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What Gifts Engender is of the very highest quality, taking its place immediately with the best ethnographies on Highlands New Guinea, a region which has seen a flood of writings since the 1950s. It is not only that in passage after passage Lederman refines and deepens detailed points of analysis about the Mendi people themselves, but also the way in which she has conceptualized her topic is capable of illuminating other studies carried out in the region and of suggesting further avenues for research to be done. The two innovative foci that she has brought to bear are (1) a consideration of network relationships as well as intergroup relations and (2) a stress on the active participation of women as actors in the society. The two foci are connected, because it is precisely in the sphere of networks that women's active roles are most clearly treated. Further, unlike some authors who tend to line up in favor of *either* group-oriented *or* individual-oriented studies, Lederman is concerned to show the dialectical relationships that come into play between network and group, or *twem* and *sem* in Mendi terms. Here then is a study that not only exhibits masterly ethnographic detail, but also integrates this firmly within an innovative and refreshing overall perspective.

I select the following matters for more extended discussion: (1) Lederman's comparisons of Mendi with other Highlands peoples, (2) her

examination of the dialectics of social life, (3) her presentation of women's roles, and (4) her perspectives on historical change and development.

The Mendi and Others

Earlier work on the Highlands has pointed to broad similarities and differences in social practices among societies, particularly with respect to group membership and ceremonial exchange. By and large, Lederman's work confirms the patterns earlier recognized, but she makes some important corrections. One axis of her comparisons is north/south, and here she finds two main differences between the Mendi and the Mae Enga and Melpa to their north. In the latter two societies, she suggests, there is a greater stress on corporate political action. The leaders or big-men are more prominent in exchanges, and individual exchange networks are portrayed as directed towards group events. For Mendi, by contrast, there is less corporate action, big-men have less power, and networks are important independently of group events. This contrast appears to dovetail with the second difference, namely, that in Mendi women are more active exchangers in their own rights than in Mae or Melpa.

Although these overall patterns are probably correctly perceived, some cautionary points should be added. First, Daryl Feil, working with the Tombema Enga, who are closely related to the Mae, has argued strongly that women are also important in the Enga tee exchange system. Second, with regard to the Melpa, historical period has to be considered. While at certain phases big-men held considerable control over interclan exchanges, it is not the case that ordinary men only contribute to the big-men's performances, nor do I think that the published ethnography, taken as a whole, suggests this. Rather, it depends on the category of exchange event and its relationship to warfare and intergroup relations. Women, also, over time have gradually come to have greater say in exchanges, partly through the introduction of money in replacement of pearlshells. The old producer/transactor distinction, which in any case was partly a male folk-model, has therefore been weakened. Third, the Melpa ethnography may unwittingly, through its concentration on group events, have given the impression that network is subordinated to group, as Meggitt explicitly states is so for the Mae. In fact, however, matters are not so simple. The very image of "ropes of *moka* entangled on people's skins" that I used in my book on Hagen exchanges indicates the possibility of conflicting alle-

giances and it is these that in fact often hold up exchange events, as also happens in Mendi.

The other "others" who have to be considered are the Wola, who live south of the Mendi. Lederman accepts that these people show a further dissolution of corporate into network activity in exchange by comparison with the Mendi, but I am unclear why this should be so. It is also puzzling that in Sillitoe's account of the Wola, women are granted almost no independent exchange role at all, a finding that sits very uneasily with Lederman's discovery of the correlation between networks and women's active roles in Mendi. Unless good sociological explanations can be suggested for these differences, we may rather be inclined to suggest that Sillitoe missed this part of the data among the Wola, particularly as he also lends himself to the producer/transactor contrast as an explanatory tool in his writings.

Dialectics

Twem and *sem* are not just separate spheres of activity in Mendi. They are interlocking ways of defining human identity. "To exchange is to be human" seems to be a Mendi motto, one that also applies widely in New Guinea as a whole. What gifts engender, then, is precisely that human identity that is expressed through sociality. Persons and things are not only symbolically interchangeable, as Mauss pointed out long ago, but people are produced by, and produce, themselves in material exchanges. Both *twem* and *sem* exchanges do this, and women as such must exchange in order to achieve identity, even though a hierarchy is situationally created by excluding them from formal participation as leading actors in *sem* activities. We may wonder whether when the two spheres conflict it is women who pursue *twem* interests, or persuade their kinfolk to do so, just as men try to stress *sem.* If so, this must lead to conflict and some antagonism between the sexes, a theme not greatly stressed by Lederman.

A second point here is that the dynamics of "incremental giving" in Mendi are closely linked to the *twem* nexus. Men are obliged to make "excess" returns on gifts to their wives' relatives; to finance these they can claim extra credit from their sister's husbands. Again, one wonders about defaulting and conflict here. Since in Mendi "increment" is strongly linked with this affinal nexus, this rule gives the Mendi players less "financial freedom" than their Hagen counterparts and is perhaps a developmental constraint on the system overall. Lederman is quite right to point out that the Mendi system falls outside of my (now twenty-year-old) distinction between pig festivals founded on production and

live-pig exchanges founded on finance, because the Mendi pig festival also depends on finance (and entails the exchange interplay of pigs and shells). In the "rules of increment," however, we may find a means of differentiating between systems in a more refined way.

Women's Roles

In a book that is excellent in many spheres, the discussion of women's roles is perhaps its best and most innovative contribution. Since the early work by Ryan, it had been noted that in southern Highlands societies a woman's position in the exchange system begins already with her at least partial control over some items in her bride-wealth payment. Lederman shows how this role is then extended into *twem* partnerships over time. It would be interesting to know whether women's roles in *twem* also give them some say in other spheres, for example, in disputes, in land allocation and use (for pig production), and nowadays in the disposal of cash gained from the sale of coffee beans. Data on these matters would enable us to pursue comparisons with other Highlands cases (e.g., the Wok Meri movement in the eastern Highlands, women's associations in the western Highlands) and to shape a new regional ethnography of women.

Historical Change and Development

Lederman's detailed consideration of historical change and development comes only in her last chapter. In earlier chapters she makes interesting references to themes such as the historical advent and circulation of the Timp cult into Mendi but does not pursue these in depth. In the last chapter she notes that, as in her synchronic work, her approach to diachronic events would be to stress human agency and identity rather than impersonal processes of evolution. (It is interesting to contrast this with Feil's approach, which is explicitly to delineate evolutionary patterns in the Highlands region.) Her way of writing here is also Maussian. There is an implicit opposition to the inroads of capitalism in her text and some good turns of phrase, for example, "By means of syncretic . . . innovations like the incorporation of money into gift exchange, the Mendi are--consciously or not--putting their own forms of sociality at risk' (p. 228). The final, significant, sentence in the book says the same thing, and the reader is left wondering, appetite whetted for more. Indeed, it is studies that explore the ambiguities that arise out of innovation and how these remold cultural categories and political practices over time that we particularly need for the future of New

Guinea ethnography. Every good book carries some indication of another good book that could be born from it. This applies well to the present work, and its sequel might be entitled "What Money Engenders."