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Shamanism and Witchcraft at the Origins of Inequality

Raymond Kelly's *Constructing Inequality* is a remarkable book with new insights on offer for academic readers interested in inequality and stigmatization as general social phenomena, although perhaps only those anthropologists inclined towards quantitative, objectifying studies will find it other than dry going. Potential readers both general and specific would do well to acquaint themselves beforehand with Schieffelin's *The Sorrow of the Lonely and the Burning of the Dancers* (1976) and Knauft's *Good Company and Violence* (1985), both of which provide more interpretative and descriptively vivid accounts of social life in Papua New Guinea's remote and sparsely populated Strickland-Bosavi region as it was in the late colonial period.

The Etoro are one of a number of small tribes occupying the country between the Strickland River and Mount Bosavi in the southwest of Papua New Guinea. In 1968, when Kelly began fieldwork, there were 386 Etoro living in some twenty longhouse groups, although the population had declined by perhaps as much as 50 percent since introduced diseases began to have an impact on the region in the 1930s.[1] The ethnographic present in

which Kelly sets the study refers to the late colonial, pre-mission period, immediately before and during his fieldwork—a fiction retained here for simplicity's sake.

Kelly's aim is to "provide a comprehensive account of social inequality, and of the interplay between egalitarian and inegalitarian features within the Etoro sociocultural system" (p. 3). An economically egalitarian people who greatly value generosity and sharing, the Etoro are nevertheless divided among themselves by differences of moral virtue and prestige. Virtue, in Kelly's analysis, attaches ascriptively to sex-age categories, with senior men at the top and unremarried widows and divorcées at the bottom. Prestige and its reciprocal, stigma, pertain to achievable statuses, of which there are only four: *tafidilo* (secular leader), spirit medium, witch, and "superwitch."[2] *Tafidilo*s are senior men who achieve their positions through communal recognition of their contributions of game and pork to longhouse distributions. Mediums are younger men who serve the community by conducting public séances in which their familiars effect magical cures and discover the identity of sickness-sending witches. Witches can be of either sex and are held to possess "a mutation of the soul" that turns them into spiritual cannibals who prey upon the souls of their neighbors.[3] Superwitches are adolescent males who consume their age-mates' life force by engaging in egalitarian (rather than normatively hierarchical) homosexual relationships.

Kelly frames his study within the larger context of sociological theories of inequality in the tradition from Locke and Rousseau through Marx to such recent anthropological theorists as Meillassoux and Jane Collier. He proposes that understandings of inequality in this tradition have turned on the question, "What is the principal locus for the production of inequality in human society?" Neo-Marxists have sought the source of inequality in modes of production, while Collier's "synthesis of feminist and neo-Marxian perspectives" (p. 3) proposes that "marriage, as the basis of kinship, organizes social inequality" (Collier 1988:vii). Considering the Etoro case, Kelly finds reason to reject both perspectives. His analysis of the factors contributing to inequality among the Etoro leads him repeatedly to their system of metaphysical ideas (about life, death, growth, and the transmission of life force) as the grounds for and cause of the hierarchies of virtue and prestige that constitute inequality in their world.[4]

On the face of it, Kelly's argument is an idealist response to the materialist approaches he opposes. He accepts as valid the search for "a central locus for the social production of inequality, . . . the internal equivalent of a prime mover" (p. 1). But against historical materialism's guiding principle, that "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness" (Marx 1859), Kelly ad-

vances the thesis that the Etoro cosmological system of ideas is the "prime mover" of the sociocultural system, the "generator" of inequality. There's a trick to the argument, however, turning on the question posed by the book's subjectless title: who or what "constructs" inequality? Throughout most of the book it is the system of cosmological ideas that "constructs," "fabricates," "shapes," "grounds," and is the "source of" inequality. Kelly's explanatory metaphors represent the cosmological system as an autonomous source of social efficacy—a conceptualization further reinforced by his identification of the "locus of the production of inequality" as a "prime mover."[5] The first suggestion of the surprise in store comes a third of the way into the book when, after a discussion leading up to the conclusion that "[b]oth men and women live in a conceptual world shaped by a male-centered cosmology" (p. 191), Kelly raises the question as to "the source, nature, and mechanisms of control over the cosmological formulations that underwrite the hegemonic ideology" (p. 205). In response, he observes that Etoro spirit mediums have "vested authority with respect to doctrine," and he foreshadows a concluding "consideration of this elite's control over the cosmological foundations of social inequality" (ibid.). Nothing more is made of this until the end of the book, where Kelly announces, "While the 'cultural system,' 'meaning system,' and 'value system' constitute comparatively amorphous sources of social inequality . . . the source of Etoro conceptions of the fundamental nature of reality can be precisely specified. Such conceptions are the product of a shamanic elite" (p. 482). Whether the "amorphous" quality of the Etoro cosmological system as a part of the wider Strickland-Bosavi cultural system disqualifies it from being the prime mover of social inequality, as it has hitherto been presented, is not made clear. What is clear is that the cosmological system of ideas as the source of inequality itself has a source—and an entirely material one at that. Kelly comes closest to sorting out the resulting ambiguity in his concluding remarks:

> The cosmological system is the central locus for the production of social inequality as a result of the fact that those who control the production and reproduction of cosmological doctrine formulate that doctrine in a manner that accords moral superiority, prestige, privilege, prerogative, and power to the social positions they occupy and the social categories to which they belong. This is why the concept of a prime mover is indeed viable. . . . Social inequality is . . . produced by an elite that is advantaged by it. (P. 515)

Kelly's ultimate explanation for Etoro inequality is thus the existence of a self-perpetuating elite of shamans who maintain an ideological hegemony in

their own interests. His remark that this is what makes the prime mover concept viable comes as a last-minute revelation (or is it a recognition?) that the cosmological system is not an autonomous source of social efficacy and that the "prime mover" of Etoro inequality is not their system of ideas per se but the tribal elite of shamans who manipulate the system.[6]

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Like a Marxist (who would begin with the direct relations of production), Kelly begins his analysis with the social relations of food production, distribution, and consumption. He finds that men put an average of 20.9 hours per week into subsistence activities, of which 6.5 hours are spent in gardening and sago processing. Women put an average of 16.5 hours per week into subsistence, of which 11.8 hours are gardening and sago processing. Women provision their families with sago and garden produce, while men have a dual obligation to provision both their families and the longhouse group with game and pork. Smaller game, caught by either sex, is distributed among family members at garden houses away from the longhouse, while large game and pigs are distributed communally in the longhouse. Normatively, longhouse coresidents should share equally and Kelly finds that this is realized in practice, with an egalitarian nutritional outcome in which women get slightly more protein than men. Thus, as Kelly points out, Etoro production and distribution relationships conform as far as scarce meat resources are concerned to the principle of "from each according to their ability; to each according to their need."[7]

Communal distributions of game and pork provide the mechanism by which the Etoro achieve their protein egalitarianism. This is reinforced by differential social rewards: men who bring game to the longhouse for distribution gain prestige.[8] But since sago, garden produce, and smaller game are not distributed outside the family and since women do not hunt large game or kill and butcher pigs, it follows that only men are in a position to gain prestige and build relationships by distributing meat. Gender-unequal prestige is thus built into the Etoro division of labor and distribution rules, even though "this is not attributable to appropriation of the products of female labor" (p. 8).[9] Thus, although "the division of labor is . . . a source of social inequality, . . . the differential moral evaluation that engenders this is derived from the cosmological system rather than from economic processes" (p. 9). Otherwise put, the Etoro economy is "a domain of relations upon which cosmologically based inequalities have been inscribed" (p. 10).

In chapter 3, "Moral Hierarchy: The Cultural Construction of Social Inequality," Kelly shows how the allocation of prestige and moral virtue is

linked to Etoro ideas about the production and perpetuation of life. Sex-age categories are delimited by metaphysical ideas and valorized on the basis of each category's culturally posited contributions to growth and life. Senior men, for example, are ascribed the highest virtue in the hierarchy of moral standing—primarily because they are considered to be intrinsically generous in provisioning the community with game.[10] Pre-reproductive married women, unremarried widows, and divorcées, on the other hand, categorically occupy the lower range of moral standing, because, so the argument goes, they are seen in Etoro metaphysical terms as contributing least to the group's well-being.[11] And at the bottom of the scale of virtue, as at the bottom of the prestige hierarchy, are the witches: "Spirit mediums seek to protect life, while witches seek to appropriate it in an ongoing contest between the forces of good and evil. The cosmological system thus provides . . . a scheme of social differentiation in which moral evaluation is intrinsically embedded. Social inequality is thus fabricated as a moral hierarchy or hierarchy of virtue" (p. 13).

Chapter 4 considers how stigma is allocated through witchcraft accusations. Whenever a longhouse resident dies from illness or accident, oracles are consulted by next of kin and public séances are conducted to establish the identity of the responsible witch. In two-thirds of all accusations a longhouse coresident is found guilty. And, although accused witches often move to another longhouse, their fate is usually to be accused again and, after two or at most three accusations, killed in a community-sanctioned execution.[12]

Males aged between fourteen and twenty and between thirty-one and forty and females between sixteen and twenty (that is, married but without children) are more than twice as likely to be accused of witchcraft than would be expected if accusations were randomly distributed. Unremarried widows and divorcées are also accused more frequently than their demographic representation in the population would predict. The other side of this distribution is that women over age sixty, males over forty, girls under sixteen, and boys under fourteen are less than half as likely to be accused, although not even infants are entirely immune (large babies of both sexes were supposed to be killed).

Kelly explains this pattern of accusations as conforming "to the contours of the Etoro scheme of morally evaluated social differentiation that delineates age and gender categories" (p. 375), that is, those assigned a low position in the moral hierarchy attract a disproportionate number of accusations. There is an assumption here that the moral hierarchy determines the accusation pattern rather than the other way around. With respect to the latter possibility, Kelly observes that accusations are not aimed at those least able to physically defend themselves, but he does not consider the more plausible hypothesis (proposed by Steadman apropos witchcraft executions among

the Hewa [1971]) that attacks tend to be made against those who become vulnerable through the loss of supportive kin among their coresidents (unremarried widows, for example).

Overlaying the sex-age categorical patterning of accusations are further accusations, amounting to 25 percent of all cases, in which the accused is an aspiring secular leader or medium. Such men are, at the least, disqualified from further advancement. In most of these cases it is significant that the presiding medium has gone beyond his usual role of authenticating others' accusations by contributing directly to the nomination of suspects. Although the "overall system thus fails to inhibit the expression of self-interest on the part of spirit mediums" (p. 282), divergent interests within the longhouse are kept in check by being "melded into a community interest in scapegoating" (p. 283). The person divined to be the witch is, by implicit common consent, the most dispensable member of the group. If the medium's spirit does not indicate that the witch is to be killed, it is left to the putative victim's adult male next-of-kin to choose between demanding compensation or killing the witch and paying compensation to his or her kin. Either course of action brings the incident to a conclusion, since the kin of accused witches will neither protect them from execution nor seek vengeance if they are killed.[13] Formerly, the bodies of executed witches were cannibalized and their hearts impaled outside the longhouse to publicly display their guilt. As elsewhere throughout the region, the eating of witches was regarded as a reciprocal retribution for their own spiritual cannibalism. No other form of cannibalism was practiced.

Chapter 5 examines how men achieve prestigious statuses. Recently initiated bachelors are nominated by established spirit mediums, speaking through their spirit voices, to become protégés and acquire spirit wives. About 40 percent of all young men become novices. After extensive training, a successful novice learns to meet his spirit wife in trances and dreams. At first he can speak only through her voice in séances, and he depends upon her for his abilities to cure and detect witchcraft. Although on the spiritual plane, the relationship is not platonic and in time the spirit wife bears the novice a spirit son. When the son is old enough to speak through his father, he "makes a trail" for the medium's ultimate possession by a male lineage spirit, his *sigisato* spirit. Possession by a *sigisato* is a prerequisite for full status as a medium, since only this spirit can authenticate witchcraft accusations and authorize executions. About 18 percent of all men between ages twenty and forty-five are mediums, with most retiring from practice while in their forties. Illustrious mediums develop multicommunity practices and appoint many protégés before retiring from active practice to take up careers as senior secular leaders.

It is the mediums who, through frequent communal séances, keep the

cosmological system continually alive in people's experiences and thoughts. The system of representations that mediums dramatize as spirit voices constitutes Etoro religion, with the principal imagery of the séance alternating from representations of gender equality (as instantiated by the relationship between the medium and his wife) to representations of brotherly equality among men (the *sigisato* spirits). Since witches are held not to exist in the world of the egalitarian and immortal spirits, Kelly infers that Etoro religion proposes witchcraft as the real obstacle to equality, which is "idealized as the ultimate goal of human aspirations" (p. 336).

Secular leaders (*tafidilo,* from "to be first") organize community enterprises including the construction of longhouses, the coordination of raiding parties, and the hosting of ceremonial dances. Most longhouses have one or two *tafidilo*s, with the two leaders in the latter case working cooperatively as senior and junior. In a sample population of eight longhouses with a total of eighty-nine men aged over twenty, thirteen men were recognized as *tafidilo*s. Eleven of these were between the ages of forty-six and sixty, comprising 58 percent of all the men in that age bracket. To achieve *tafidilo* status a man has to avoid the stigma of witchcraft while accumulating prestige by being a successful and generous hunter. In one documented case, half of the game consumed over a year in a longhouse was provided by a single *tafidilo.* Recognition of a man as a *tafidilo* continues for only as long as he continues to hunt. The *tafidilo* in effect exemplifies behavior that is the opposite of the witch's: by giving meat to his coresidents he increases their life force, whereas witches "eat" the life force of their coresidents by consuming their spiritual bodies.

Relations between a longhouse's senior *tafidilo* and medium are cooperative. Senior *tafidilo*s and mediums together make up an elite that includes only twelve of the eighty-nine men in the eight longhouses surveyed, although taken together with junior *tafidilo*s and mediums, 29 percent of all men have some prestige status. Another 30 percent have been precluded from prestige status by witchcraft accusations, while the remainder will mostly achieve *tafidilo* status if they remain free from accusations and live long enough. Thus, although the prestige/stigma system is stratified, it is also (for men) open to advancement.[14] *Tafidilo*s and mediums derive no material advantage from their positions; neither have more wives on average than other men their age, and both are subject to witchcraft accusations at about the same rate as other men in their age bracket. Prestige and, particularly for the mediums, influence are the main rewards, since "egalitarian values and the levelling effects of witchcraft accusations" permit little else (p. 374). Surveying these findings, Kelly concludes that Etoro social inequality is "predominantly shaped" by the prestige/stigma hierarchy, which in turn is

shaped by the moral hierarchy, which is finally "grounded in" the cosmological system of ideas about life-force transmission (p. 376).

In chapter 6 Kelly analyzes data on the production, circulation, and distribution of wealth. Wealth items, mostly shell valuables, circulate as bridewealth payments and as compensation payments for witchcraft killings. Wealth is obtained by both trade and the direct production of items for trade (pigs, bows and arrows, hornbill beaks, tobacco rolls, sago flour), both activities being largely in the hands of young, unmarried men. Little of women's labor is involved in producing wealth items, and young men are able to raise bridewealth payments without dependence on either the labor of their female kin or contributions from male elders.

Bridewealth and compensation payments are distributed on the basis of generalized reciprocity among those of the distributor's kin who have contributed to or are likely to contribute to his own social payments. The distributor keeps little for himself. (Indeed, Etoro economic egalitarianism is such that no one should keep more than one of anything while others lack.) Kelly's data show that the net effect of these payments is redistributive. Wealth is accumulated from among the compensator's lineage kin on the basis of their ability to contribute and then redistributed among the kin of the compensated on the basis of relationship and need. Males aged twenty-one to forty contribute 81 percent of the total value of all contributions, but they receive back only 64 percent. Women and older men are, correspondingly, the net winners. Although women contribute little to the production of wealth, they receive 10.8 percent of its total distributed value. But, instead of using their valuables to invest in social payments as men do, women keep the shells they receive to wear as ornaments.[15] There is also a "modest transfer of wealth" from those accused of witchcraft to *tafidilo*s, who in turn contribute it to other men's bridewealth payments, thus furthering their own reputations for generosity. By contributing 68 percent more than other men to marriage payments, *tafidilo*s accumulate "the one thing that is readily accumulable, namely prestige" (p. 406). The main conclusions that Kelly draws from Etoro wealth distribution practices, however, are that (1) transactions of both shell wealth and pigs are disconnected from the means by which men gain prestige in the community[16] and (2) the existence of accumulable wealth doesn't necessarily lead to inequality, since the data show that an egalitarian redistribution of wealth (as of meat) is a possibility actually realized by the Etoro.

The larger part of the lengthy concluding chapter, "Theories of Inequality in Simple Societies," is devoted to a critique of Collier's brideservice model of gender inequalities in classless or "simple societies."[17] Kelly shows that Collier's assumptions fail to match Etoro realities and that her model

rests upon fundamental misconceptions. This excursus is justified on the grounds that Collier's is the "most comprehensive and influential current model" for understanding simple societies, but the arguments here are tedious and likely to be of interest only to those for whom Collier's model seemed plausible in the first place.[18]

The conclusion proper returns to the thesis that the cosmological system (and/or the "cosmologically derived system of moral evaluation," the two being largely interchangeable in Kelly's formulations) is (are) "the central locus for the production of inequality." Reviewing his arguments from previous chapters, Kelly concludes that the cosmological system "is central to the organization of production, distribution . . . and consumption" (p. 512) and is capable of "totalistically accounting for" the entire range of inequalities among the Etoro—with the sole exception of the jural prerogatives associated with making and responding to witchcraft accusations. These prerogatives are "organized in terms of a discrete logic, pertaining to the capacity to employ or respond to coercive physical force" (p. 515). The cosmological system is therefore not the sole locus for the production of inequality, although it remains the central one.[19] What is not clear is why the concluding analysis should recognize only this exception when other components of the sociocultural system have also been identified as independently causing inequality, namely the division of labor, the prestige system connecting meat provisioning with leadership, the initiation system, and the system of witchcraft beliefs and practices (pp. 286, 433, 447). Indeed, the "causal factors responsible [for Etoro social inequalities] originate in diverse domains and characteristically produce mutually reinforcing configurations of moral worth, prestige, privilege, stigma, and disability that overdetermine gender [and other] inequalities" (p. 448). If only Kelly had developed this formulation instead of reducing each system of practices to the cosmological system of ideas!

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For Marxists, superstructures are never entirely autonomous; cosmologies do not simply descend from the heavens but are connected (often dialectically) to material conditions. Kelly's eventual assignment of a source, the shamanic elite, to the Etoro cosmological system thus answers the principal Marxist objection to what would otherwise be an unashamedly idealist project. But if the interests of the shamanic class finally construct the system, how does this differ from Marxist understandings of ideology in which the dominant ideas in society are understood as promoting class or elite interests?

Godelier's *The Making of Great Men* provided just such an analysis with respect to the Baruya (1986), an Eastern Highlands people with significant social organization and cultural features in common with the Strickland-Bosavi tribes (including male initiation, normative homosexual behavior, shamanism, and an absence of emphasis on ceremonial exchange).[20] Kelly cites this study but overlooks its analysis, thereby missing the chance of clarifying his argument through a comparison. What comparison would show, I think, is that although Kelly and Godelier start from opposed theoretical positions they nevertheless reach similar conclusions. Godelier characterizes Baruya society as a "Great Men system," in contrast to Highlands "Big Man systems." "He shows [to quote from my summary in Modjeska 1991:236] that the distribution of [the] means of producing social relationships (including the 'discovery' of [the next generation's] great men [by the current generation's leaders]) is the outcome, as it must necessarily be while social relations are produced by magico-symbolic rather than gift-economic means, of struggles for the possession of symbolic capital." "Struggles" here refer to the competition that Godelier documents between Baruya lineages for the control of sacred objects embodying the means of self-legitimization.

This is a point of substantive difference between the Baruya and the Etoro, since the Etoro lack a spiritual technology of sacred objects, substituting instead of legitimating rituals a self-legitimizing acting-out of the dictates of the spirit world. Competition between Etoro lineages is thus suspended in favor of the more general battle of all good men against the witches.[21] Although couched in terms of Marxian notions of symbolic capital, Godelier's analytic conclusions are broadly parallel to those of Kelly's cultural idealist analysis: (1) he who controls the means of symbolic legitimation controls the means of reproducing positions of dominance within the system, and (2) this is an entirely different kind of domination/inequality than that found in Highlands societies, where prestige is largely tied to performance in ceremonial gift exchanges that, in turn, depends upon pig production and finance. To the extent that Kelly has independently and from an opposed position arrived at similar conclusions there are, I think, good grounds for accepting them while remaining skeptical about any claims for the superiority of his theoretical orientation.

NOTES

1. Kelly gives a 1981 population of 750, implying an annual rate of increase of almost 5.5 percent!

2. There is apparently no such status as "ordinary person" among the Etoro.

3. Kelly isn't concerned with the Melanesianist literature on witchcraft and sorcery, nor with the terminological and other comparative issues involved. What he terms "witchcraft" is indigenously conceptualized as involving both innate and willful components, cutting across the usual anthropological distinction between "witchcraft" as innate mystical power and "sorcery" as the willful manipulation of paraphernalia and spells. On the terminological question in relation to Strickland-Bosavi concepts of mystical attack, see especially Knauft (1985:339ff.) and Shaw (1990:133 n. 5).

4. Since Kelly begins by defining inequality as "social differentiation accompanied by differential moral evaluation" (p. 4), his analysis necessarily proceeds to a conclusion in similar terms: "The Etoro cosmological system . . . is the central locus for the production of inequality because it constitutes the source of morally evaluated social differentiation" (pp. 511–512). The analysis is a Durkheimian *tour de force,* but Kelly doesn't recognize the extent to which his conclusions are determined by his starting point. A Marxist analysis would, of course, define inequality in different terms (the metaphysic of labor and of "[wo]men working for men"), leading to different conclusions.

5. Readers familiar with classical Marxism will recognize Kelly's "prime mover" as a truncated and rearranged variant of the original historical materialist formulation (e.g., Engels 1892). Rather than directly "producing inequality," the Marxist prime mover drives history, which progresses through changing modes of production upon which class divisions and struggles are consequent. The Marxist prime mover doesn't consist in "the dynamics of a particular mode of production," as Kelly supposes, but in the autonomous development of the forces of production through successive modes of production. In the Marxist motor metaphor, historical change results from the development of the productive forces, alternately facilitated and "fettered" by the social relations of production. Thus the arrival of the sweet potato in the New Guinea Highlands 250–300 years ago initiated a "revolutionary" development of the productive forces, because it made possible a production system in which women's labor could be effectively exploited (Modjeska 1995).

6. From a Marxist viewpoint, Kelly's identification of the "prime mover" of society with its least progressive element might seem ironic, but it is not thereby incorrect. Certainly there is no reason to doubt that the shamans really are the power elite of Etoro society. But it is misleading to say that they control the cosmological system of ideas. As (re)presenters of the spirit world, Etoro shamans strongly influence how community members interpret reality in terms of the cosmological system, but they don't thereby exercise control over the conceptual elements of the system itself. Kelly neglects to point out that Etoro cosmological ideas are but local versions of a system that dominates the spiritual thinking of other peoples far beyond their ken. The idea of the soul as a bodily double is, of course, universal throughout Melanesia, while even specific details in ideas about witchcraft are shared beyond the Strickland-Bosavi region by all the peoples of the Strickland headwaters (Bogaia, Duna, Bimin, Oksapmin, Hewa, and so forth, although not by the contiguous Highlands populations of Ipili and Engan speakers). The interpretation of the social world as a world of witchcraft proceeds from a doxic frame of reference that is beyond the reach of any individual to alter.

7. Kelly holds that the Etoro valuation of meat and their division of labor (which assigns most hunting to men, thereby making gender inequality inevitable) are due to their cosmological system. His culturalism does not extend to claiming that meat's value is inde-

pendent of its objective properties or that the division of labor rests on nothing but culture, but neither does he admit any possibility of material causation.

8. Marxists would note that prestige, unlike meat, is distributed according to the formula "from each according to their ability; to each according to the amount contributed," that is to say, according to the lower of the two forms of communist production relations as defined by the "from . . . ; to . . . " formulas.

9. Etoro pigs are able to forage for most of their food, and pig production makes little use of women's labor, in marked contrast with practices in the nearby Highlands where pig production requires intensive inputs of sweet potato fodder produced by women's labor. In my 1982 analysis of pig production and pork distribution among the Duna (who share common linguistic origins with the Strickland-Bosavi peoples but have a Highlands-style production system rather than a hunting-dominated economy), I arrived at similar conclusions as regards both the egalitarian consumption outcome of pork distributions and the largely ideological basis of men's monopoly over distribution as granted by the division of labor. I also emphasized that "at the level of exchange-values men are clearly the appropriators of the prestige and power created by the exchange of pigs" within male-created exchange structures (Modjeska 1982:85; cf. Kelly, p. 88: "Men, as the creators of this structure of exchange, realize the exchange value that is structurally derived"). Kelly emphasizes what he sees as clear-cut theoretical differences between our perspectives, but he neglects fundamental similarities in our analyses.

10. But also, it seems, by virtue of their past role as donors of seminal life force in homosexual relations with boys and young men.

11. No specific evidence is adduced by Kelly to suggest that sex-age categories are understood by the Etoro to occupy specific positions in a hierarchy of virtue. It emerges elsewhere in the text that a woman must be accused of witchcraft before she can be divorced, so it is also misleading to argue that the low moral standing of divorcées derives from their cosmological status qua divorcées.

12. Kelly points out that reaccusing a previously accused witch is usually the least divisive course of action for a longhouse group.

13. In his study of "sorcery" accusations and killings among the Gebusi (some twenty kilometers to the west of the Etoro), Knauft writes that the "unwillingness of kin groups to protect their members has perpetuated a pattern which has been . . . against each clan's—indeed against the entire society's—self-interest" (1985:355). This seems particularly perceptive when one considers in comparison the importance of clan/lineage solidarity in the face of violence in Highlands societies (see, e.g., Sillitoe 1980). But there's a catch: the Strickland-Bosavi "unwillingness of kin groups to protect their members" goes together with a normative residence pattern of dispersed lineages and coresiding affines. If men were to defend their lineage kin against attack, the solidarity of the longhouse group would be destroyed. Conversely, a lineage-based, more-or-less monocarpellary, Highlands pattern of residence would seem a prerequisite for a brothers-before-affines, Highlands-type social consciousness. Presumably because he is concerned with the analysis of inequality rather than witchcraft per se, Kelly does not mention Knauft's interpretation. Nor, for that matter, is he concerned with the broader consequences of the Strick-

land-Bosavi witchcraft/sorcery complex, which (as Knauft suggests) was apparently accelerating a population "implosion" towards extinction among the smaller tribes of the region immediately prior to colonial intervention.

14. Women can have a degree of prestige too. Senior women freely contribute to longhouse discussions and sometimes take prestigious roles in dancing. But women are "ineligible for the statuses that concretize prestige attainment" (p. 14); that is, they can become neither *tafidilo*s nor shamans.

15. Why don't women use their valuables as men do? Kelly does not provide any insight into what women (or men, for that matter) might say about this, but given his argument that an ideological hegemony prevails, one must suppose that the idea of women using valuables to build social relationships and prestige would be unthinkable for both sexes.

16. The contrast with the Highlands big-man system, where prestige hinges largely on skill in transacting pigs and other wealth, suggests to Kelly that "one of the key features of the evolution of social inequality turns on the development of an engagement between the prestige/stigma system and the economic system in which relations of production are instrumental to the attainment of prestige" (p. 412). Although Kelly does not suggest how this might have come about, my proposal has been that the basis for the engagement lay in the development of pig production based on intensive sweet potato foddering, thereby permitting women's previously underutilized labor to be harnessed for the production of male-controlled wealth.

17. Following Sahlins, Kelly initially defines "simple societies" as those in which age, gender, and personal characteristics provide the bases for social differentiation (p. 3). But elsewhere he contextualizes the category as the equivalent of Collier's "brideservice societies" (e.g., pp. 2, 473). Brideservice societies, however, are contrasted with "bridewealth societies" as subtypes of simple societies in Collier's typology. On the basis of his initial definition, bridewealth societies are also simple societies, yet Kelly implicitly excludes them from this status. This is further complicated by his classification of the Etoro as a "brideservice society," even though (as he points out) they do not follow brideservice practices and do have bridewealth.

Kelly subsequently redefines simple societies as those in which the labor of others cannot be readily turned to the pursuit of prestige and in which "control over metaphysics is the central mechanism" by which elites reproduce their positions (p. 516). In practice this limits the category to those societies of hunter-gatherers and hunter-horticulturalists where individual rather than collective hunting predominates. I would add that identifying a societal type on this basis is entirely consistent with a Marxist approach: technological limitations in the forces of production (the absence of means of concentrating women's labor in the production of game and pigs) necessitate, in the absence of other arrangements, that prestige be the reward of productivity in hunting. Prestige inequalities associated with secular leadership are thus a function of the (lower communist) mode of production: "to each according to his contribution." Control over metaphysics as the ultimate determinant of inequality among the Etoro is, however, only negatively determined by the limiting conditions of the productive forces. That is to say, mediums, séances, spirits, witches, witchcraft accusations, executions, and compensation payments are in large part the products of a semiautonomous ideological structure operating in tandem with, but not functionally necessary to, the continued operation of the subsistence mode. This struc-

ture is basically an imaginary, spiritual economy that, although entirely real from the Etoro point of view, is the basis for "false" relations of production and their consequent inequalities from the Marxist viewpoint.

18. Kelly (p. 521, quoting Modjeska 1982:51) misreads my remark that "the relations of production are relations of kinship" as an assertion that kinship generates relations of production, thereby aligning my position with Collier's. My position was (and is) that the relations of production in these societies are defined by the conjunction of the division of labor with the relations of kinship.

19. It is noticeable in these passages that "centrality" replaces Kelly's earlier formulations in terms of generative causality. From a Marxist perspective, apart from Kelly's initial pretense that the cosmological system has an autonomous existence, there seems little to choose between his notion of "centrality" and a Gramscian understanding of ideology as providing the grounds for action orientations, appropriate attitudes, and social cohesion. Neither conceptualization sits very well with the original base-superstructure spatial metaphor, of course, but even classical Marxism insisted on "reciprocal influence."

20. To clarify, although the Baruya live in the Eastern Highlands, they are not "Highlanders" in terms of their linguistic/cultural affiliations, nor in terms of subsistence and economic regimes.

21. Knauft, however, has argued that the underlying motive for witchcraft accusations among the Gebusi arises from imbalances between lineages in marriage exchanges. Although Kelly affirms that lineages are the real units of Etoro social accounting (p. 467), he doesn't consider whether Knauft's interpretation might also fit the Etoro case.

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