THE EMBODIMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY: "CONFESSION" AND "COMPENSATION" IN MOUNT HAGEN, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

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We discuss two contexts of responsibility for action in Mount Hagen, confession and compensation. Verbal confessions of either wrongdoing or resentment against wrongdoing are important signs of the exercise of agency, but if they are not made, it is expected that sickness will result. "Substance" thus takes over where "agency" fails, and the two are intimately linked. Compensation payments can be seen as nonverbal equivalents of confession or the logical result of it, and if they are not paid, sickness or a failure of wounds to heal is thought to be likely as a result. In contemporary times both confession and compensation have been deflected toward more individuated and commodified forms through the influence of Christianity and monetization of the economy.

THIS ARTICLE EXPLICITLY SEEKS to set out a relationship between practices of "confession" and the payment of compensation, primarily for Mount Hagen society in the Western Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea.

Links between these two topics, confession and compensation, have not been a prominent feature of the literature to date, and discussions of confession itself are not very common (Michael O'Hanlon's valuable treatment of both themes is cited later in this article), although the theme of concealment versus revelation is often alluded to (e.g., Merlan and Rumsey 1991:224–226; Bercovitch 1998). One author who has explicitly made a connection between these topics is Laurence Goldman in his *Talk Never Dies* (1983), a study of the Huli people of the Southern Highlands Province in Papua New Guinea.

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Goldman, working from within Huli linguistic usages, points out very clearly the parallelism set up by the Huli between disputes, breaches of norms in the group, and bodily sickness, and the concomitant idea that compensation has to be paid in order to heal both social and physical wounds. It follows that the body may be its own witness and itself reveal hidden truths. The Huli emphasis on this idea may have muted the significance of verbal confessions or revelations of wrongdoing.

From the Huli example, however, we can suggest a general point that should hold at least in other Highlands New Guinea cases: the payment of compensation for killings, wrongdoings, insults, or physical woundings must depend on a viable attribution of responsibility. In some cases such an attribution will be self-evident; in others it will be problematic. Where it is problematic, a verbal confession may be sought, but if that is impracticable, unlikely, or difficult to obtain, the final "backstop" of any system is likely to be the body itself. Hence a logical relationship always potentially exists between compensation, confession, and sickness. A reexamination of the New Guinea literature in these terms would likely prove to be rewarding but is not undertaken here. Such a reexamination would take into account also the various logics of divination in relation to sorcery and witchcraft, and compensation or revenge issues that flow from such logics. Here we proceed with our more specific examination of changing historical contexts in Hagen.

What Is Evidence?

What constitutes "evidence" for wrongdoing? In the Mount Hagen area of Papua New Guinea, considerable stress is placed on the idea that the investigators of a case should bring accused persons to the point where they themselves declare what they have done. The admission of responsibility is therefore taken as an ultimate form of evidence. It is also evidence of willingness to undertake the steps to put matters to rights, insofar as this is possible. But there is a further point to this drive in investigatory practice. If a confession is not made, either the accused or the investigators can ask that divination take place, and the results of the divination will be expected to appear in a direct, nonverbal embodied form. If the accused lies, he or she will get sick, a child will, or fellow group members will experience sickness and misfortune. For this process to be set in motion, the accused must verbally deny the charge, then undergo the divination or oath-taking. The results are expected to be "written on the body." The body thus becomes a repository of truth beyond words. But it is significant that verbal action has to be involved. These two components, the verbal and the nonverbal, constitute different vital aspects of personhood, involving agency on the one hand and

substance on the other. Responsibility is linked to verbal statements, to acceptance or denial of facts. The body then acts as a passive but powerful register of the consequences of exercising human agency.

The idea of "confession" involved here is one that has, therefore, a deep foundation in Hagen notions of personhood and truth. However, contemporary notions are also inflected by Christian concepts, which have been taken into Hagen repertoires of thinking and blended with ideas concerning the workings of anger and shame, which are also at issue in questions of confession in disputes. An absence of confession leads to sickness by two different pathways: a guilty person's failure to reveal what he or she has done can cause sickness to his or her kin and also to himself or herself; equally, a person who is *popokl,* angry or frustrated, with others may cause sickness to himself or herself by not revealing the source of the frustration. It is this context of ideas about sickness and confession that has been interwoven with Christian ideas to produce a new constellation of practices, while the basic logic remains the same.

Confession logically precedes restitution or the payment of compensation. However, a context of embodiment may act as a "backstop" for evidential proof in a given case, and the act of paying compensation can be regarded as an admission of responsibility. In this article, we look first at "confession" and then at "compensation" as two contexts that exhibit the same principles. Verbal statements, as declaration of agency, reduce ambiguity, but as denials they may be untrue. Nonverbal actions can also constitute statements but can be given variant interpretations, increasing ambiguity. And all of these processes also shift their forms in historical time.

First, however, we need to show empirically that there is a stress on both fact-finding and "confession" in disputes.

Two Cases: "Tell Us What You Did"

We adduce two cases to show the determined lengths to which investigators may go in attempting to make recalcitrant suspects declare their supposed guilt. Both cases are drawn from dispute contexts of the 1980s and have been reported on at greater length elsewhere, but without the emphasis on the points at issue here regarding personhood, agency, and the embodiment of truth (Strathern 1993: chaps. 3 and 4). The cases both also took place within the general ambit of relations between one group of people, the Kawelka, living at Kuk, and their immediate or more distant neighbors. The disputes were heard outside of the formalized context of village courts, where appointed magistrates hear cases in accordance with introduced procedure while following "custom" in whatever way they choose to. The disputes here

were handled in moots, where there was full community presence and the broadest invocation of factors and knowledge. In the second case the body handling the case was a "trouble committee" set up with government sanctions behind it, but the committee members operated along with others and behaved essentially as a form of moot gathering.

Case 1: The Wandering Pig

In the first case, a man was accused of stealing the pig of another man by finding it in a garden space belonging to the pig's owner, tethering it, and then secretly returning to fetch it and take it to his home. K., the accused, agreed he had tethered the pig but denied that he had removed it or that it had gone to his place. The pig's owner, M., pointed out that the footprints of the pig had been recognized, headed in the direction of the accused's house, at the place Kuning.

Investigators strongly suggested this discovery implied K.'s guilt and also hinted that the mere fact that he had tethered the pig made him guilty of an offense anyway. They established that K. had been playing cards in a local men's house up until a certain time on the evening of the supposed theft and that he had left alone and could have collected the pig and taken it home in the dark. One investigator, a relative of K.'s named Ru, noted: "If you thought that the pig was wandering around and you didn't know who its owner was, then say so. . . . You are not a small boy that we can force you to reveal the truth." A local magistrate weighed in as a bystander, saying that the disputants were both leaders and the facts should be revealed quickly. The owner, M., said K. should reveal whether he took the pig in anger, for some particular reason. Another magistrate grew sarcastic: "So, you thought that M. is your brother, so you tied the pig up for him without a thought to steal it. And later the actual thief broke in to the area, found it, and stole it. . . . Someone else stole the pig, and you, an innocent man, are sitting here under the sun." An observer pointed out that if the facts were not revealed, bad feelings would continue. The second magistrate continued with his sarcastic tack: "This pig was in your care, and you might have secretly tipped someone off. Or else maybe the pig itself wanted to get you into trouble, so it followed you into your area." Other observers argued that people should live peacefully together on the land and suggested that K.'s kin would be happy to contribute to pay for the pig's going astray. K., however, adamantly refused to admit any guilt and declared he was prepared to take the matter to an outside court. Faced with his intransigence, the matter was dropped. The pig, meanwhile, reappeared.

All kinds of personal and community pressures were applied to K., but he was not threatened with a divination ordeal, probably because the pig "turned up" in the nick of time.

Case 2: Who Stole the Car?

The second case concerned a violent attack on the leader Ongka by a set of young men of his own group. The young men suspected that Ongka's son Namba had informed on them after they had stolen a car belonging to the local Department of Primary Industry station.

The case fell into two phases. In the first the young men were interrogated about their reasons for launching their attack. Two levels of process were involved. One was to establish that they had in fact stolen the car. The second was to get them to substantiate their claim that Namba had informed on them or to abandon it, leaving them without even a flimsy excuse for making the attack. Their own words in making the attack incriminated them on the first point. On the second, one of them had reported to the others on seeing Namba in conversation with the station boss. Meanwhile the car, like the pig in case 1, had been recovered. Ongka said he knew nothing about the car or where the thieves had hidden it (in the old Kawelka territory, from which they had migrated to Kuk). Namba said he had said nothing to the station boss about the car. An investigator asked if anyone had seen Namba's lips moving to pronounce the term "car" as he spoke to the boss. It was admitted that this was not so.

The inquiry here was minute and exhaustive; its basis was that if the attackers were mistaken in their ideas, they had no excuse whatsoever for their hasty and violent actions. Interestingly, they did not fabricate evidence, nor did anyone think to ask the station boss himself. The focus of the investigation, ostensibly centered on a minor set of facts, was in fact on intergroup relations. The attackers were rendered culpable and threatened with arrest and being taken to court. They and their kin acceded to the payment of compensation (admitting not only the attack, which was evident, but their total culpability), which was followed by the cooking of pigs and a shared feast to restore relations between the group segments involved. The minute attention to facts and the invitation to the attackers to explain why they did it and to admit they were mistaken were both aimed at reaching the possibility of reconciliation. Neither Namba nor the accused was asked to take a divination test. No one was therefore expected to get sick.

Both cases show an impressive forensic and rhetorical ability by investigators, appealing to a wide range of "personhood notions." Neither case pro-

ceeded to the level of invoking the body as a repository of truth, but the stress on achieving reconciliation was in line with doing so, since hostility and anger can always lead to sickness and further trouble.

Forms of Divination: Language and Embodiment

In cases where verbal investigations have not revealed the truth, there can be resort to divinatory practices. As we shall note in the next section, these have now been largely replaced by holding the Bible and swearing by it, but the logic involved is exactly as it was before. This logic reveals a relationship between language, truth, and embodiment.

In the standard form of swearing as a divination, an accused person takes hold of a sacred plant or object associated with the origins of his or her group and makes a declaration of innocence, invoking the power of the object to cause death in the case of lying. It is thus an act of, almost literally, taking one's life into one's hands. The object is the group's *mi,* the source of its life. It is "laid down" from the origin times, when it was first shown or revealed to an ancestor as the means to increase the growth of the group itself. It is that which is permanent, *tei mel,* "laid down" for all time. The ancestor also took possession of it by holding it *(ömböröm),* just as a descendant who swears by it must do. People regard the *mi* with respect and do not lightly undertake to swear by it in this way.

Ongka, in his autobiography, tells of another test that was used in the past. People suspected of killing someone by sorcery were invited to take part in a firethong divination. They would say:

> "I wonder if you'd like to come up to our place for a little ceremony?" The suspect answered directly: "I didn't kill your man, why are you asking me this?" "Oh, we're embarrassed, it's just a little thing like a bird's song or the feces of a spirit, don't worry, it's nothing big. We're eating food together with you, and one of our children has fallen sick, so come up and we'll try the firethong divination."
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> The suspect's people argued about whether to go or not, but eventually they went, preparing themselves for violence. The hosts brought out a hardened firethong and a tinder of *kuklumb* leaves and invited them to try it. At first they declined. At length, a big-man would come forward and say, "If there is trouble, we should not fight or kill in revenge, we have pigs and shells with which to pay compensation. Just try out the firethong."
>
> He made the talk "cool" in this way, and one man came forward

> to use the thong. If he successfully made fire, he went free, for he was accounted innocent. Perhaps he had cooked a pig as a sacrifice for his own ghosts and obtained their support? But if fire would not come or the thong broke, they would exclaim, and set upon him at once. (Strathern 1979:73)

The logic involved here is that the creation of fire is a sign of benign influence and goodwill. The aggrieved spirit of the dead would prevent the fire from coming. A similar ritual is performed at the beginning of a sequence in the Female Spirit cult, when a fire is lit to heat the stones for earth ovens to be used in pork sacrifices. If the fire does not light, the performer of the ritual does not have the right bodily condition, and this can result from dissension within the group involved.

Fire is instrumental in cooking, and the same logic of the "raw" versus the "cooked" is seen in the case of the taro divination, which was performed in the past. Those suspected of thieving or sorcery were asked to select taro corms, which were placed into an oven for baking and later removed. Whoever had a taro that was not properly cooked was held to be guilty. Angry spirits had prevented the corm from cooking so that the guilt was revealed. By the same logic, nowadays rice that has been the object of sorcery is held to be hard to cook properly; it tends to remain "raw." Improperly cooked rice is therefore by definition suspect. In these instances the taro or the rice becomes the vehicle that embodies the true situation, that is, that a declaration of innocence is false. In extreme circumstances the *mi* itself may be burnt by fire. If this is accompanied by an untrue declaration, the one who swears falsely will swiftly die.

The relationship between language and embodiment here is interesting, because the two are conjoined. A verbal statement is tested by an embodied act. As we shall see next for the Melpa, the verbal and the nonverbal form a communicative continuum.

"Confession" and Christianity

"Confession" as used so far in this article is a gloss for the Hagen or Melpa phrase *nemba mot ndui,* "saying, to make evident." Things that are not said but themselves become evident by showing themselves, as sickness shows in the body, are referred to as *mot ninim,* "it speaks *mot.*" What we would call "nonverbal" is thus encompassed by a verb of "verbal" action in Melpa, demonstrating the communicative locus of the verb *ni,* "to say." Things "speak *mot*" when they are not covered up or occluded, as stars that shine when they are not obscured by clouds and are said to be stones: *ku mot ninim,* "a

stone speaks *mot."* The overt onset of an illness does the same: *rukrung pepa ekit omba mot ninim,* "it lives inside and comes out and speaks *mot*/ reveals itself."

The dramaturgical image-schema of concealment versus revelation is one that is basic to contexts both inside and outside of conflict situations. In the Female Spirit cult, dancers mass behind a tall fence and then burst as if newborn into the midst of a huge throng of spectators who have been eagerly awaiting their arrival (Strathern and Stewart 1997). The dancers for a *moka* prestation prepare themselves privately and individually and then mass together to show themselves on a ceremonial ground. *Moka* gifts themselves may be likened to a snake as it appears at the edge of a brushwood covering: its head may be visible, but the length of its body and tail are not. This imagery refers to the time when people are still collecting pigs for the gift and have not yet revealed how many they have. The revelatory pattern involved is that which Roy Rappaport refers to in relation to Maring ritual: it is epideictic and it converts analogical into digital signals (Rappaport 1968). Things that reveal themselves may therefore be good and favorable as well as unfavorable. "Speaking *mot*" is also a strongly performance-oriented term. Things come into existence when they are *shown* to do so, as a matter of clear evidence.

In dispute contexts revelation may come from various agents: from accusers who finally show some piece of evidence they have, from the accused who decide to tell, from witnesses, or from spiritual powers whose presence has been invoked or whose evaluation has been elicited. In all of these contexts revelation means resolution of the issues at hand and the possibility to move to a phase of settlement in the discussions. Also, revelation may in turn mean that an unpleasant consequence can be averted. For example, if a person accused of stealing a pig stubbornly denies the imputation, the aggrieved and suspicious accuser may take a clandestine reprisal and secretly steal a pig of the accused, provoking an escalation of conflict between them, since the accused guesses from the timing what has happened. Or if a man has had illicit intercourse with a fellow-clansman's wife while she is secluded in a menstruation hut and he falls sick, it is held that he cannot possibly recover from the sickness unless he reveals what he has done and thus enables a purification ritual to be held on his behalf. The menstrual blood must be sucked from his body at certain points through pieces of sugarcane skin and spat onto heated tin drums to neutralize it. If he fails to reveal the situation, the pollution will reach his brain and dry it up totally so that he dies. Since the action of committing adultery with a clansman's wife is considered to be an offense to shared ancestral spirits in the clan, it is a matter of shame and thus may be concealed. An episode of sickness is likely to be

the only event that will induce the man to overcome shame and reveal what he has done, since the sickness shows on his skin and draws comment from others, eliciting eventually his confession and a ritual of reconciliation with the spirits and his kinsfolk through a pork sacrifice.

The context of sickness is the one in which a term such as "confession" comes closest to being an accurate gloss for the Melpa term. Sickness events are heavily loaded with moral significance in Hagen. Sickness may itself result from situations of conflict that precipitate anger/frustration *(popokl)* between people. The relationship between sickness, anger, and revelation is certainly an example of a perduring cultural form or image-schema in Hagen social thought, and its resilience is shown in the fact that it has been a matter of everyday experience in fieldwork since 1964. It has, however, undergone a metamorphosis since it has become intertwined with introduced Christian ideas.

In the original indigenous system, sickness was an expected result of *popokl* and would be experienced by the one who was made *popokl.* It was legitimate, indeed necessary, to express one's *popokl* in order to gain redress. Concealed, it could be lethal. A male wrongdoer ought also to confess, though not out of *popokl,* in order to prevent pollution sickness to his own body or to enable a sickness of his wife and children to be cured (Strathern 1977). In one such case a man failed to reveal that he had had sex with his own mother-in-law, and all of his children and his wife were affected by a sickness (scabies) on their skin. Revealing the cause of an event or condition, then, whether to deal with anger and its threat of sickness or to admit to one's own wrongdoing, is considered essential to righting whatever wrong is implied by the event or condition itself. The expression of *popokl* is therefore legitimate; its concealment is not.

These ideas about *popokl* began to change with Christian influence. In the Christian viewpoint anger, which may be associated with acts of retaliation and revenge, is not considered legitimate, and institutions that are seen as regularly leading to anger are therefore questionable. Polygyny and *moka* exchanges are cases in point. In the 1960s Lutheran and Baptist missionaries argued that Christians should not get too involved in *moka* because these tended to produce anger. The term *ararimb* was used instead of *popokl,* but it is uncertain whether this was a new coinage at the time or an existing variant term. The state of anger/frustration was considered to be undesirable, equated with sin. Confession and removal of anger/frustration was seen as necessary before people could take part in the harmonious ritual of communion. Hence it was the state of anger itself, rather than the actions of others that provoked it, that was seen as undesirable and in need of correction.

Similar changes may have occurred in Santa Isabel in the Solomon Islands, where Geoffrey White remarks on the fact that divulging transgressions in Anglican areas to the priest had taken the place of public "disentangling" discourse that could lead to further "entanglings." White notes also that the Anglican bishop had encouraged confessions of the private type and discouraged public moots (thereby playing a hefty role in social change). A cultural practice was maintained at one level, then, and subverted at another (White 1990:93).

In Hagen, Christianity itself was seen as *min-nga kongon,* "work of the soul" (the part of the person that survives death and can go to heaven or hell), and confession was therefore seen as setting the soul in order and in a good relationship to God. The concept here is subtly altered from the older indigenous context, in which anger had nothing to do with the soul *(min)* but was experienced in the *noman* (the mortal mind), and conflicts had to be settled by removing anger from and aligning the minds of people. The revelation of anger and wrongdoing therefore had to do with ongoing social relations, not with the relationship of the person to God, the future residence of the soul, and its individual immortality.

It is in the Catholic religion that regular forms of "confession" are practiced. The Melpa, however, do not call this Catholic act by the term *nemba mot ndui,* because the information does not become public and does not stimulate acts of social retribution or rectification, although it does prepare the person for communion. Nor is such confession seen as a necessary prophylactic act for the success of a future enterprise, to forestall a disaster, or to pave the way for an atonement of a public kind. In times of fighting, men are supposed to gather in cult-places and reveal any wrongdoing they have been guilty of in relation to their clansmen; this is done in order to forestall the withdrawal of ancestral favor. Conflict and disharmony as well as secret wrongdoing undermine the subtle ties that bind men to the ancestors and the protection they afford, and so any man who has done wrong is exposed to being killed by the enemy: hence the public revelation followed by sacrifice. It is most serious when men hold the *mi* or sacred cordyline (in the case of the Kawelka) and declare that they have done no wrong, because if they lie the *mi* will destroy them at some later point. Here again, a subtle change has recently been slotted in. Instead of taking a cordyline leaf, people of either sex will use the Christian Bible to swear on, explicitly commenting that (1) they have seen this done in courts when disputes are adjudicated and (2) the Bible is like a *mi* that can function in the same way for all groups provided that those who swear by it are Christians. Here the "swearing" can also be called *nemba mot ndui,* to make a public statement, to stake a claim to the truth publicly. The Bible is also a sacred emblem that can be shared

by both sexes and across group boundaries, so it fits with contemporary conditions of life.

In the context of sickness, Christian ideas have also somewhat altered the notion of confession. The newer Charismatic churches (such as Assemblies of God) greatly favor the idea of prayers for healing the sick and use this emphasis as a recruiting device. Sickness, seen as a result of anger, is described as a "heavy" thing *(mbun),* whereas in indigenous practice it is a legitimate protest against wrongdoing. In Christian ideas, as we have seen, anger is also a sin, and therefore the sickness is in a sense itself a kind of wrongdoing. Confession of anger removes it and is held to relieve the associated sickness or the threat of becoming ill. A small sacrifice is usually performed, although never said to be for ancestors. Prayers are said earnestly over the sick person to remove the power of the Devil and to instill the power of Jesus to heal. A dualistic battle of good versus evil is thus set up. The logic here is that of the indigenous system turned ninety degrees. Sickness, produced by anger, is seen as sin rather than as a protest against wrongdoing. The sick person is urged to cast out anger and in effect to turn the other cheek, not to seek the revenge actions that ordinarily might follow from anger. The aim is to put to rights the state of the sick person's *min* as well as to call on Jesus to heal the actual sickness. Sickness as a source of heaviness *(mbun),* then, is seen in this revised schema as resulting from anger, as before, but the cure is differently conceptualized. In cases where the sick person has a grievance against a fellow member of the same church congregation, there will be a meeting to discuss the problem (in the case of Lutherans, this is known as a *sutmang,* a Kâte word introduced in the 1960s by coastal evangelists from Finschhafen). Community action follows, therefore, as before, but the ancestors are not made a part of the whole process, and prayers to God and Jesus are directed toward healing the sick persons and changing the hearts of those who have wronged them. Exchanges and pork sacrifices are not made essential to the process, though it is notable that revealing the causes of feelings or the facts behind the scene is still thought to be important, indeed essential.

Many times during our 1997 visit to Hagen we heard from people that when something unfortunate had happened to them, it was caused by their own wrongdoing by not adhering to the teachings of the church and letting *popokl* block the granting of forgiveness to others. A case in point occurred when one of our female informants, M., explained that her husband, R., had "broken" her house in a drunken rage on grounds that she had stolen some coffee beans of his and that he would not repair the structure or build another house for her because of the *popokl* between them. One way in which the adherents of the Charismatic churches relieve the pressure of their con-

cealed *popokl* is through witnessing (standing in the church in front of the congregation and confessing). This action is especially important nowadays, when many Hageners believe that the end times are close at hand and the year A.D. 2000 will herald in the return of Jesus—at which time those who have confessed their sins and asked for forgiveness will be favored for salvation, while those who have not done so will perish in the consuming fires ignited by the Antichrist (Stewart and Strathern 1997b).

The act of witnessing in the congregation privileges the Christian church in which the words are spoken, thereby strengthening the power of the religion within the community of church adherents and strengthening that community itself. Its functions are thus similar to those of "confession" in the earlier indigenous sphere.

The Charismatic Catholics in Hagen have taken the act of voluntary witnessing one step further. When rumors circulate that a person has fallen from his or her faith in God through "wrong" actions, the religious community gathers at the home of the person and holds a fellowship meeting. During the meeting, which lasts throughout the night and into the early hours of the morning, Christian hymns are sung to the tunes of traditional songs while drumbeats set the rhythm. These songs are a means of communicating more immediately with the heavenly (and perhaps ancestral) realms from which the power of the Holy Spirit is evoked by their ritual actions (Stewart and Strathern 1998).

"Compensation" and Its Embodied Concomitants

In the context of the above discussion, the payment of compensation for a killing can be seen as a nonverbal form of the "confession" through acceptance of responsibility for a death. Moreover, there is a link with the body, since compensation is thought to have a healing quality when it is paid for the infliction of a wound. We can set up the following scheme:

Verbal admission	→	Social reconciliation
Compensation	→	Bodily healing

Where the compensation is for a killing, the "healing" is displaced: the life removed cannot be restored, but new life can be created in its place by the use of wealth.

As with verbal confession, however, there has been a historical shift in the meanings of compensation over time. The term "compensation" itself has entered the indigenous Melpa vocabulary only in the last five years or so. Its use coincides with a shift in both consciousness and practice, from an ethos

of bilateral exchanges leading into *moka* exchange sequences to one of unilateral payments not articulated into any wider planned concatenations or forms of reciprocity between groups. Correlated further with this pattern is a shift from the practice of sending "solicitory gifts" in order to receive a large payment for a death to one in which the victim's group presents a "demand" to the group of a killer, as was first observed in 1995. The ethic of exchange that underpinned transactions in the past has gradually been supplanted since the 1980s by an ethic of payment that corresponds generally to a commodified pattern. Here we explore the history of commodifications of the person and its intersection with practices of compensation for killings over time.

Complications of the Person: Commodification and Violence

In the precolonial social system, violence was always the ultimate sanction of relations between groups and individuals not tied closely together by kinship or affinity. In certain contexts, physical violence was an automatic reaction to provocation, as much an intrinsic expression of group identity as a calculated strategy of reprisal. In this context it was linked to the concept of *popokl,* which if not revealed or acted upon, will result in the sickness of the person who experiences it. Between those categories of persons who were defined mutually as *el parka wamb,* "Raggiana Bird of Paradise people," or major traditional enemies, a permanent state of *popokl* was expected to hold and large-scale compensations were not held between them. Raping of women in warfare and the mutilation or burning of the bodies of male enemies at the boundaries of their territories marked this basic attitude to the bodies of such enemies: the practice was to destroy them, spoil them, render them worthless, and thus insult their living kin. Between "minor enemies," however, it was expected that compensation would be paid for killings and reparations made to allies who gave assistance in fights. Intermarriage took place between these minor enemy/ally categories; there was a sharing of "blood" as a bodily substance between them and an arena in which transactional exchanges of wealth as substitutes for blood were preserved. There is a common ideology among the Melpa and the Duna people of Lake Kopiago in the Southern Highlands Province that, when a dispute occurs between two people and one party is wounded, the wound will not heal until compensation is paid. The wounded party will say *nanga mema pindi:* "replace my blood!" This is a frequently heard demand in dispute encounters resulting in physical violence in Hagen. The claim made is not for blood to be replaced by blood, however, but for a cathexis to be enacted between social relations and bodily condition that amounts to a ramified set

of embodied practices in Hagen culture. The demand is for a payment of compensation in wealth goods (pigs, pork, valuable shells, money), thought not only to ease the hurt feelings of the one who has been assaulted, but also in effect to staunch the flow of blood from this body and restore its balance within that body. Once an agreement has been made to institute social accountability, the wounded person can begin to recover. The value of the body here depends on relationship, on shared substance, or the transacted substitutes for substance. Within this sphere, then, the body gains its value, and that value is defined socially as an expression of the value of the ties that bind persons together. The value is thus communalistic and founded on the embodiment of sociality.

In colonial times this sphere of embodiment was extended to pockets of previous major enemies, via intermarriage and the alliance-seeking activities of big-men. Precolonial practices preserved their earlier meanings, stretched into a larger arena and supported by pacification and an influx of shell wealth. The Melpa remained in control of their own definitions of the value of a body, because shell wealth operated only within their own system, even if it came from outside or the supply of shells came from colonial sources. With the shift to money, accelerated around the time of Papua New Guinea's national independence, this local independence was eroded (Strathern and Stewart 1999). Shells were abandoned when the people's attention shifted to money as a scarce valuable, and at the same time people were drawn increasingly into activities that could secure for them a monetary income. Coffee grown on clan land gave that land a monetary dimension as well and thus gave a new meaning to old acts of destruction in warfare: enemies concentrated on slashing down coffee trees and hacking trade stores to pieces in addition to the earlier practice of burning down dwelling houses. Also with cash-cropping practices came a dynamic shift in gendered roles and status, as women were able to acquire wealth in ways not previously conceivable. Their earnings flowed readily into compensation payments. With the introduction of education, younger men and women entered the nexus of business and politics, funneling cash back into their home areas as a means of building political factions to secure election to positions in the introduced governmental system, an arena previously suppressed in colonial times.

Money became a dominant component in *moka* gifts between allies, but transactions in it between major enemies halted, along with the regrowth of political competition between them. Such political blocs became the basis for the major factions in the new political system. The colonial expansion of the precolonial system fell to pieces, revealing again the edges of identity and hostility along which the value of a body or person was nullified. Battles between major enemies in the latter half of the 1980s were deeply exacer-

bated by the introduction of guns, making it possible to kill many people and to do so without even knowing who they were. The consumption of alcohol led to heightened violent encounters. The scale of these killings made it difficult even to contemplate making compensation payments to cover them.

In addition, new layers were added to the arena of compensation payments at large. Members of language groups that previously had lived separately now dwelt side by side in resettlement areas laid aside for cash-cropping and available to land-short farmers within the wider region. Disputes and killings between these groups tended to escalate rapidly, bringing in large numbers of kinsfolk or coethnics on either side. Identities were "blown up," without the mechanisms to mediate between the parties (Strathern 1992). Claims for compensation were enlarged and the amounts demanded purely in cash, or with notional stipulations of numbers of pigs that could obviously not be met. Most significant, a pattern of killings of prominent businessmen and politicians began to make itself felt. In two cases that became widely publicized in the national media, leaders from the Enga language area west of Hagen were killed and the killings traced to gangs or hired assassins from the Hagen tribal groups. The amounts demanded for these deaths skyrocketed and were based on a kind of actuarial, future-based assessment of their individual worth, running into figures far beyond those collected for the settlement of interclan disputes in the past.

The inflated demands were at this point met by markedly deflated offers on the part of the Hageners (Melpa). Where millions were being demanded, only a few thousand kina (PNG currency) were collected. Where amorphous collectivities of coethnics faced each other and where the blame or responsibility for the killings could not unambiguously be attributed, it was impossible for compensation to retain its precolonial structure of meanings. The individual values of the bodies of the two prominent Engans were linked to an ethnic, not just a group, identity, replacing the old fusion of the big-man and his group with a new monetary-based equation. Such huge demands for payments were focused largely on men who had attained prominence in the introduced capitalist system, and the payments for their deaths thus became categories of payment in an indigenized capitalist nexus rather than in a capitalized indigenous nexus as before.

Even in contexts where businesspeople or politicians were not involved, the destruction of trust between groups was such that the form of payments altered. There was no possibility to create interpersonal networks between individuals as a means of underpinning and prolonging temporally the effects of wealth transfers. Instead groups nervously confronted one another, weapons at the ready, handed over payments en bloc while watching for treachery, and left rapidly. Needless to say, such events could not pro-

duce peace. To a great extent, the threat of assassination by hidden gunfire lay behind the collective fear and unease displayed on these occasions, and it enormously curtailed the effects of the indigenous oratory that was designed to form a bridge between groups and signal their consensus.

There was only one context preserved from this progressive degeneration of the compensation system: ally-payments made with pigs. In the first half of 1991, there occurred an amassing and disbursement of large numbers of well-grown pigs by the Kawelka to a diverse set of allies, all of whom had lost men in helping the Kawelka against their major enemies in the previous five years. The pigs were either home-reared or purchased with money. In this context traditional oratory and discourse prevailed. Pigs are not fully commoditized: their status as substitutes for human life remains intact because they have no place in the outside system other than as an occasional trading resource. The concept of "eating" and thereby achieving satisfaction in the replacement and sharing of substance applies to them. The compensation, accompanied by the slaughter of many of the pigs, their consumption, and their implicit dedication as sacrifices to ancestral ghosts and those of the recent dead, succeeded in creating harmony between those involved. But this event, hard as it was to organize and extremely expensive for the Kawelka, still fell far short of neutralizing the major axes of future violence, since the payments were made solely to allies, not to the major enemies with whom all scores remained unsettled. Rumors that killings of such enemies or by such enemies had been effected by sorcery and trickery or by assassinations in distant parts of Papua New Guinea kept alive the deep sense of enmity and suspicion in the region and guaranteed the possibility of further violence in the future.

From one perspective, then, no change has occurred. Major enemies remain major enemies, and there is a state of permanent hostility with them. But this picture has to be set against a background of kaleidoscopic changes in economy, government, and ritual. The processes were set in motion in colonial times. The commodification of land and wealth has sharpened oppositions between enemies, and the inflated "rates" of compensation have produced a breakdown in the flow of payments. Whereas the substitution of exchange for violence in the past was able to produce an aura of security, nowadays people feel much more vulnerable in their bodies, especially with the advent of guns. Violence has begun again to define the edges of identity, upsetting the substitution of wealth for killing and defining an expanded arena of killing in which some bodies once more become worthless, while others attain a factitious or cargoistically inflated value in monetary terms.

Individuation, Conscience, and Collective Contexts: Two Comparisons

The introduction of Christianity into our analysis prompts us to set our findings into a wider comparative framework, such as is provided by Hepworth and Turner in their general study of confession, deviance, and religion (1982). These authors examine the development and impact of ideas of conscience and confession from medieval times in the Catholic church in Europe, through the individuation of conscience and the sense of guilt in Protestantism, and thence to the place of notions regarding confession and therapy in psychoanalysis. They compare European witchcraft trials to confessions in other contexts, citing, for example, the remark made by I. M. Lewis that a public confession of tensions can help to "restore social harmony in a ceremony where the village shaman gives expression to the consensus of the local community" (Hepworth and Turner 1982:39, referring to Lewis 1971).

Hepworth and Turner are concerned with confession only in the sense of the admission of wrongdoing, or sin in the Christian religious context, and its place in bringing to a close processes of investigation, enabling counteraction to be instituted (e.g., incarceration, restitution, death) and marking social boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. The last of these functions is of particular interest here, although equally significant is the point that rituals of confession are supposed to lead to a reestablishment of the social order, as in the historical examples from Europe in which confessions of violence by "unruly knights" acted to constrain their violence, and confessions of sexual misdemeanors by female members of landed houses served to protect property interests. For Hagen confessions of forms of "theft" (of property or of sexual intercourse, for example) within the clan group served periodically to cleanse the group of suspicions of wrongdoing and generated the compensatory gifts and exchanges that were needed to restore group fertility. The *mi* was the very symbol of in-group morality in this regard. A voluntary statement of wrongdoing would thus announce that the confessor had transgressed social boundaries and wished to be readmitted within them. The mechanism for readmission was the payment of compensation accompanied by sacrifice to ancestral ghosts. (In the European context, in-group morality was also upheld, through either the rehabilitation or the stigmatization/extinction of the confessor.)

Confession in Hagen prior to the growing significance of Christian ideas thus reflected a collective context, but it also had an element that tied persons in an embodied fashion into that context, since it operated in tandem with ideas regarding sickness. Unconfessed, hidden wrongdoing leads to

sickness that cannot heal unless a confession is made: the concordance between body and society is exact, since social wrong leads to physical illness. Individual "guilt" leads to "self-punishment" in the body itself.

Formulating the Hagen ideas in this way makes it possible to see how such ideas can be subtly altered, as we have argued, to bridge the gap between indigenous and introduced notions of responsibility. However, it is necessary to recognize the specific elements that must come into play before confession of a "European" type can appear. Hepworth and Turner formulate these as a theory of individual guilt, a moral order against which individual sins are committed, a system of authority that can receive and absolve sins, and a variety of techniques to deal with confessions (1982:67). Notions of individuality and hierarchy are crucial here, and they operate differently from the relatively egalitarian and community-oriented ethos in the Hagen system, although the body in Hagen stood, as it were, both on the side of individuality and on the side of society.

There is another complication in the Hagen situation, since "confession," in the sense of "revelation"—making known what was hidden—could be used to point to another person as the wrongdoer and thus functioned as an accusation. Here the confessor placed himself or herself inside the social boundary and declared the other to have transgressed it. The catch is that in both cases "anger" worked the same way: it could cause sickness unless revealed. Virtue and self-interest thus conduced to making one's anger known. This context has been somewhat elided by the Christian "interpretive turn," leaving problematic the question of redress against wrongdoing. The Christian is not supposed to become *popokl,* since now *popokl* itself is seen as sin. This Hagen twist on Christian ideas gives the confession complex today its particular hybrid quality, since the rules of its contemporary discursive formation (in a Foucauldian sense as explicated by Hepworth and Turner [1982: chap. 4]) are an attempted conflation of different thought-worlds through the selective alteration of points where they intersect in the relationship of anger/frustration to the body.

Introduced Christian ideas have, then, been partially blended in with indigenous Hagen notions, but only by a form of matching that simultaneously transforms both elements. It is interesting to compare this production of a third form from two originals (a reproduction with difference) with what happens when we make a comparison between Hagen ideas and practices and those of the Komblo people on the North Wall of the Wahgi, eastern neighbors of the northern Melpa speakers, as described by Michael O'Hanlon (1989). O'Hanlon's exposition shows clearly that while, on the one hand, Melpa and Wahgi (Komblo) ideas show a core of shared ontological propositions, the application of these to political life is somewhat different

in the two cases. On the other hand, the comparison shows that dominant features of the Wahgi appear in muted or secondary form among Melpa. The Komblo are a former refugee group who were reestablished in their area with the help of allies. Understandably, they are much concerned about group solidarity, strength, historical viability, and possible threats to it. Like the Melpa they consider that hidden wrongdoing will cause misfortune unless and until it is revealed and made a part of public discussion. The Wahgi phrase for this is *yu ne penem kele,* "throwing the talk into the open" (O'Hanlon 1989:66, 127), equivalent to the Melpa *nemba mot ndui,* "saying to make evident/revealed." At this level Melpa and Wahgi ideas are identical. Both peoples also say that wrongdoing that results from anger within the group or produces such anger can cause harm to group members and their enterprises, as long as the wrongdoing is not revealed. This point is simply a specification of context for the first level of ideas. From this point onward, however, the idea systems show some divergence.

The Komblo do not appear to have the Melpa notion that anger can cause sickness to oneself, an assertion that Melpa apply equally to both sexes. Rather they stress the male sphere and the damaging consequences of anger between in-group males (O'Hanlon 1989:66, 149). Further, they are greatly exercised by the prospect of in-group betrayal, in which an angry man may give away secrets to an external group through a pathway of matrilateral kinship; this betrayal is held to result in misfortune, death, loss of fertility, and especially the loss of an ability to attract brides through epideictic displays of male finery and dancing in the *gol* pig-killing rituals. The process of betrayal may be preempted by a revelation of anger and presumably by attempts to redress its causes; but if the aggrieved person proceeds to the point of betrayal, it is described by the Wahgi as *kum,* "witchcraft," a striking usage that linguistically parallels the Hagen term for witchcraft but seems to have a markedly different emphasis. In Hagen *kum* refers to cannibalistic witchcraft, stereotypically perpetrated by women married into a group, and serves as an antisymbol of proper external exchange relations (Stewart and Strathern 1997a). *Kum* in Wahgi serves as an antisymbol of proper in-group solidarity. Highly complex rhetorical claims are made in Wahgi around this theme. O'Hanlon details a speech made by a Komblo leader of the Kekanem clan, Kinden, in which he revealed that he had made *kum* against a neighboring group with whom he was angry and had magically enabled his cross-cousins in another group to outshine the others by rubbing grease into their skins and inserting plumes of his own into their head-nets (note here the strongly embodied context of this "laying on of hands"—and plumes) (1989: 131). Later his cross-cousins ungratefully made boasts against his own group, the Kekanem, saying they were dying out for failure to attract

girls. Kinden then withdrew his hidden support and revealed the talk (ibid.:133).

Kinden's actions would not be described as *kum* in Hagen. However, the processes of switching allegiances in an interplay between matrilateral and agnatic allegiances are well known in Hagen, as they are in Wahgi. Nevertheless, the emphasis in Wahgi on the theme of betrayal seems to be overwhelming by comparison. The Wahgi *gol* celebrates in-group male solidarity and male power in attracting brides through dancing and decoration. Threats to such solidarity belong to the realm of politics and are the antithesis of "fertility." In Hagen, by contrast, the aim of achieving and expressing intergroup alliance by a multiplicity of *moka* exchange partnerships was added to the imperative of group solidarity.

Threats to exchange, symbolized in the image of consuming greed or *kum,* therefore were the focus of anxiety. It is not simply that individual financial capacities were involved (O'Hanlon 1989:130). There was a moral component as well, since the individual efforts to excel in exchange added up to a display of group status. For this reason, it is not surprising to note that in Hagen the same basic kinds of assessments of dance decorations and movements were made as in Wahgi: groups with dancers who moved awkwardly or had dull decorations were spoken of disparagingly as having internal troubles and as likely to lose a member of the group (*ti kawa ndomba,* "one will be cut down [die]"). Conversely, in Wahgi, a secondary discourse extolled the individual success of some dancers against others, as shown in the narrative by Kinden. The two cultural scenarios thus both contrast and complement each other in terms of dominant versus muted characteristics. And both stress the importance of revelation as a means of creating and altering the boundaries of social inclusion and exclusion, as Hepworth and Turner argue. This two-step comparison between Hagen ideas and Christian ideas, on the one hand, and Hagen and Wahgi ideas, on the other, indicates that quite significant transformations occur simply by the switching of one element or by its greater elaboration. Such an examination of cultural structures may help us to understand the processes whereby changes occur and how the universality of a theme such as confession is partnered by its local specificities.

Conclusion

We have followed the historical turns of practice in relation to confession and Christianity, on the one hand, and compensation and money, on the other. Both confession and compensation form part of the wider logic of settlement by reconciliation in Hagen. Confession may lead to compensation,

and compensation is itself an equivalent of confession, a revealing of the truth accompanied by a corrective action in relation to it. The body is the ultimate marker of the validity of both: failure to confess leads to sickness; failure to compensate leads to bodily revenge; and a proper compensation heals the body that has been wounded. Verbal and nonverbal, mental and corporeal acts go together and conduce toward the same totalization of action and being. Ultimately, both confession and compensation are about definitions of personhood. An insistence on confession makes the agency of the person the focus, and agency is underpinned by substance, so that if agency fails, substance linked to spiritual powers takes over (cf. Strathern 1996). Compensation practices recognize the substitutability of wealth for the person, and contemporary problems reveal the incipient commodification of the person-body complex resulting from the effects of monetization in the economy at large. Concomitantly, a change in the focus of confession from communal inquiry to a more private statement made to God indicates a similar change, at least within the religious realm, of the definition of personhood, toward a new kind of individuation.

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