not emphasize unity as a descent group, but rather their unity as a village. A village is considered very important for the Yabio since it comprises a unit of food production and consumption.

This theme is related to the classic problem in New Guinea; genealogy is not the only criterion for obtaining membership in a local group. Ever since anthropologists began to conduct intensive research in the New Guinea Highlands there has been argument about whether or not we are able to apply the African descent model to New Guinea societies. It is now accepted by many scholars that besides genealogy and consanguinity, common residence and working together is also important in recruiting members for forming local groups. Saito has confirmed this principle, for the Sepik Hills area.

In terms of language, the Iwam and the Yabio, which belong respectively to the Sepik Sub-Phylum and the Leonhard Schultze Sub-Phylum, are unique in having numeral classifiers. Some other languages in New Guinea have numeral classifiers, but they are mostly Austronesian. Papuan languages with numeral classifiers are very rare.

Conrad reported five numeral classifiers among the Iwam [1971], but Yoshida

examines the system in detail, and presents a six classifier model, by adding one more. According to Conrad, the features of the classifiers of the Iwam are; *nu-* for something male, *hwu-* for something long, *kwu-* for something large, *ha-* for something small, and *a-* for something female. Yoshida, however, argues that the classifying system of the Iwam is not so simple as Conrad claimed, but is more complex with six classifiers. He further contends that the Iwam language is unique in that it has two classifiers for men, mature and immature, although it has only one for women, irrespective of maturity or immaturity.

The domains and features of each classifier are as follows; *nu-* for mature men, *ru-* for immature men, *a-* for women, children, animals with legs, materials associated with women, and something squat and round, *hwu-* for living plants and something long, *kwu-* for leaves and something flat, *ha-* for small food items, small gifts, and something small.

The Iwam language is unique also in that it has a classificatory verb system. The example of 'to give' shows that six classes are distinguished depending on the size of the object, or the means of carrying. This gives us a typical example of classificatory categories generated through the subject's action.

Yoshida, in an appendix to his paper, also examines the numeral classifiers of the Yabio, presents fourteen, and explains the domain of each.

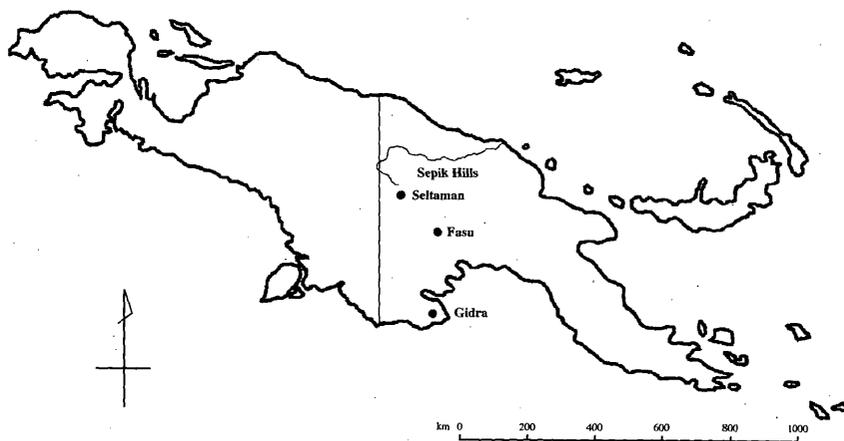
The Highland Fringe Area

In addition to those who have studied the Sepik Hills area, we invited some anthropologists who worked in the Highlands Fringe area to obtain a comparative perspective. Two such anthropologists have contributed to this volume. One is Hiroyuki Kurita, who has studied the Fasu-speaking people in the Southern Highland Province, and the other is Tomoya Akimichi, who conducted his research among the Seltaman and the Gidra in Western Province (Map 2).

Kurita discusses the problem of how the Fasu settle their disputes since their contact with Europeans. New Guinea societies are marked by a lack of elaborate political or judicial organizations, and many anthropologists became interested in how these societies manage disputes without any formal procedures.

The Fasu-speaking people are, in spite of a long history of European contact, considered under-developed people even by the standard of Papua New Guinea. They have introduced the European court system since coming into contact with Europeans, and it has operated well in that many disputes have been settled in their society. To our surprise, the Fasu are eager to have government intervention in their disputes. They are willing to have their affairs mediated by patrol officials, who are considered 'government people' by the Fasu. Although the courts held by the patrol officials are unofficial, the Fasu regard the officials' suggestions (not judgments in any sense) as formal court decisions.

Kurita tries to address this problem with an historical account. The Fasu, with their experience of European contact, have realized that the patrol officials have the



Map 2 Location of Research Areas

ultimate power and that their orders are not to be opposed. As they were prohibited by the administration from using their own system of sanction, they are forced to depend on the European judicial system to resolve their conflicts.

The judicial system has been changed several times since the Fasu came into contact with Europeans; the appointment of village officials, the introduction of a Local Court system, the replacement of expatriate patrol officials with nationals, and so on. In spite of these changes, however, they regard the judicial system as not having been essentially changed. Patrol officials are the only 'government people' for the Fasu, and they are the only officials who can handle the disputes.

Since Fasu is an egalitarian society, like most New Guinea societies, no one in their communities has the power to urge the accused to obey the judgment. They need outside power to settle disputes, and the only outside power available for the Fasu is the patrol officials.

Although they are not satisfied with the official's court, they know that they have to depend on an outside power to handle their own disputes. A village court system, which was envisaged by legal planners of the national government, was introduced in order to restore customary powers to the local people. This purpose, however, has not been served in that the people cannot solve the disputes by themselves. But it functions well in that people are obliged to follow the decision of the court as long as the legal system is based on the outside power, which is still the ultimate one that obliges the people to obey the decision.

Kurita's discussion is important when we consider how people in remote places react to European systems, and it shows that societies without organized political or judicial systems are obliged to rely on outside powers to settle disputes and keep order.

Akimichi, another contributor to this issue, discusses pig husbandry systems in New Guinea societies from the ethno-ecological point of view. He examines the

role of pigs in two societies in Papua New Guinea; Gidra in the lowlands and Seltaman in the fringe area, and he argues that although the ecological systems of the two societies differ, the way the people regard pig husbandry is explained by the same logic.

It has been said that there exist two distinct pig husbandry systems in New Guinea. One is the pig breeding system, in which pigs are intentionally reared, and controlled mostly by powerful men. In this area, pigs are domesticated and the people do not hunt them very often. The other is the pig rearing system, in which pigs are mostly hunted while some are semi-domesticated. Male pigs are castrated at an early age, village sows mate with wild boars and their new-borns are brought back to the village. The distribution of these two pig husbandry systems does not overlap, and we find the breeding system mostly in the highlands of New Guinea, and the pig rearing system in the lowlands and some hilly places of New Guinea.

Akimichi, examining the pig breeding system of the Seltaman and the pig rearing system of the Gidra, argues that the way the people relate to pigs and men is the same in these two systems. He argues that the two distinct ideas about pigs and men can be understood by the application of transformation theory. Wild pigs and domesticated pigs are cognitively distinguished. For example, wild pigs are symbols of grown-ups among the Gidra, and are treated as sacred by the Seltaman. The aggressiveness of wild pigs is often desired by men, especially by warriors. Domesticated pigs, however, are regarded as pseudo-human animals. Therefore, the relations between pigs and men, whether in the pig-rearing system or in the pig-breeding system, represents the same transformation: e.g. men desire to be wild pigs whereas domesticated pigs are to be transformed into pseudo-humans.

According to Akimichi's argument, the fringe area is similar to the lowlands in that the people emphasize hunting for subsistence, and is similar to the highlands in their logic of the relation between pigs and men. Pigs play a crucial role in New Guinea, and pig husbandry in New Guinea is closely related to agriculture. Akimichi's ethno-ecological point of view, therefore, sheds new light in comparing New Guinea societies.

Some More on the Sepik Hills Area

This small volume is only a part of our results. Besides the papers in it, we have more to contribute to the study of the Sepik Hills area.

Yoshida has been working most vigorously on the Sepik Hills study. He has published two books on the Iwam; one deals with the life and the world view of the Iwam before they came into contact with Western culture [1988b], and the other after the contact [1992]. The former focuses on traditional wars and disputes, and the latter on sexuality and sorcery. He also has provided numerous papers on the Iwam, concerning disease and magic [1987a, 1987b, 1987c], folk classification [1986], migration [1988a], subsistence [1996], a short monograph on the Iwam [1993], and so on.

Yamada has also published numerous works on the Waxeï. He has presented an ethnography of the music of the Waxeï in Japanese [1989], and in English [1997b]. He has published numerous papers on the music of the Waxeï [1987b, 1988, 1989a, 1991a, 1995a, 1995b, 1996, 1997a], some on music in the Sepik area generally [1989b, 1993], and he also deals with the problem of migration of the Waxeï [1987a].

The Yabio have been studied by Saito in terms of ethnohistory [1988] and the concept of family [1989]. The Miyanmin have been studied by Saito and Kumagai. Kumagai, in his report on field research among the Miyanmin, discusses their history of contact with the outside world, stressing the influence of returned migrants [1988]. He has also dealt with the problem of migration, and noted that settlement shift had frequently occurred in the pre-contact days [1989]. Saito has argued for their recognition of development, referring to their dissatisfaction with the fact that they cannot receive its benefits [1985].

Kamimura, who has conducted research among the Kapriman and the Kaningara, has published a paper concerning the methods of acquiring political leadership among the Kapriman [1997]. His discussion is unique in referring to cargoism, which is still dominant in the Sepik area as their means of recognizing their outside world. He has also published some papers on the mythology of hook-shaped carvings in the Sepik Hills area [1990, 1991b], and on the problem of the diffusion routes of a deity image [1988] and of clay pots [1992], and one on the diffusion of myths in New Guinea [1991a]. There are some more papers by Toyoda on the Mari [1997] and by Kawasaki on the Bahinemo [1989].

Hatanaka, who started our story, finishes it. She has reported on the problems of development and the people's reaction to it in the Frieda River basin [1985].

Note

- 1) They mostly belong to the Sepik Hill stock of the Middle Sepik Super-stock, while some are included in the Upper Sepik Stock, and the Leonhard Schultze Sub-Phylum. The language of the Miyanmin is exceptional in that it belongs to the Trans-New Guinea Phylum, in contrast to the other languages, which belong to the Sepik-Ramu Phylum [LAYCOCK 1975, 1981; LAYCOCK and Z'GRAGGEN 1975]. But we call this area, located between the Central Range and the Sepik mainstream, 'the Sepik Hills' in terms of geographical setting.

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