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In his regional synthesis on south coast New Guinea cultures, Bruce Knauft successfully addresses no less than three anthropological domains. First, drawing on a myriad of papers and on the dense and magnificent monographs dealing with the region, he documents and synthesizes the past sociocultural organization of seven language-culture areas that cascade down from the Asmat country (in present-day Irian Jaya) to the Purari delta (Papua New Guinea). He then proposes a global interpretation and characterization of the similarities and diversity of these societies, based on a theoretical perspective that stresses the "core dialectic . . . constituted by the recursive qualitative impact that symbolic and existential dimensions of social action exert on each other over time" (p. 15). Lastly, he debates at length the theoretical and methodological pitfalls of regional comparativism and how to escape them. Any one of these would already make the book well worth reading. Jubilant agreement alternating with strong disapproval guarantees to mobilize similar energy and interest in the reader. But the skill and clarity with which the author constantly combines these diverse points of view is the amazing feat.

Summarizing dozens of reports, papers, and books devoted to the south coast in a few easily readable pages on each of the seven language-culture areas reviewed is admirable for the erudition, accuracy, and pertinence involved. Not only is there a thick pile of literature on south coast New Guinea societies, but information on one particular group is often scattered in several publications. Furthermore, as Knauft recalls in the excellent chapter devoted to the historical setting of these societies and their study, although one is struck by the richness of the pre-World War II descriptions of

rituals, exchanges, and warfare patterns that had already almost disappeared sixty years ago, the first ethnographers of the region were not particularly interested in some of the topics Melanesianist ethnology has dealt with more recently. Consequently, establishing what is now basic information on leadership, exchange, or gender often involves a treasure-huntlike approach, in which Knauft shows great expertise. He also generally indicates the precise reference that supplies a key detail as well as missing information. The picture he draws is highly reliable, and those who have spent a few months with the literature in question will appreciate the sheer amount of work involved in this "mere" presentation of the south coast cultures.

The core of the book is devoted to the exposition and step-by-step demonstration of the authors theoretical position. Knauft assumes that, among south coast societies, the cosmological beliefs linking the cultural creation of fertility and the circulation of life-force with ritual sexuality and head-hunting were in various kinds of correspondence with residential patterns, political organization, and forms of social inequality. Such particular aspects of a group's "sociomaterial life" had a dynamic influence on its sociopolitical and/or demographic patterns, which in turn acted on "cultural motivations." The Marind-anim, whose cosmological beliefs and ritual life have been described at length by van Baal, in his *Dema* (1966), and among whom the relations between myth, ritual, and demography have already been stressed by Ernst (1979), provide the main illustration of this dual relationship. On the one hand, their mythology and practices focused on the rejuvenation of the *dema* spiritual beings and their fertility cult involved intense heterosexual rituals and head-hunting. On the other hand, their "hypersexuality" and notably the frequent *otiv-bombari* rituals during which a few women often copulated with many men in succession, resulted in a high rate of female infertility due to vaginal infections. As Knauft puts it, "Marind ritual heterosexuality was caught in a vicious circle with the very feature it was most explicitly designed to cure, that is, infertility" (pp. 164-165). As a result, "Marind elaborated ever-intensifying beliefs and practices linking hypersexuality with headhunting and culturally-engendered reproduction" (p. 168). At the same time, the internal depopulation was balanced by the taking of heads and living children from non-Marind groups (heads being necessary to the naming of children in view of their social incorporation in a Marind group).

Knauft next turns to demonstrating that this clear-cut and convincing case of a "reinforcing spiral among cultural, sociological, and demographic processes" (p. 169) is only one possible permutation of a more general configuration of reciprocal relations between sociocultural representations of fertility and the institutions and practices that they underpin and into which

they materialize. For this purpose, for each of the six other south coast New Guinea language-culture groups, he analyzes and characterizes (1) their views and practices regarding "fertility," (2) the "concomitant" residential and politicoeconomic patterns, and (3) the kinds of internal development resulting from the coexistence of these two domains. These characterizations take the form of short, sharp formulae. For instance, in the Purari delta, "fertility emphasized *coalescence of spiritual force* in clan spirit incarnation . . . , in persons of rank, and in large men's houses. The political correlate of this fertility emphasis was *centralized competition* in warfare between extremely large but widely dispersed Purari villages" (pp. 176-177; Knauft's emphasis). Or, "Kolopom fertility emphasized *antagonistic polarization* in nested dual organization, restrictively controlled sexual exchanges, sexual antagonism, and food-giving competition. . . . As a political and economic corollary, one finds *invidious intra-village opposition* in Kolopom residential structure, prestations, sorcery, and killing" (pp. 183-184; Knauft's emphasis). These résumés, synthesizing Knauft's own analyses, raise three sets of questions. Is the characterization of each society accurate? Do these characterizations call upon the same phenomena? And do they illustrate the process that Knauft wants to demonstrate?

The description of each group proves to be extremely precise, which is no surprise in view of the author's impressive knowledge about the area. Having spent far less time than he in the company of this literature, I shall merely venture the comment that one would sometimes like to know more about the interpretative choices he has made, in light of the uncertainty of the available data on certain domains. Trans-Fly people, for instance, are said to have "failed to develop a strong fighting ethic or alliance structure, preferring to derive their social prestige from thousands of small yams" (p. 188). It is perfectly true that, according to Williams himself, these people were "less often aggressors than victims" (1936:262). But there were also those known to practice in various circumstances what this great ethnographer called "head-challenge"--that is, challenging an offender to prove he was as able a head-hunter as the offended (Williams 1936:117, 162, 286). One may wonder if people for whom "Match that head!" is one possible answer to social conflicts are accurately characterized as lacking a fighting ethic, or at least, how much their "preference" for competitive exchanges rather that fighting weighed in their "relative defenselessness . . . to ethnic encroachment" (p. 207).

The Kiwai case offers another example of the difficulty of retaining particular aspects of a social organization for comparative purpose, while at the same time key ethnographic details are missing. Knauft very cogently characterizes Kiwai fertility beliefs and ritual as emphasizing "*temporary cele-*

bratory union of groups" and underlines the "concomitant . . . *pulsating aggregation* of Kiwai population for collective activities, visiting and trading, headhunting raids, and attending feasts and ceremonies" (p. 200; Knauft's emphasis). But when he comes to explain the (otherwise well documented) dispersal and shifting alliances of the Kiwai, he puts forward a "large-scale social repulsion" grounded in the very events that brought people together. However--and insofar as I have not overlooked some important piece of information in Landtman's book (1927) --only the *gaera* feasts seem to have been an occasion to bring people together for a common fertility purpose and, at the same time, to compete in food giving. If I am right, then, either a general statement about the "political rivalry of feast-giving" or interpreting "the widespread dispersal of the Kiwai" as "the unintended fallout of celebratory union" (p. 200) implies that all fertility cults had such a competitive dimension, which Landtman does not specify. Or, as Knauft advances, one must consider that the main fertility cults "overlapped or were coincident with large feasts such as the *gaera*" (p. 200). However, the references to Landtman's work mentioned by Knauft (p. 250n. 22) merely indicate that several cult performances included the same kind of preparation (notably games) or initiatory rites as the *gaera,* but this does not imply that all cult performances and feasts had a competitive dimension. Consequently, and again if I am not wrong, the general competitiveness of all "large-scale aggregation" would remain to be demonstrated, which may weaken Knauft's hypothesis that the internal dynamic of the Kiwai groups was the indirect result of fertility-oriented rituals, which provided "the seeds of their active dispersal" (p. 200).

These are probably marginal remarks that do not do much to change the strength of Knauft's general appreciation of each south coast New Guinea culture. Nevertheless, more details would be welcome on, for instance, why the fighting ethos of the Purari could pertinently be seen as *relatively* less developed than that of neighboring groups, or why the Kiwai's competitiveness in collective events should take priority over their collective partaking in fertility rituals, in other instances. For lack of such information, some of Knauft's characterizations of the south coast cultures are less convincing than others, notwithstanding the remarkable care with which he generally documents and establishes their salient features.

Alternatively, there is no doubt about the general assumption that south coast societies illustrate a particular set of "symbolic and sociopolitical permutations." Furthermore, whoever is familiar with these cultures as a whole will certainly agree that these permutations definitely have something to do with "the pragmatics of fertility cultism" (p. 173). In the present case, it would be helpful to determine what sociocultural elements are involved in

these permutations, and then to specify and, if possible, understand what common process or social logic underlies each local configuration.

Knauft's study deals with only part--although a very important part--of such a program. He first demonstrates that social representations (my term) of fertility and the cultism they underpin are a key factor of sociocultural differentiation among these societies. Conversely, he shows that the political, residential, demographic, and other patterns that locally "correspond" to particular kinds of emphasis on fertility also react in some way on the symbolic dimension of fertility cultism (e.g., pp. 134-135). He also quite rightly stresses that these two sets of relations are "mutually contingent" (p. 225): the relationship between "symbolic orientations" and "existential constraints and opportunities . . . is systematic over time but cannot be predicted by considering either of them separately" (p. 225). Lastly, Knauft highlights the internal dynamic or "developmental" dimension of fertility cultism and its sociocultural correlates on the south coast, even though some of his cases are more convincing than others. More generally, the entire book provides a perfect illustration of the too often ignored phenomenon of "spiralling elaboration" of cultural organization or of the "reinforcing" of social processes (e.g., pp. 135, 220). These are all-important and to a large extent fairly well established results. In particular, Knauft not only postulates and explores a useful bridge between "symbolic" and "material" or "existential" dimensions of social life (which is not so common nowadays), but he also proposes crucial hypotheses about examples of the mutual relationship involved.

Nevertheless, although it is highly plausible that "the process of generative development has been similar in each case" (p. 16; also p. 209), Knauft does not provide details on this co-elaboration of the symbolic and existential dimensions of reality in south coast New Guinea societies. What the book gives is a clear idea of what *type* of social relations, institutions, and representations participate in this process. Furthermore, it paves the way for further research by outlining key social domains in which permutations and various dynamic processes need to be understood. We are convinced that a number of questions are involved here, such as: Where and with whom do people go head-hunting? Which social units co-celebrate successful raiding or fertility rituals? There are also questions concerning the politicodemographic consequences (expansion, polarization, realignment, and so forth) of obtaining life-power by killing "others" in accordance with specific cosmological beliefs. By designating the "strong and complementary linkage between celebratory creation of life-force through ritual sexuality and violent taking of life-force through headhunting" as a crucial aspect of fertility (p. 216), Knauft's comparison puts forward an important result that may even characterize south coast New Guinea as a cultural region, albeit at a

fairly general level. But at the same time, he shows that this particular emphasis on fertility was in *various* relations with sociopolitical practices and institutions. Even the elements that were associated primarily with fertility cultism were sometimes quite different (e.g., pp. 206-207, 220). Of the process itself, by which "a *distinctive* pattern of symbolic-existential interface resulted [from the actualization of symbolic impetus] in each of the seven south coast language-culture areas" (p. 172; my emphasis), we do not know a lot (if anthropology can even hope to come to grips with such a question). In other words, what Knauft demonstrates to be similar in each group is a general, highly complex but rather unpredictable two-way dynamic relationship between cosmological beliefs, fertility rituals, and the sociopolitical sphere (pp. 216-217). But he does not point to, or characterize, a *particular setting of social relations and institutions* that might correspond to the south coast fertility emphasis and that would be common to all south coast groups and therefore distinguish them from other New Guinea culture areas. I shall come back to this shortly.

Besides demonstrating that a major involvement of fertility beliefs and rituals can be read in the diversity and, often, transformation of the sociopolitical forms in south coast New Guinea, Knauft's book is a dense essay on comparative anthropology. The main interest of this component is first and foremost the very way Knauft has built his demonstration of the central and dialectical implication of a particular set of beliefs and rituals associated with south coast social organizations, even though it is not 100 percent conclusive. His attempt to set his research in a more general theoretical framework is less convincing, although he would probably argue that he is the only one who knows what his research owes to others' theories. Let us simply say that his numerous (probably too numerous) theoretical references are not equally pertinent. For instance, there is no real point of appealing to postmodern feminism to come to the conclusion that ritual *hetero*sexuality was a prominent feature in south coast New Guinea, nor to pretend that whoever has "missed" these rituals in the available ethnography was misled by the theories of the time (pp. 8-10). On the other hand, what does need explaining is why anthropologists can write about an area without having so much as glanced at its ethnography, for no one can "miss" these rituals once they have opened the books on the area. In a word, Knauft's ethnographic study speaks for itself, and his step-by-step comparison of seven south coast societies, his systematic exploration of his own and others' hypotheses, his relentless search for counterexamples, and, of course, his own theory on the necessity of simultaneously analyzing "symbolic" and "hard-world" realities are real advances and bases for future research. But, for a large part, his the-

oretical references sound rather academic or pay a nonpertinent respect to particular theories of the day

The same is certainly not true of the strong critical review of several recent comparative studies on New Guinea, which he rightly goes through in his systematic quest for the most appropriate means of documenting "the richness and diversity of alternative cultural formation and . . . the operation of social inequality and domination" (pp. 129-130)--by the way, two highly recommendable although not exhaustive goals of ethnographic comparison. He notably and again rightly shows that generalizations about "homosexual societies" or hasty correlations between fertility rituals and particular sociological features are unfounded. In so doing, he shows an impressive ability to unearth counterexamples and illustrates how difficult it is to make solid generalizations in comparative anthropology. Knauft's association of minute analysis and erudition makes this critique an extremely important piece of work that any further research on ritual sexuality or on possible factors related to female status in New Guinea in general will have to reckon with.

I shall now turn to my main disagreement with his book, which concerns Knauft's evaluation and dismissal as a comparative tool of the "big-man"/ "great-man" opposition, developed and discussed by Godelier and others (Godelier 1986; Godelier and M. Strathern 1991).

This might look like just one more critique of this model, on which I am merely commenting in the name of my previous (and continuing) support of it (Lemonnier 1990, 1991). But my point goes far beyond that. I argue that, contrary to Knauft's claims, reference to such a "typology" can be particularly effective in revealing several *general* social logics specific to the south coast--that is, in obtaining a kind of result that his own otherwise excellent study fails to bring out. Needless to say, my general feeling is that the two approaches are definitely complementary.

I shall start by commenting rapidly on two criticisms he makes on the general plausibility of the big-man/great-man model itself. First, although it was necessary to mention the important questions raised by the variation in the findings of ethnographic comparison according to the scale of the geographic area, there was no reason to link these remarks with the implicit affirmation that the author or users of the big-man/great-man model claim that the opposition between the two types of leadership exhausts the entire range of sociopolitical organizations found in Melanesia (pp. 118, 120-123). This would clearly imply that the advocates of the big-man/great-man model have never heard of ranks and chiefs in the region. In passing, the question addressed by this kind of model is not principally that of characterizing regional social systems, nor even of assessing the geographic scope of

the model's pertinence, but that of *contrasting social logics.* A regional basis only means that the societies at hand may share a common sociocultural past or have developed similar means of dealing with their environment. In turn, this may narrow the range of factors behind the differences to be accounted for when stressing intraregional variations.

His second criticism is more serious, though less straightforward. It concerns the idea that one of the protagonists of the model--the big-man--might be pure invention, and that "many Melanesianists could now consider 'Big Manship' to be (in significant part) a chimerical rendering of indigenous leadership" (p. 120). A consequence of this proposition is, of course, that if big-men and the social organizations they are supposed to characterize are a chimera, then there is no more big-man/great-man model. However, whereas Melanesianists do agree that "the classic Big Man emphasis on complex and competitive material exchange was intensified . . . by Western influence in the course of colonial pacification" (p. 120), I do not think one can even envisage that big-man sociopolitical systems were "enabled" by it. To take note of the "de-throning of the Big Man as *the* typical indigenous Melanesian leader" does not imply that "Big Manship," as a particular kind of social organization, did not exist before the Europeans arrived in the highlands (p. 120; my emphasis). First contact in Mount Hagen, for instance, is dated April 1933, and the first ethnographic accounts of big-men and competitive exchanges for this area are those of Vicedom, who settled there in 1934, and Strauss, who arrived in Hagen in 1936 (Stürzenhofecker 1990). To be sure, these observers were missionaries and not trained anthropologists. But is that reason enough to skip over A. Strathern's own ethnography (including his criticism of earlier descriptions) and imply that the entire set of social logics he has analyzed at length and modeled are "chimeral" (Strathern 1969, 1971, 1978)? I do not think so.

Knauft's most substantial argument against the big-man/great-man model concerns the latter's alleged nonpertinence for the study of the south coast societies *stricto sensu.* He rightly observes that features generally associated with big-man *or* great-man societies are to be found *together* in the south coast area (pp. 79-83). For instance, bride-wealth and sister-exchange, homicide compensation and blood feuds, or several bases for leadership (wealth, spiritual prerogative, coercion) sometimes coexist in *one* society. In particular--if I may quote myself [1]--south coast New Guinea societies definitely showed coexistence of warfare, initiations, *and* intergroup exchanges as dominant collective enterprises (Lemonnier 1992:39). At this stage, two conclusions are possible. One may consider, as Knauft does, that the south coast groups appear as an intermediary case of big-man (and/or great-man) societies, which makes the very contrast between these two

types of leadership (and related social organizations) highly questionable and therefore useless in characterizing south coast societies. In particular, this is a logical decision if big-men and great-men are wrongly supposed to be the *only two* forms of leadership in New Guinea. With such a presupposition, south coast New Guinea can only appear as a region that contains many of those intermediate cases and counterexamples before which "the Great Man versus Big Man dichotomy squirm[s] if not dissolves" (p. 119).

An alternative position is to remember that the big-man/great-man opposition is built not so much on the presence or absence of particular sociocultural features as on the way their *relations* constitute particular *social logics.* In effect, it is less the presence of a given aspect of social organization that is important than its possible involvement in social relations and practices, and notably of its participation in social practices that *reinforce each other* (to use a notion that Knauft has remarkably illustrated in his own analysis and that nicely summarizes the kind of phenomenon at hand in a social logic).

By social logic, I mean what appears to the analyst as a functional or symbolic outcome of a particular set of social relations, behaviors, and representations that are interconnected, derived from one another, or at least compatible. In big-men societies, for instance, the exchanges linked with marriage; homicide compensation, and intra- and intergroup competition put into play the same kind of wealth items, among which pigs and shells have a prominent role. [2] Furthermore, the people involved in these various exchanges--maternals and affines--are often the same. Their participation in the preparation of these exchanges or that of the competition itself is another social characteristic of big-men systems. Similarly, personal relations of dependence or cooperation materialize primarily in gardening and pig raising, two activities at the heart of the "finance" process (Strathern 1969, 1978). Finally, marriage, politics, and intergroup relations imply a set of constantly interwoven relations, all of which involve the exchange of pigs, as a token of life, and shells, as a key medium and event of social life.

It is noteworthy that, if models are prone to be "compromised by considering smaller-scale ranges of variation *within* each individual area or type" (p. 118), this compromising is also the best way to improve them, to refine them by bringing out the key features and relationships that make up the core of a particular social logic. For instance, recent research on southern Anga groups, where bride-wealth is the marriage rule although the general social organization is definitely great-manlike, has shown that the opposition bride-wealth/sister-exchange has probably less radical consequences than previously suggested by Godelier (Lemonnier n.d.; see also Whitehouse 1992). But the fact remains that the political domain (leadership, male dom-

ination, authority of the older initiates), the basis and reproduction of male/female relations, the overwhelming place of warfare and male initiations as collective enterprise are nevertheless associated in a core of interlocking relationships--that is, a social logic. And this social logic contrasts sharply with that of big-man systems. Anga groups do show important differences among themselves (notably in marriage practices, but also in the patterns of male initiations, cooperation, residence [Bonnemère 1996]), but this core of interlocking social relations is common to all Anga groups and makes them great-man societies. Similarly, whatever important differences can be observed within big-man societies, there exists a nucleus of mutually linked social relations or institutions (namely, the existence of a unique sphere of exchange, the "finance" process, etc.) that characterizes a particular type of socioeconomic organization, the logic of which can be opposed to that of great-man societies.

For lack of other models bringing into play such a wide range of sociological domains (exchanges, initiations, male/female relationships, war and peace, agriculture and pig raising, etc.), the big-man/great-man contrasts can help in the understanding of both intermediary cases [3] or of obviously non-big-man or non-great-man societies. With such a view in mind, rather than pronounce the big-man/great-man contrast useless, one may try to use it to analyze the mutual relations in which various sociological features observed in south coast New Guinea are or are *not* involved. In the present case, the contrast between the intergroup exchanges in south coast and in big-man societies is illuminating.

As underlined by Strathern (1978), Modjeska (1982), and Godelier (1982), and mentioned above, one key feature of exchanges in the world of big-men is the use of the *same* kinds of items, pigs (or pork) and shells, in a *multitude* of social relations (marriage, homicide compensation, peace, economic competition, etc.). Alternatively, what is striking in south coast New Guinea is that, although societies there did utilize wealth to pay compensation, raise and circulate pigs, and practice competitive exchanges, none of these terms (or domains) was ever overtly paired in any way (details in Lemonnier 1993:135-142). In particular: (1) although large-scale ceremonial exchanges did play an explicit role as an economic alternative to warfare, these ceremonial exchanges were clearly distinct from peace ceremonies; (2) competitive exchanges involved only vegetal products, with the exception of other kinds of wealth, notably pigs; (3) pigs were also notably absent from the wealth items used to compensate for lives lost in combat; and (4) wealth items played only an indirect role in marriage, and pigs were only marginal there (Lemonnier 1992:46). In short, it is precisely the absence of a key aspect of big-man systems that appears as a general feature of south

coast social organizations, that is, the systematic absence of relationship between various spheres of exchange. In other words, whereas several features that are particularly developed in big-man systems are to be found in south coast societies, and notably the existence of particular exchanges (homicide compensation, competitive exchanges, and so forth), these features are not involved in the kind of "spiraling reinforcing" of wealth exchanges that characterize the big-man systems and are the basis of the "finance" process on which the big-man built his political status. As one can see, the big-man may be a reified type of leader, a chimera, but the particularities of the exchanges he organizes can be usefully contrasted with those of the south coast in order to reveal two important and general social characteristics of the region: a systematic separation of various types of exchanges, emphasized by the use of different types of items in different exchanges and circumstances, and by the nonlinking of these events to each other; and the concomitant absence of a basis for a "finance" process that, in turn, is coherent with the absence of big-manlike leaders.

Now, in the light of this comparison, the next question that comes to mind is that of the striking absence of the pig in exchanges. [4] Whereas big-man societies (and most highlands peoples) use the domesticated pig as a substitute for the human person (notably in marriage and homicide compensation), the groups of the south coast do not. Another domain where highland and south coast societies make a radically different "use" of pigs is the cultural reproduction of fertility. I need not go over the crucial links among fertility, head-hunting, and ritual heterosexuality, which Knauft has explored in depth. I shall simply add that, contrary to highlands groups where the pig's blood and grease are more than often involved in the rejuvenation of the fertility of the gardens, the abundance of the pig herds, or the health and growth of humans (Lemonnier 1990), [5] the domestic pig plays no such role on the south coast.

Marriage is another domain in which the social organizations of the south coast peoples prove to be an interesting "intermediary" case with respect to the big-man/great-man contrast, which emphasizes the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the use of wealth in marriage exchanges. Several south coast groups make remarkable *indirect* use of wealth in marriage, that is, "buying a sister" in view of sister-exchange, giving wealth to the wife givers as a sort of "security," or giving a compensation in case a marriage agreement is broken (p. 104; references in Lemonnier 1992:40-41). Together with the Purari's gifts of wealth to women as sexual partners in ritual heterosexual intercourse and the involvement of these wealth items in male status, these marriage practices indicate a very particular set of relationships between marriage, sexuality, and wealth in south coast New Guinea. And

comparison with big-man societies again reveals the absence of the pig in this domain.

Since this is a review of Knauft's book, however, I am not going to summarize or carry on my own research. [6] Besides my lack of agreement with Knauft's dismissal of the big-man/great-man model as a possible analytical tool for comparative studies on New Guinea, what I wanted to emphasize here is that, looking *also* at the south coast with the big-man/great-man model in mind rapidly brings up new questions that are directly *complementary* to those raised and studied by Knauft. In particular, the absence of the pig from fertility rituals or from various compensations in which south coast peoples offer women's sexual services might lead to exploring correlations with other particularities of the place of pigs in the region, such as the fact that they are not bred in captivity or the use of wild boars in most ceremonial occurrences and their association with warfare and male initiations (Lemonnier 1992:46-49). This would in turn bolster a somewhat daring hypothesis according to which the role of pigs in compensation might be bound up with the amount of agricultural labor the women invest in the animals and, particularly, in their reproduction (Lemonnier 1992:49-52).

How and how much all that would fit into Knauft's inquiry on the internal dynamic of south coast New Guinea societies or with his tentative hypothesis on gender in the region I just do not know (this would be work for the future).[7] But it might help to understand the diversity of socioeconomic life and forms of social inequality that he regards as two important goals of ethnographic comparison. For we can now posit that, despite the contingency of the actualization of fertility beliefs in particular socioeconomic forms and that of their feedback effect of symbolic forms and notwithstanding the variety of socioeconomic forms encountered, south coast cultures *also* emphasize an original exchange pattern--that is, the crucial separation of the exchanges regarding war and peace, marriage and homicide compensation, economic competition, and the rejuvenation of fertility. Together with this general pattern of exchanges goes an amazing cultural emphasis on the maintaining of a distance between pigs, which are no substitute for the human life, and women, whose sexuality is considered a crucial component of fertility and means of exchange.

Needless to say, my comments are direct proof of and proportional to my respect for and interest in Knauft's book. Whether one considers his theoretical criticisms, his interpretation and presentation of the south coast ethnography, or his hypotheses for understanding its diversity and originality as a region, Knauft's work is profoundly thought provoking. This is a book to be read and reread.

NOTES

1. From here onward, I shall base much of my argument on the near-twin papers I wrote and published at a time when Bruce Knauft was doing his own work on the south coast (Lemonnier 1992, 1993). For those interested, I add that the English version of my study covers a wider range of questions (notably it addresses indirectly the originality of the Baruya case) but is less detailed than the paper in French. Here *is* also a good time to mention that it also contains (at least) one wrong interpretation of Kimam (or Kolopom) competitive exchanges (1993:148) to which Bruce Knauft (pers. com., 1994) has kindly drawn my attention. Like Knauft's study, my own took into account the Asmat, Marind-anim, Kolopom (or Kimam), Kiwai, and Trans-Fly people (or Keraki). Unlike him, I have included the Jaqaj in my own work, but neither the Purari nor the Elema.

2. It should be noted that, contrary to the pig, whose role in different regions of New Guinea has been contrasted, a comparative study of the uses and significance of shells has yet to be done.

3. Peoples of the Eastern Highlands Province, for instance, would be "intermediary" between big-man and great-man social organizations (Lemonnier 1990).

4. This would obviously not be true in the case of the Elema, but they were clearly the least "south coast New Guinea-like" people in the area. They are geographically a south coast people, but they are unfamiliar with head-hunting as well as with ritual sexuality and they practice highlands-like gift exchanges and pig raising (p. 204). This is fairly in line with their probable origins in interior New Guinea (p. 215). Altogether, the Elema are obviously one of these exciting intermediary cases that comparativism has to deal with.

5. Not to mention the use of pigs in "sacrifice," which has yet to be developed following Strauss's analysis of the Hagen people (1962).

6. For lack of time--the study of south coast literature is an endless although fascinating occupation, for each new reading inevitably brings new hypotheses to test--but also because I am rather ignorant of the literature on the Purari, who are probably crucial here, even as one more intermediary case.

7. Jaarsma 1993 should also be consulted.

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