OCEANIA

Oceania, Vol. 90, Issue 2 (2020): 98–150
DOI:10.1002/ocea.5248

Re-analysing the Baining: The Mytho-Poetics of Race, Gender and Art

Andrew Lattas
University of Bergen, Norway

ABSTRACT

This article criticises primitivist caricatures of the Baining in Melanesia as a society that lacks exegesis, symbolic logics, religion, structures of power and control, and even an interest in play. The mytho-poetics of gender and procreation in Mali Baining society are documented by focusing on how art and sexuality are traced onto each other. The formative power of painting, barkcloth, dancing masks, netbags and music are merged with the formative power of women. Art and sexuality are made to inform each other's generative potential, and even each other's aesthetic charm. These fertile mytho-poetic practices also underpin Mali political practices. Mali indigenous identity is celebrated as local control over the original powers of creation, which continue to reside in the earth, in the local landscape and, above all, in that which underpins all creation, women's procreative bodies with their creative potential to bring forth something new. The Mali localise creative processes so as to empower and revalue themselves within a culture of resistance to the hegemony of colonialism, modernity, settlers and regional ethnic elites.

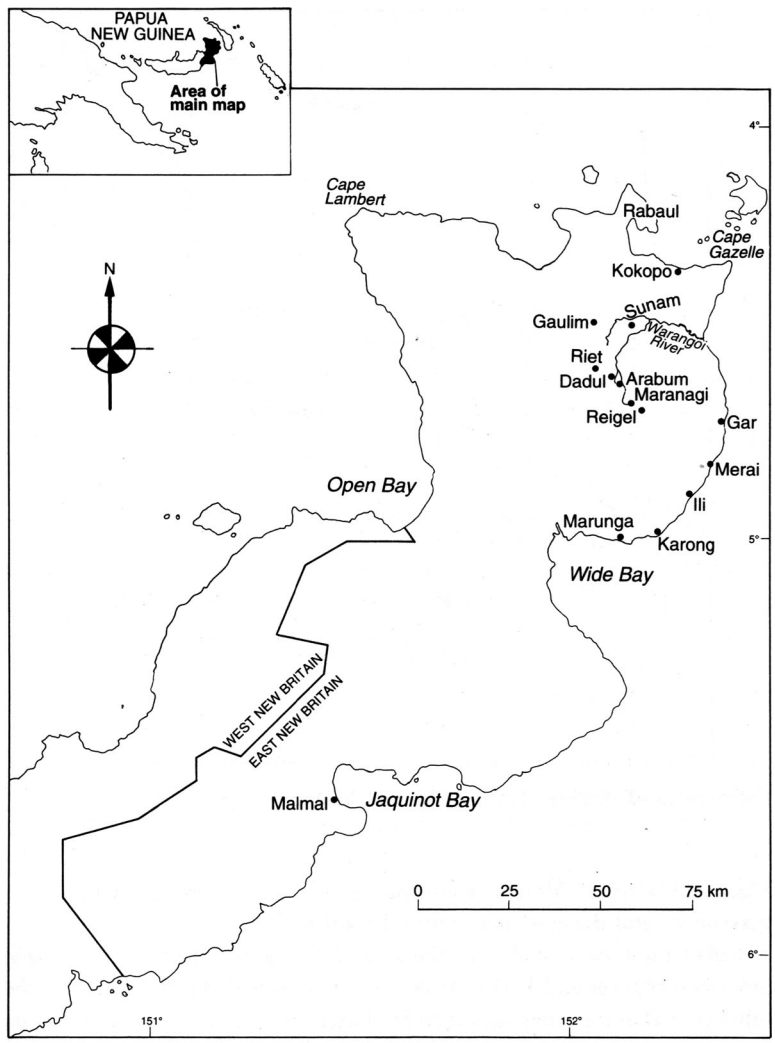
Keywords: Papua New Guinea, millenarianism, Baining, art, matriarchy, gender, exegesis.

PART ONE: PRIMITIVISM, DULLNESS AND REPETITION

> All Work and No Play Make the Baining the 'Dullest Culture'
> Bateson called them 'drab and colorless:' the culture where play is shameful.[1]
>
> The most boring culture on Earth.[2]
>
> … a culture that so relentlessly represses play and everything natural; the Puritans are an apt comparison but they had more fun than this.[3]

The above quotes are indicative of how the Baining, though a small marginal group in Papua New Guinea, have acquired much notoriety. Initially, it was among academic anthropologists, with whom the Baining have a long standing reputation as difficult informants who are not forthcoming with information (Bateson 1932; Fajans 1997; Lipset 1982; Poole 1943; Read 1931; Rohatynskyj 2000). In the coffee rooms of anthropology departments, I have often heard the Baining used as an amusing anecdote of an exceptionally quiet

society that does not encourage conversation. Baining villagers are said to visit and stay in each other's company for hours before uttering a single word. Recent internet blog sites have popularised this caricature, which has also been expanded into the Baining as perhaps 'the most boring people in the world'.[4] The latter quote is from an anthropology blog site run by Thomas Eriksen – a well-known professor at the University of Oslo and the author of numerous undergraduate text books. The same caricature was repeated on other blog sites where psychologists, educationalists and a broader reading public used ethnography on the Baining to discuss contemporary issues such as work, school, leisure and play in western society.



East New Britain Province

Most internet bloggers had no personal knowledge of the Baining. Most bloggers were not really concerned with what the Baining actually say, think and do. They were more concerned with what Baining culture supposedly repressed – prevented from occurring – and how this offered a cautionary warning to the West. For the most part, bloggers saw themselves as cosmopolitan humanitarians who were not seeking to devalue or degrade the Baining. I do not dispute bloggers' self-understandings.

However, their postings were consistently critical of a 'traditional' Baining society, which supposedly suppressed not just conversation and exegesis, but also other normal human activities such as religion, play, sexuality and leisure. Here are two more brief extracts from such postings:

> *So-called 'Dullest Culture* on Earth' frowns *upon sex and bans play*.[5]

> The Baining, an indiginous (*sic*) group of Papua New Guinea, shun play and basically don't do anything but work. According to Fajans, the Baining eschew everything that they see as 'natural' and value activities and products that come from 'work,' which they view as the opposite of play. Work, to them, is effort expended to overcome or resist the natural. To behave naturally is to them tantamount to behaving as an animal. The Baining say, 'We are human because we work'. The tasks that make them human, in their view, are those of turning natural products (plants, animals, and babies) into human products (crops, livestock, and civilized human beings) through effortful work (cultivation, domestication, and disciplined childrearing).[6]

As can be seen above, bloggers' understandings of the Baining drew heavily on Fajans' book *They Make Themselves: Work and Play among the Baining of Papua New Guinea*. Bloggers were keen to ground their arguments in empiricism, in ethnography. Yet their postings also participate in a long history of primitivism in the West, which searches for extreme examples of humanity and its social, cultural and psychological possibilities (Clifford 1988; Fabian 1983; Lattas 1987, 1990, 1992, 1996; Torgovnick 1990).

For bloggers, the Baining epitomised a primordial, puritanical social order that had excessively favoured utilitarian concerns at the expense of other meaningful concerns. In early twentieth century anthropology, Malinowski championed this portrait of total 'native' pragmatism; natives who had no intellectual, symbolic or interpretative interests. Instead, their culture could be reduced to useful biological, psychological and social functions.[7] I interpret Malinowski's functionalism as systematising and theorising what was already present in popular western culture. Contemporary bloggers have revisited but also reformulated this portrait of total 'native' pragmatism so to render the Baining into a moral warning against modernity's oppressive possibilities, its obsessive focus on work and production. A certain caricature of the Baining was required by bloggers to highlight their concerns with the repressive utilitarian directions of modern social change. Through the Baining, bloggers voiced their contemporary anxieties and cultural politics by re-grounding these within a larger, comparative 'scientific' overview of different societies. The extreme values, thoughts and practices attributed to the Baining provided the perfect foil to warn against a perceived growing western commitment to work and productivity at the expense of play, religion, art and leisure. The alleged disinterest of the Baining in hidden spiritual realities, mysteries and philosophical-intellectual speculations made them a human anomaly but also possibility. The Baining were modernity 'primitivised' – a precursor of contemporary dystopian possibilities.

Ironically, the ethnographic examples that sustained these caricatures of Baining culture were the failed ethnographic projects of anthropologists themselves – notably by Jeremy Pool and Gregory Bateson, but also Fajans' difficulties. Bloggers repeated Fajans' claim the Baining were not amenable to the ordinary methods and theories of ethnographers that had hitherto focused on deep meanings. Bateson's fieldwork difficulties in the 1920s were cited by bloggers and even Bateson's questioning of whether the Baining had any 'formulable culture'. There was little evidence any blogger – including the educated psychologists, teachers, social workers and journalists who participated in the debate – had read

Bateson, let alone any other ethnographer of the Baining, such as Corbin (1976, 1979, 1982, 1984), Hesse and Aerts (1978), Laufer (1946/49, 1959, 1970), Gail Pool (2015), Jeremy Pool (1971, 1984, 2008), Poole (1943), Read (1931), Stebbins and Planigale (2010), or Whitehouse (1995, 1996a, 1996b, 2004). Instead, bloggers relied on Fajans' historical overview of Baining ethnography, which sidelines earlier studies by resident German Catholic priests. The latter had documented extensive myths, religious beliefs, rituals, symbolic representations and cults bound up with a hierarchy of knowledgeable big men and women. Unaware of this alternative model of Baining society and culture, bloggers repeated Fajans' claim that ethnographers' difficulties in studying the Baining were due to anthropologists seeking something that was not there – a deep world of mytho-poetic references.

Unlike other researchers (Rohatynskyj 2000, 2005; Stebbins and Planigale 2010), Fajans did not attribute ethnographers' fieldwork difficulties to Baining hostility and resistance towards outsiders. Yet, Bateson was aware of this. To Jeremy Pool and his wife, Gail Pool, Bateson described fieldwork as him often wandering alone in the forest because villagers would take off whenever they saw him: 'They always seemed to be disappearing' (Pool 2015:19, 21).[8] Earlier, from the field, Bateson wrote to his mother: 'I am a creature whose intrusion they resent' (Lipset 1982:127).[9] He wrote also of how the Baining would trick him into leaving the village whenever anything important was to occur. It is hard to understand why people devoid of significant meanings, of any formulable culture, would employ such ruses. Indeed, Bateson's correspondences and publications often show the Baining as not denying they had religious-cosmological secrets (Bateson 1932:234). Villagers sought to appease him by claiming they would reveal their important knowledge once he learnt their language. Suspicious, Bateson regarded this as another trick, for the non-Austronesian Baining language is difficult with diverse dialects. New to PNG, Bateson was also just getting on top of learning Melanesian Pisin (Harries-Jones 2016; Lipset 1982).

Though he acknowledges their secretiveness and how he had to drag information out of them 'a sentence at a time', Bateson still suggests the Baining lacked exegetical meanings and were 'unstudiable'. This provided a convenient explanation for his disappointment that Bateson was never really sure about, hence his claim the Baining broke his heart (Rohatynskyj 2000; Fajans 1997:3). The latter makes no sense unless Bateson was aware, at some level, of Baining tactics of deferment, diversion and evasion. These are common experiences for researchers in Melanesia. Since 1985, I have frequently encountered such tactics throughout New Britain, as villagers seek to affirm their autonomy and desire to be not fully colonised – possessed, controlled and accessible to the inquisitive appropriating gaze of dominant outsiders.

Unhappy with his lack of access to their cosmology, Bateson offers the self-justifying suggestion that the lacklustre Baining were unconcerned with religion and the supernatural. Aware this seemed to be contradicted by their spectacular masks and the artistic energy focused on them, Bateson downplays the masks as non-indicative; as 'the only patch of colour in the otherwise drab existence of the Baining people'. He summed up his fieldwork:

> I could never collect any general statement either that the ceremonies were good for the crops or that they referred to ghosts or ancestors. The Baining are not an easy people to work among, and though they were keen enough to exhibit their dances and masks, they were very unwilling to talk about their religion. I enquired into the meaning of the patterns and the songs, but neither of these shed any light on the significance of the ceremonies as a whole. (Bateson 1932:337–8)

Bateson's ethnographic failure with the Baining haunted him. I believed it stayed with him because he was unable to make satisfactory sense of their local strategies of silence and avoidance due to his own lack of interest in colonialism and racial politics, which in turn was influenced by Bateson's conservative class background.

Race, cannibalism and anthropology

Geertz commented on Bateson's upper class mentality and attributed it to a privileged sense of coming from a distinguished British family of scientists (Harries-Jones 1995:30, 44–6; Lipset 1982). Given that Bateson's father was a distinguished geneticist and the Baining were purportedly the most primitive group in Melanesia, it was no accident that Bateson went into the field with callipers. Whilst measuring Baining heads, Bateson was startled when a villager asked him what he was doing, upon which he stopped (Lipset 1982:127). Though unaware of scientific discourses like phrenology, the Baining are aware of being labelled wrongheaded and small minded by white missionaries, government officials and Melanesian settlers. Such labels still justify the appropriation of their land and other resources, for the Baining are deemed to lack the intellect and motivation to utilise them properly.

At the time Bateson was writing, Australian newspapers often mentioned the Baining and even Bateson's work in their support of Australian colonial interests and ambitions in Melanesia. A shared article in the Adelaide *Mail* (12 November 1927:14) and *Advertiser* (3 December 1927:19) described the Baining in terms of being 'as primitive a race as it is possible to find anywhere in the world today'. They were 'a clumsy, stocky, muscular race' that was 'peculiarly insensitive to pain'. They reportedly loved to 'sleep around the fires made on the earthen floor of their huts, so they often get burnt, and it does not even wake them up'. The Baining's insensitivity also extended to emotions, going so far as to compromise natural instincts such as care and love for offspring and population survival.

> In one district it is said that there are no children under ten years of age. Some years ago there was a severe famine, and all the young children were eaten. (*op. cit*.)

Fear of such cannibal practices was said in the article to have made Baining masks difficult to collect. These were of special scientific interest to museums and curators, for 'their masks show traces of an art far in advance of their apparent culture. Where did they acquire this art?' The popularisation of such scientific puzzles in the press was part of the rationalisation of race. The spectacular nature of Baining art and artefacts was used to popularise scientific evolutionary models of racial hierarchy that placed the Baining at the bottom of savage extremes.

As with contemporary blog postings, early twentieth century newspaper articles on the Baining used selective ethnography to construct and mediate the West's need to understand itself through symbolic racial opposites. As is the case today, academic work was not immune from such primitivist practices. Summing up earlier studies of the Gazelle Peninsula by archaeologists and missionaries, Riesenfeld (1950:266) concluded the Baining's primitiveness 'counteracted the development of the culture of the stone-using immigrants'. The indigenous Baining were regressive: they had held back the evolutionary progress offered by more advanced Melanesian settlers with superior tool use. The religiosity of the Baining was also questioned. They allegedly had no 'ritual use of sacred plants'. Their ritual dances to the dead, which missionaries had recorded, were probably derived from others and had been 'adopted with little appreciation of their real meaning … it is certain that the

mythology too shows more recent influences'. In short, Baining religion had been borrowed and this was further proof of their primordial inability to create and evolve.

Contemporary caricatures of the Baining

The above early twentieth century caricatures are not the same as, though they do prefigure, contemporary caricatures of the Baining as irreligious, dull, anti-intellectual and lacking creativity. All are part of a longstanding western concern with human oddities; with strange experiments in society and culture. This especially has often included amusing spectacles in cognition – beliefs, values and ways of thinking – that until recently were closely linked to a perceived biological-racial heritage. Phrenology – the scientific study of skulls, popular from the mid eighteenth until the early twentieth century – catered to a growing concern with tying biology and race to social and psycho-cultural possibilities. Like the Australian Aborigines, in the early twentieth century the Baining were part of racial speculations about regressive natives who could not evolve or create new possibilities (Fabian 1983). Frozen in time, these evolutionary failures were destined to die out especially when confronted with the need to adapt to the new challenges of colonial change.

At the time Bateson was writing, the Baining were part of racial theories about population decline and primitives who appear to lose the will to live (Lattas 1996; Edmundson 2019; Fajans 1997:40; Pentony 1940). Australian newspapers cited Bateson's work when praising the promising work of anthropologists, which would provide valuable knowledge so the administration could 'arrest depopulation and maintain a virile native race' (*Telegraph Brisbane* 2 July 1929:14). The later had allegedly been compromised by the colonial cessation of warfare and other traditional cultural practices that had previously empowered masculinity (like sorcery and initiation rituals). Indirect rule, which sought to preserve native culture, was seen as a possible solution as was sport and work on western plantations.

Today, reports concerning the Baining's refusal to embrace progress and modernity are still used by government officials and Melanesian settlers to justify the appropriation of Baining land and resources (Fajans 1997; Rohatynskyj 2000, 2005; Parkinson 1907:264). The Baining's reputation as primitive, simple and wrong-headed is especially seen to be evidenced by their participation in millenarian activities that resist full incorporation into western commerce, politics and education. Many Mali are part of the Kivung movement and it advocates minimal involvement in cash crops and other *giaman* (fake) forms of development brought by deceitful white men in alliance with a Melanesian kleptocracy.

Politics and methodology

Though Fajans (1997) skilfully discusses colonial history and the marginalisation of the Baining in the first part of her book, she suspends this analysis in her de-political understanding of fieldwork problems. Instead, she analyses the ethnographic difficulties experienced by Bateson, Jeremy Pool and herself as methodological in origin: a product of a mistaken theoretical assumption that all cultures have a hermeneutic concern with symbolic depth. Rejecting the possibility that the Baining may be deliberately making themselves 'unstudiable', Fajans reduces ethnographers' difficulties to them using outdated models of culture. These models failed because they erroneously identified real culture with elaborate exegeses and deep symbolic references rather than everyday practical concerns. Mundane concerns are supposedly all that concerns some societies, like the Baining.

Instead of focusing on anthropologists' favourite topics – like religion, art, ritual or millenarianism – Fajans foregrounds the unremarkable repetitive aspects of Baining existence. She notes how for anthropologists: 'It is difficult to take an interest – even a theoretically motivated interest – in boredom as a cultural phenomenon. The intermittent activities that

spark interest and excitement, such as the dances and seances, are without conscious exegesis or referent' (Fajans 1997:4). Justifying her focus on the pragmatic, tedious aspects of a work-oriented existence, Fajans argues this constitutes a way of being in the world that is just as meaningful as an existence that continually references an elaborate, deep cultural logic.[10] I do not accept the way Fajans often juxtaposes everyday meanings to a deep cultural logic, for the latter often inhabits the former (see Bourdieu 1977; Gillison 1993; Mimica 1988). Indeed, as we shall see, the Baining are similar to other societies in using gender as a generative logic for organising everyday activities while reproducing the cosmos.

Before I illustrate this using my own ethnography, it is important to analyse why so many anthropologists, psychologists, educationalists, internet bloggers, and other members of the public embraced Fajans' portrait of the Baining as exclusively devoted to the mundane. For bloggers, this portrait of extreme utilitarianism resonated with their own experience of intensified work regimes in the West, which had eroded away leisure and other realms of meaning. In the academy, Fajans' portrait resonated with a growing intellectual focus on everyday life rather than spectacular ritual events, ceremonies or persons. Many anthropologists, who had never visited or studied the Baining, were drawn to Fajans' model of a mundane existence that was uninterested in mytho-poetic representational concerns (Tomlinson 2006:145). These anthropologists were seeking an alternative model of culture to structuralism and phenomenology, and the Baining seemed to manifest this. They appeared too matter-of-fact to be susceptible to the hidden 'grammar' model of Lévi-Strauss or the 'thick description' model of Geertz. Instead, the Baining supposedly articulated an alternative cognitive orientation that was flat and eschewed depth and mystery.[11]

Flattened out, the Baining have been used to champion an anti-symbolic, anti-interpretative turn within contemporary anthropology. Ironically, to borrow a famous phrase of Lévi-Strauss', they have become 'good to think with'; and paradoxically so by being positioned as the concrete opposite of Lévi-Strauss' native intellectuals.[12] More than anyone, Lévi-Strauss championed the intellectual coherence and depth of indigenous peoples, their creative role as folk philosophers, speculative thinkers and inquiring observers of differences and analogies. This accords with my own fieldwork experience of the Baining and of villagers throughout New Britain. It also accords with the fieldwork experience of German priests who collected rich ethnography on Baining myths, magical practices and religious beliefs.

Materialism, mystification and the Baining

In the academy and in popular culture, the Baining continue to function as a symbolic opposite, an emblematic caricature for organizing western intellectual concerns and political projects. This can sometimes take some unusual twists and turns, for while bloggers typically expressed horror at the alleged total materialism of the Baining, their ascribed unclouded focus on work endeared them to some left-leaning anthropologists. For Graeber (2001:69), the Baining had rightly captured the essence of human existence as grounded in labour. Moreover, they had even created 'a society singularly lacking in mystification' because their existence is 'based on something very much like a labor theory of value' (*ibid.*). Graeber's romantic idealisation of Baining society uses a Marxist historical model of demystified revolutionary consciousness to render the work-obsessed existence of the Baining into a form of true consciousness. Like Marx, the Baining had truly understood the social and cultural production of value through labour. They had a revolutionary or free and clear perspective on reality without the Revolution. This ahistorical application of Marx' labour theory of value ignores important Marxist points such as that all societies require ideologies to reproduce their relations of power. Graeber also conveniently ignores gender inequalities and ideologies

among the Baining, and the unequal distribution of knowledge and power between men. Instead, still citing Fajans, Graeber celebrates the Baining for their 'egalitarian anarchism:'[13]

> their lack of political structures; in fact, they lack enduring social structures of almost any kind whatever. Not only are there no chiefs or 'big men,' but no clans, lineages, age grades, no initiation societies, ritual or exchange associations, or anything, really, that can be called a 'ritual system' (*ibid*.).

These grand claims ignore other ethnography on the Baining by Corbin, Hesse, Laufer and Whitehouse who document an extensive culture of men's houses, initiation ceremonies, shamans, senior male (**lengenacha** MD) and female (**lengenachi** MD) ritual specialists, and cult leaders.[14]

Play, psychology and the rationalisation of happiness

Today, the Baining are still being re-imagined to fit diverse western projects that authorise themselves through selective ethnography. Disciplines such as psychology, sociology, politics and history will often use ethnography to assert that they have relativised – suspended and challenged – ethnocentric assumptions. This use of ethnography to articulate objectivity, to produce 'truth effects,' is also employed in popular culture. It features in debates about social planning where information from other cultures is used to evaluate the best institutions, practices, values and beliefs for the West to adopt. These debates, which are often about how to maximise productivity, happiness and learning, started to use the Baining to discuss how to optimise the balance of leisure, play, work and meaningfulness. Such debates are part of the rationalisation of culture and society in the West, of maximising productive outcomes by broadening the calculus of production and productivity into previously non-economic realms (Löwith 1982).

One contemporary internet site that frequently discussed the Baining was *Psychology Today*. In July 2012, it hosted a blog forum called *Freedom to Learn: The roles of play and curiosity as foundations for learning* (henceforth FtL). There, bloggers discussed how western society could create learning environments that would 'optimize rather than suppress [children's] instinctive drives to educate themselves'.[15] The blog forum was overseen by Dr Peter Gray – a research professor at Boston College. His summaries of Fajans' ethnography provided bloggers with their understanding of the Baining. Fajans posted a few contributions to the forum and, with minor qualifications, she did not challenge bloggers' use of her Baining research to discuss the growing practical schemes organising western existence. Like Fajans and Bateson, the difficulty bloggers faced when making the Baining emblematic of a mundane culture is that the Baining have an impressive art culture. Their spectacular masks are displayed in international museums, art galleries, books, magazines and tourist brochures. The grand scale, colour, design and awesome performances of Baining masks seem to imply creativity, religion and a concern with hidden spiritual meanings. To undercut this inference, bloggers cited Fajans' support for Bateson's characterisation of the masks as like surreal spectacles removed from the Baining's matter-of-fact, everyday world. Bloggers especially focused on Fajans' (1997:4) claim the masks were part of a culturally devalued realm of play that stood opposed to the more important serious realm of work.

> The difficulty is further enhanced by the Baining's own attitude towards the dances, the surreal flamboyance of which they bafflingly dismiss as just 'play'. They seem dissociated from the events of daily life. Like Bateson (1931-32) and Pool (1971, 1984) before me, I was unable to get Baining informants to come

> forth with exegesis or commentary of a non-trivial kind for these aspects of their lives. (Ibid.)

Bloggers repeated Bateson's and Fajans' view of Baining masks as highly-stylised and with no deep symbolic significance. They were pure form without content. Only as a means of celebrating a work-oriented culture did the masks have meaning. The dances were performed because the work of preparing and staging masked performances affirmed the human nature of work and thus served to distance the Baining from 'primitive, animal-like ways of playing'. Still extrapolating from Fajans' ethnography, bloggers concluded that this obsession with work had led the Baining to suppress not just play, but many other normal human activities like creativity, freedom and religion.

Though he had no fieldwork experience with the Baining, Gray described Baining adults as 'remarkably non-playful compared to adults in other cultures'. Many bloggers mentioned an incident reported by Fajans (but which she never saw) of Baining parents who purportedly put their child's hand into a fire because he was playing too much.[16] Flabbergasted by these caricatures, other ethnographers of the Baining (Lattas, Pool, Stebbins and Planigale) and even one south coast Baining villager, Ngorana of Sinivit (whose identity was unfairly questioned) posted disagreements. They argued the Baining were not dull or boring and their children played regularly, most conspicuously at local streams and team sports at school.[17] Pool wrote how he never saw a parent smack a child for playing, which is also my experience. These ethnographers criticised the internet caricatures as ethnocentric and bordering on racism. In her posting, Ngorana went on to criticise claims of an alleged lack of religion among the Baining. She attributed such claims to strict secrecy rules that excluded outsiders from Baining spiritual knowledge.[18]

These public critiques led Fajans to come online to clarify her position as arguing that the Baining 'did not so much actively prevent children's play as devalue it'. Fajans also wrote: 'As the daughter of a nursery school teacher, I was much more struck with the passivity of the children than I was with their exuberant creativity' (FtL). Such comments by a leading ethnographer re-authorised bloggers' understandings and use of the Baining in their cultural politics. With a good conscience, bloggers returned to their discursive tactics of using the 'boring,' 'repressive' Baining to warn against a growing loss of play, leisure, pleasure, creativity and meaning in the West. The public disagreements between ethnographers did not dampen postings but instead boosted the bloggers' sense of being engaged in a scientific forum for debating social and cultural 'facts' objectively.

Humanitarianism and dullness

Bloggers saw themselves as well-intentioned, non-bigoted humanists who were not seeking 'to pass judgement on these people' (FtL). Instead they were just observing 'their way of life and the manner in which it influences their apparently dull culture. It is not judgement but simple observation'. Though acknowledging it was hard to measure dullness, blog-manager Gray defended his description of the Baining as referring 'primarily to Bateson's assessment of them'. Gray then clarified how by 'dullness' he meant 'a relative lack of curiosity, enthusiasm, creativity, and joy in life'. Many bloggers walked a fine line between presenting themselves as unprejudiced, whilst noting they personally would never choose the Baining way of living. Jason wrote:

> A life without fun is a life not worth living. Even at 32 I still believe that. Work has its place and there's a need for more of it in our society, but if one cannot enjoy life why then does one live it at all? (FtL).

The individualisation of opinion and the reduction of culture to a personal lifestyle choice was regarded as protecting bloggers from any charge of racism. I interpret it as evidence of how psychology has become part of the contemporary rationalisation of racial-ethnic differences, their de-biologisation and transformation into psychological-cultural schemes.

As a cultural extreme, the Baining authorised a critique of intensified disciplinary regimes in the West, which had eroded not just the proper balance of work and leisure but also the 'true meaning' of childhood. Many bloggers mentioned changes in the school curriculum that now subjected children to more testing and rote learning – increasing homework and stress. The austere Baining were a dystopian possibility that warned against this growing dominance of a work-orientated culture that would destroy childhood as an idealised world of play and freedom. As Gray, put it:

> In some ways, I fear, we today are trying to emulate the Baining as we increasingly deprive children of opportunities to play and explore freely and, instead, force them to spend ever more time working in school and participating in adult-directed activities outside of school. (FtL)

Another blogger – a teacher – sought to moderate the tone of some caricatures by arguing the Baining should not be described as a 'dull culture' but as 'repressed'. She found:

> unstructured play, that is play planned by the children, to be the most effective way for children to learn. My job is to observe, observe, observe and based on those observations guide, question, encourage, and support, and not necessarily in that order.

Gray praised the teacher's pastoral-pedagogic strategies of empowering the child with freedom. He again criticised the West's compromising of childhood as it going in the same direction as the Baining. Gray had begun this forum (FtL) featuring the Baining to elicit such supportive comments, and other internet sites soon reproduced *Freedom to Learn*'s discussions about needing to protect childhood but also, more generally, play, leisure, art and religion from a growing culture of work. Indeed, blogger comments reveal the investment of western adults in a certain idealisation of childhood, where the rights of the child also encompass and articulate the rights of adults – to freedom, play, creativity, art and leisure.

The nothingness of modern life

The Baining were used to voice blogger fears about a terrible nothingness, an expanding realm of dull routines that appeared to be taking over modern life. As with all forms of othering, the Baining were set up in the staging of a curiosity focused on understanding the furthermost possibilities of the human. In previous centuries, the interest in exotic excess had often been an interest in savage and brutal extremes (Clifford 1988; Fabian 1983; Lattas 1987; Said 1978; Torgovnick 1990). Ironically, it now became an interest in dreaded worlds of boredom. The Baining were a forewarning of how human values and meaning could be remade within worlds of super production where excessive dull pragmatism would suppress all other and more stimulating realms of human meaning. Some philosophically-inclined bloggers discussed the Baining as offering the fascinating spectacle of a world view and a vision of humanity that had been created 'all without a foundational myth or religion to justify or enforce that belief'. Whereas, in

other cultures, the need to differentiate humanity from animality was 'a natural drive' that was religiously justified, this was allegedly not so for the Baining (FtL). More than primitive purists, the Baining became the first unbelievers – primitive agnostics or atheists. Indeed, their irreligiousness offered a unique case study in how it was possible to organise society in total pragmatism and without the mediation of religion, ritual, myth and exegesis. This caricature of a flat or depthless existence required bloggers to remain unaware of the well-documented religious culture of the Baining (Corbin 1979, 1982, 1984; Hesse and Aerts 1978; Laufer 1946/49, 1959, 1970; Stebbins and Planigale 2010; Whitehouse 1995, 1996a, 1996b), something I will later further document using primarily my own ethnography.

All work and no play makes the Baining dull

Ironically, both on blog sites and in academic narratives, the dullness of the Baining has made them exotic (Clifford 1988; Kapferer 2013). They offer the amusing spectacle of a totally tedious existence that has been socially institutionalised. Wary of overstepping the mark and being accused of promoting racial stereotypes, bloggers have followed academics in emphasising how they are just discussing culture and not race. Supposedly, there are no racial connotations implied in arguing that Baining culture lacks deep speculation with regard to myth, art, religion and creativity. Some bloggers repeated Fajans' argument that only outsiders experienced the Baining as living a monotonous, repetitive, shallow existence. The Baining did not have this experience because for them work and subsistence were meaningful. The Baining were unaware of their own dullness, and so some bloggers asked if it was ethnocentric to impute it to them. Other bloggers went further and defended the Baining's right to be boring. These bloggers questioned the right of westerners to devalue or criticise other people's existential choices, or their levels of comfort with a mundane existence. The Baining here lived a purposeful, rich life even if it was a flat existence that did not cultivate the deep truths, exciting speculations, spontaneity and creativity that westerners overly valorised. Readers were cautioned that a culture's repetitive tediousness did not make its bearers simple or thick. Other people were simply choosing other lifestyles. Here, culture was reduced to a lifestyle choice to which the Baining were entitled, just like everyone else. Cultural relativism was merged with democratic and consumer capitalist values to defend the Baining's right to a humdrum existence; their right to live in dullness and to be unreflexively boring.

Some bloggers justified the Baining's focus on work as imposed by subsistence needs. Others sought to turn the tables and they questioned how harmful dullness was when compared to more-damaging western activities.

> What harm is being done by becoming a dull culture? Do they suffer more? Are the[y] more violent or less caring for those in need? Do they pollute the environment or waste resources more than they would if they were less dull? Are they more prone to mental illnesses, depression, mania, anxiety? Are they more prone to chronic or fatal diseases? (FtL)

Another blogger rhetorically asked: 'What's wrong to base living on the idea that life is not fun?' (FtL). For these bloggers, the Baining offered a cultural relativist critique of the West; they offered a sober alternative to a pleasure culture. The Baining had rightly avoided organising life around excessive hedonism. Such praise affirmed the bloggers' sense of themselves as humanitarian liberals who were not interested in reproducing

racial hierarchies or stereotypes but could value diversity in all its unusual, idiosyncratic forms.

Contemporary caricatures of the Baining as boring, dull, unexegetical, irreligious and anarchical are part of a long history of racially primitivist speculations. However, today, cultural essences and cognitive styles have replaced skull shapes and evolutionary racial hypotheses as the primordial truths organising existence. Liberal humanitarian discourses have empowered these new caricatures, with bloggers believing it is morally and politically acceptable to use culture rather than biology to formulate their portraits of native exceptionalism. Anthropology has replaced biology in providing the rational empirical basis to authorise such caricatures of diversity that deny their racial aspects by grounding themselves in culture and psychology. The Baining continue to be re-invented to fit western intellectual, moral and political projects that have little to do with Baining life worlds and more to do with cultural politics in the West.

The religious Mali Baining

Over the last thirty years, fieldwork contacts in New Britain – recently through the Kivung movement – have led me to live and work with Mali villagers at Dadul, Illi and Karong. Like other Baining groups, the Mali are somewhat shy and reserved. They are not mute or, more accurately, they are selectively and deliberately so. They have a deep religious life that they hide from outsiders. Amongst themselves, the Mali enjoy the seriousness and the play of developing elaborate exegeses. Leading the way are their ritual specialists (**lengenacha**) and shamans, who are often supporters if not participants and leaders of local cults. The Mali have a long history of millenarian movements with internal schisms (Bley 1914; Köhnke 1973; Whitehouse 1995). The cults are noted for their religious creativity, often merging customary myths, rituals, symbols, dreams and magical practices with western culture so as to remake both tradition and modernity (Whitehouse 1996a, 1996b, 2004).

Many Mali villagers at Dadul, Merai, Karong and Marunga are loyal to the Kivung movement even though its political and religious leaders are Mengen. Mali followers regularly visit the Kivung's headquarters at the Pomio village of Salel, where I have been doing fieldwork since 1995. Other Mali villages, notably Maranagi and Illi, have breakaway cults that criticise Mengen cultural hegemony and the flow of Baining money to Pomio and Salel. The secessionists still follow the main movement's *Tenpela Lo* (a version of the Ten Commandments) given by the original Kivung leaders – Koriam, Bernard and Kolman (Fig. 1). The secessionists pay token homage to these founding leaders, whilst refusing to recognise the authority of Salel and its current spiritual leader Margaret Tuataprea (the late Kolman's wife).

Proudly local, the breakaway cults have their own spiritual leaders, shamans, rituals, myths and beliefs. These often localise not just western culture but also the rituals and beliefs of the main Kivung movement, which in turn prides itself on localising western culture – especially church, government and modern money. In effect, the secessionists relocalise existing cult forms of localisation. They do so using Mali culture, especially its ritual-mythological focus on the procreative powers of women and, more especially, of an original earth mother known as Naepalm (*cf.* Forge 1967; Hauser-Schäublin 1996; Hiatt 1971, 1979; MacKenzie 1991; Tuzin 1995). Initially, I was told Naepalm was God's wife and only later that she was also his sister.[19] This latter mythic detail is hidden because outsiders belonging to mainstream churches are said to criticise the Baining for their backward *tudak* beliefs.

When I began fieldwork at Salel in 1995, Mali villagers had just started to revisit after having joined breakaway cults (Whitehouse 1995, 1996a, 1996b). Today many Mali

Figure 1: *Tenpela Lo* post at Karong, it normally would have Roman numerals. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

stay at the headquarters for months at a time. Many can speak or at least understand the local Austronesian language of Mengen. They have also become knowledgeable in traditional Mengen myths that inform the main movement – some of which are similar to Mali myths, especially those involving a decrepit grandmother and grandson, or the rivalry between a good clever god and an evil stupid god. At the main office, Mali leaders started again to deposit books that record in Pisin the monetary donations and fines of their followers. Two books from 2005 are different, for they record the dreams and visions of Henrick K. Henrick who lived at Maranagi, which in the 1980s had been the centre of a breakaway cult that Dadul villagers also joined. He used his access to the spirit realm to police both villages' beliefs, practices, and loyalty, realigning these with the main movement.[20]

Henrick is a *nius man* (news man) – a shaman who brings information from the invisible worlds of the dead and future. Sometimes his *nius* came *via* the spirit of a deceased nephew, Charles, who would possess his body. Sometimes Henrick used his own soul to travel in dreams to the spirit world. There he saw the dead had shed their black skins and had turned white. These alternative white people controlled machines and factories, which they later would provide to the visible world once they were satisfied with followers' moral and ritual behaviour. Any accidents or misfortunes in a village would be interpreted by Henrick as a sign. It was communication from the dead with regard to followers' moral behaviour, loyalty to the main movement, and fulfilment of ritual obligations. In dreams, Henrick's soul sometimes visited the Kivung's communal gardens, especially Paradise Garden. There, he saw strange lights, heard the cry of noisy engines and spoke to white men dressed in white clothes. Such accounts confirmed the dead were living a modern European existence.

Henrick's soul also travelled to the Kivung's communal houses where he checked to see if the dead were coming to eat the soul of the food put out by followers. Whether

they came or stayed away served to confirm whether the dead were pleased or displeased with followers. When Henrick returned from the spirit world, he sometimes substantiated important, yet contentious, new claims made by Salel, namely: Joe was the black Jesus of Pomio and the world; Kolman was Number Two Nutu – the second god who had replaced and would improve on the first god; Koriam headed the Government of the Dead; and the late member for Pomio – Koki – now headed the underground Multi-million company that would surface with proper white people to truly develop Pomio and PNG (Whitehouse 1995). Whereas previously Mali shamans had used possession and dream travels to authorise breakaway cults, Henrick used his *nius* to bolster Mali commitment to the main movement.

At Salel, Henrick's dreams and visions were discussed publicly alongside those of other *nius man* from other language groups; some of whom also had notebooks recording their spiritual travels and communications. In a context of declining membership and accusations of fraud and fanciful innovations, the revelations of diverse spirits provided welcomed religious legitimacy to Kivung leaders. It conferred cross-cultural universality by confirming from different standpoints (regional, cultural and individual) the presence of a shared hidden modernity accessible to all loyal Kivung followers.

Mali Kivung followers

At the Mali villages of Dadul and Karong, I always attended the regular meetings that explained to Kivung followers the *Tenpela Lo*. Many Mali, irrespective if they belong to the main movement or a breakaway cult, secretly believe the Kivung's knowledge, rules and rituals originated in the Mali Baining area. In particular, they 'came up' from the first woman and cosmic mother of the world, Naepalm.[21] She reportedly visited Kolman in the 1960s, prior to his return to Pomio in 1974, when he was still managing Warwick Plantation, which is near Sunam and Dadul. Naepalm gave Kolman magic for making money multiply and ritual knowledge for feeding the dead. Kolman used this to begin secret cult activities with several of his plantation labourers – some of whom came from nearby Mali villages. One was Elisa, who still resides at Sunam. Every Thursday morning, Elisa helped Kolman prepare the food and the special room set aside to feed the dead. Later in the afternoon, Elisa would check to see if the dead had come. He smiled knowingly to me, with feigned puzzlement, as he noted that the food was always eaten.

Today, Elisa is a respected elder proud of his knowledge of traditional Mali myths and rituals. Though his village of Sunam has embraced development, and is widely regarded as having become Tolai in its relations and customs, Elisa still identifies with his bush Mali origins in the Dadul-Maranagi area. He clandestinely supports their millenarian attempts to use Mali custom to create a new modernity. In 2013, I visited Elisa and, whilst we were alone, he whispered how, one stormy night, Naepalm knocked on the door of the room where Kolman slept.[22] She 'came up' as a snotty nosed, filthy, smelly, old woman.[23] Kolman, however, was not revolted by her. He invited her in and offered food and water. Later, Kolman was not afraid to eat and drink the soiled remains of what Naepalm had not finished, even though this and the utensils were totally covered in her mucus and saliva. Having won this trial, Naepalm tested Kolman again. This time, she transformed herself into a huge python. Kolman was unafraid, so she coiled herself around Kolman, climbing up to his head. Kolman remained unafraid, even when Naepalm stuck her serpent tongue into his mouth.[24] The two kissed, which transferred Naepalm's knowledge – the *Tenpela Lo* – to Kolman. He is said to have later passed it on to Koriam and Bernard when they visited him at Warick plantation.

Figure 2: Four **Guaremgi** Mendas, Francis from Marunga on the left was the ritual co-ordinator. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Such heretical narratives, which attribute the Kivung's sacred knowledge to Baining ancestors, are concealed from Salel's Mengen leaders so as to avoid their anger and punishing fines. Though, today, Mali Kivung leaders are loyal to the main movement, they still have to compete with breakaway cults that threaten to steal their remaining followers. These Mali Kivung leaders often feel a need to localise the main movement's beliefs and practices by relating these to Mali ancestral procreative powers in a similar way as the breakaway cults.[25] Spanning across Mali cult cleavages is a hidden knowledge that all things of importance originated in the Mali area, and therein lies also the world's future destiny – its new beginning. Both Kivung and secessionist followers know that their first ancestress – Naepalm – was the true origin of the *Tenpela Lo* that will deliver an alternative Melanesian modernity not controlled by the Australians and their Tolai allies. Such proud secrets create solidarity and a sense of separateness for the Mali, regardless of cult rivalries. Paradoxically, such secrets lead Mali Kivung followers to stay loyal to the main movement, even though Kivung leadership and mythology are firmly Mengen. Mali Kivung followers undercut Mengen hegemony not through public defiance but through forms of secret complicity with one another, through subtle arts of resistance that employ hidden transcripts (Scott 1990). The Mali's loyalty to the main movement is underpinned by heresy; by covert strategies of re-reading that cosmologically recentre and re-empower Mali history, landscape and culture.

Heresy of all kinds, against both mainstream Christian Churches and the main Kivung movement, is why the Mali are reticent to discuss their beliefs about spirits, creation and the cosmos. However, when amongst themselves, they do talk openly about how the world originated in the Mali area; how rain, sun and the fertility of gardens depend on their customary rituals and the spiritual powers housed in their landscape. Those spirits are mostly female and part of Naepalm's line – extensions of her procreative powers. Sometimes called 'angels' or 'Marias', they appear in the daytime Mendas ceremony as four masks called **Guaremgi** (MD; Fig. 2). Their dome or bell shaped cap depicts a men's house which has womb connotations. From this cap protrudes a stick that supports an elliptical flat platform-canvas whose underside is painted with Mendas designs.

Etymologically, **guaremgi** is linked to words for the sounds of cool rivers, rapids and gurgling waters (MD:91). Coolness is associated, as we shall see, with the procreative powers of women, the moon, netbags, wombs and Naepalm. The male equivalents of the female

Figure 3: **Gerkachēna** Mendas moving towards the earth mound. Francis stands nearby. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

angels (Marias) are Mendas masks called **Gerkachēna** (MD; Fig. 3), or the 'Apostles' and 'angels of Jesus'. Gerkachēna are the last masks to appear in a Mendas ceremony. They use their thumping feet to destroy the earth mound whose creation begins this daytime ceremony (Fig. 6).

The sacred spiritual workers of the Mali are not those in the Bible or of mainstream churches. Informants noted that their spirits, their Marias and angels, do not reside in an elevated, removed and insubstantial Heaven but down below in the firm and fertile ground, with intimate links to the procreative powers of women and the beginning of time (*cf.* Forge 1967; Hauser-Schäublin 1996; Hiatt 1971, 1979; MacKenzie 1991; Tuzin 1995). The Mali revalue the subordinated creative potential of the Baining by revaluing the subordinated creative position of women. The mythologisation and ritualisation of women's regenerative powers uses gender differences, inequalities and resistances to encode colonial and racial-ethnic differences, inequalities and resistances.

When the Mali reread and localise the Bible, they play down the importance of a male god by showing how he is paired and dependent on an equally powerful female deity – his twin sister and wife, Naepalm. Linked to the origin of the earth, she embodies the millenarian promise of woman. The Mali deploy her to localise the Bible. They poach and stand upon the Bible's sacredness and its colonial-racial authority to re-empower the custodial relationship they have to the mythological creative powers of women residing in their landscape, rituals and the everyday bodies of Mali women. In the breakaway cults especially, this cosmic understanding of female procreative powers is projected into those powers providing a new modernity for the Baining.

Many Mali believe their myths, rituals and masks contain traces of the original creative knowledge from mythic time. It was part of the beginning of the world and so holds out the promise of being able to begin the world anew, only this time it will unlock a hidden modernity residing in the local landscape. Concealed in its mountains, rivers and undergrounds is Naepalm and her line of female spirits. Like masalai, they have the power to turn into white people. Other spirits, like the dead, are said to have shed their black skins and become white. For cult followers (both Kivung and secessionists), these alternative white people are knowledgeable and powerful and thus better able to supervise, manage and develop the Mai (and indeed Papua New Guinea). In the underground, the dead have underground factories and machines. These white relatives will provide their descendants with a better modernity, but only if followers are moral and adhere to cult obligations. True change

will not come from cash crops or the *kopi-save* (copy knowledge) of schools, government and church but from cult loyalty and moral-ritual discipline.[26] The Mali undercut the importance of modern western institutions so as to avoid complete hegemonic capture by surface-world white people and, more especially, by ethnic Melanesian groups like the Tolai and Sulka. Since Independence, the latter two groups have become economically and politically powerful in East New Britain. They are resented more than other settlers from the mainland or nearby regions, like Pomio. The Tolai are especially accused of reserving government jobs and funds for their *wantok* (same language-ethnic group) and of deliberately locking the Baining out of even menial jobs, such as cleaning, that do not require educational qualifications.

Mali narratives of hope and power

At Karong, where the Kivung is still prominent, I often heard from my bed, the respected elders – Clement and Jacob – talking into the early morning in the nearby communal house, which functions as a men's house at night. They would be explaining to young men the relevance of secret Mali myths, places and ancestors for the future of Papua New Guinea, the Kivung and the Baining.[27] The next morning, these weary old men (sometimes their sons) would visit me to drink tea and discuss their late night lectures. I always recorded our conversations. I quote extensively from them to counter current caricatures and to show how similar Baining villagers are to other Melanesians who also enjoy studying, reanimating and experimenting with their myths, rituals, sacred sites, ancestors and dead relatives. Like other Melanesians, the Mali guard their knowledge, the secrecy of which is the basis of: 1) local leadership and hierarchy; 2) gender segregation; and 3) ethnic solidarity against whites and intruding settlers (Allen 1967; Herdt 2003; Langness 1974; Whitehouse 1995, 1996a, 1996b).

Conscious of having lost much land and resources to outsiders, many Mali believe they must hide perhaps their most valuable remaining resource, namely knowledge concerning the invisible ancestral powers in their landscape. The colonizing Tolai are said to be searching for these. Though they have occupied much Baining land for commerce and subsistence, the Tolai are characterized as greedy and frustrated that a truer source of wealth eludes them and it is controlled by the backward, uneducated Baining. Mali informants tell of how some Tolai have tried to trick them into revealing where their ancestral powers are hidden. One, perhaps the most powerful, had originally resided in a local volcano, but when the Tolai first arrived from overseas some local Baining ran away with her. My informants claim not to know exactly where she was hidden, though they have a rough idea that privileges their local landscape. Other Mali stories tell of how during recent earthquakes and volcanic explosions, Tolai settlers were shocked to see traditionally decorated villagers dancing and singing. My informants claimed they were Baining ancestors who had emerged from underground to show they controlled these destructive seismic activities. They were making their creative presence and anger felt. Through sharing such narratives, the Mali delimit the appropriations of encroaching settler groups to what is materially visible while local invisible powers associated with the underground, dead relatives and wild forest spirits (*masalai*) are reserved as uncolonised or free, and as only truly understood and controlled by the Mali.

Exegesis and cult movements

In a context of ongoing poverty, marginalisation and hegemonic encapsulation, the Mali re-empower and revalue themselves *via* their narratives. Some narratives are secret whilst others are public but heavy with euphemisms and cryptic condensation (see

Figure 4: John Tommy at the cemetery post listing the names of the dead that Dadul feeds at its communal houses. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Whitehouse 2004:53). At first sight such practices of concealment and camouflage may seem to be a denial or subversion of exegetical practices, but they also give rise to them, to the need to reveal, elucidate and unpack what is hidden – both spiritually and conceptually. Other Mali narrative practices are quite public as Whitehouse (1995) shows for Kivung meetings around Dadul. To this day, Dadul leaders will explain to Kivung followers the intricacies and encompassing nature of the *Tenpela Lo*. This is done between two and five in the afternoon on those specific days that are reserved for feeding the dead at the two communal houses known as City and Gigunga. Whitehouse used this to develop a theoretical model that contrasted different cognitive styles to different cult forms. The main Kivung movement was said to use primarily a discursive-logical-exegetical style whilst the breakaway cults used primarily a creative-imagistic-emotional style.

Whitehouse had good reliable Mali informants and I admire the accuracy of his ethnography, but his binary cognitive model has limitations. Firstly, it plays down the role of creativity, images and emotions in the main movement (Jeudy-Ballini 1998; Lattas 2009). Like the breakaway cults, the main movement has also needed innovations to keep its followers. After the death of the early Kivung leaders – Bernard (1973) and Koriam (1978), many followers left the movement citing their unhappiness with the innovations introduced by Kolman when he assumed control at Salel.[28] After Kolman's death in 1995, more followers left, citing the innovations introduced by his wife – Margaret Tuataprea. She is a female shaman who is permanently possessed, mostly by her miscarried male children. She reveals their presence by dressing and acting as a man. One prominent lost child is Joe Baikolakia, who will be the new black Jesus of Melanesia and the world (Lattas 2010).

When alone with their followers, the preaching of Mali Kivung leaders can be far from doctrinal and repetitive. This is also so for other non-Mengen Kivung followers whom I have visited, like the Kol and Tomoip. Their Kivung leaders will also creatively relate the *Tenpela Lo* to local culture and history. On the south coast, Mali Kivung leaders can name

local sites where Biblical events occurred: where Jesus and Maria first appeared or where John baptised Jesus at a local stream called Jordan. The latter is commemorated in cult songs by secessionists at Illi.

Though frequently repetitive, the ritual practices of the main movement are not opposed to creativity, as posited by Whitehouse's model (Lattas 2009, 2010). For repetition is regarded as a magical practice directed at re-instating the original creative powers of myth. Moreover, repetitive Kivung practices have not remained the same. The rituals have been continuously modified and not just repeated. Sometimes Kivung leaders will deny having introduced any new ritual routines. But, at other times, those same leaders will note and justify their ritual innovations as 'steps', as ritual progress towards a utopian conclusion where repetition will end.

Rituals are repeated in the Kivung because repetition itself is ritualised; that is, it is regarded as a formative form, a transformative formal practice. Ritual repetition is a cult duty because of its magical promise to create a new society with new subjects and subjectivities. Both the breakaway cults and the main movement experiment with creating more powerful forms of repetition. These are attempts to develop new hybrid rituals, which merge customary forms of ritual repetition with western pedagogic forms of disciplinary repetition (Foucault 1977; Lattas 2006, 2009). Many Kivung rituals use repetition to posit a 'picture' of disciplined moral subjects whose civilised western nature and peaceful social order can attract the future government of the dead – that belonging to underground white people.

When Whitehouse noted tedium and boredom in the main movement, he did not appreciate sufficiently how repetitive ritual practices often appropriate and re-invent the transformative disciplinary-pastoral practices of a western civilisation process belonging to government and church by remediating this transformative western civilising process through dead relatives and their transformative worlds of myth and custom. This syncretism has two aspects. On the one hand, hybrid cult routines – that use western-styles of prayer, confession, meetings, preparations of food, and European etiquette – will be used to modernise customary ritual relations with the dead. A western disciplinary-pastoral character is given to traditional communications and gift exchanges with the dead. On the other hand, those same hybrid cult routines also work to 'customise' and localise western disciplinary-pastoral practices, which even in the West always had as their goal the transformation of the self and society. The Kivung diverts the transformative civilising projects of modernity away from the control of church, government, whites and educated Melanesians, so it is re-owned locally by being remediated through new ritual relations with the dead which always had their own transformative promise.

To Whitehouse's credit, his binary cognitive model never reduced Baining culture as a whole to everyday dull routines. He saw tedium and boredom as aspects of the main cult and its prioritisation of discursive exegetical meanings and standardised rituals. Unlike Bateson, Whitehouse never suspects the Baining to lack a formulable culture. Indeed, Whitehouse (1995, 1996a) studies the systemic mytho-poetic symbolic references (*e.g*. ring symbolism) in both the Kivung and breakaway cults. However, in positing a stark contrast between the disciplined, repetitive, logical-discursive regimes of the Kivung *versus* the spontaneous, poetic-imagistic, emotional schemes of its offshoot cults – Whitehouse's binary model underplays how both cognitive styles are inherent human qualities found in all cultures. Both cognitive styles are always implicated in each other. Thus, breakaway cults can implement stricter ritual-disciplinary regimes (meetings, work programs, prayers, confession, and other ritual obligations) than the main movement. What is more, the strict repetitive disciplinary-pastoral regimes of the main movement and the secessionists are always predicated on imagistic and emotional practices.

The philosopher, Castoriadis (1998), has rightly argued that all social life and its relationships are mediated by imaginary practices; by the imaginary institution of society. Indeed, cult followers regard repetitive ritual-disciplinary practices to be imaginary practices, what they call 'pictures' (*piksa*, **ailachi** MD), which also means shadows and reflections, but not in a superficial way. For a shadow can be the spirit or soul of a person and object. Indeed, in magic and sorcery practices, pictorial and ritual likenesses are created to draw close and capture the animating soul or life-force – that of what they resemble. The Kivung's ritual-disciplinary routines will magically realise by drawing close the perfectly ordered world they depict. The new modernity will come through instituting attractive or promising pictures of its order as idealisations of core aspects. Like their Mengen counterparts, Mali Kivung followers claim to be today only working with the 'skin' (**chēdenggi** or **kēndenggi**; **patuna** in Mengen) of a hidden inner reality (**chēlochacha**; **mirana** in Mengen) that will later be brought by the dead. It is the concealed buried soul of modernity, its shadows, that are routinised, ritualised and repictured to realise anew modernity's future.

Whitehouse's binary model of Baining cognitive practices (discursive, ritual repetition *versus* emotional, imagistic creativity) narrows down the cognitive diversity in different cults. But Fajans' model totally flattens out the cognitive possibilities of Baining culture as a whole into an absence of exegesis and symbolic depth; a relative lack of discursive and poetic possibilities. I am more sympathetic to Whitehouse's work. However, his theoretical approach has contributed to the Baining becoming overly 'cognitivised', that is, the diversity of everyday cultural practices is reduced to core foundational styles of thinking. Recent psychological and religious studies analyses have further systematised Whitehouse's and Fajans' cognitive models by highlighting dichotomies such as: exegetical *versus* practical or psychological *versus* little interest in other minds (Fajans 1985:367; Hamilton et al. 1988). Invariably, the contextual aspects of Baining existence are lost in a search for totalising psychological schemes that simplify and essentialise what is variable and shifting. These cognitive caricatures ignore the organising influence of social relations – rules of etiquette and protocols of power – that organise what people can say, think and disclose at various points in time, which includes what they must not say, think or disclose at other times, such as to outsiders. What is more, silence is not always silent; it is not the absence of articulation so much as an articulation of what must not be spoken.

In the next section, I will turn to my fieldwork data to unpack the intellectual, moral and political projects of the Mali Baining themselves, focusing on why art, gender and millenarianism are so intimately related.

PART TWO: ART, MILLENARIANISM AND THE MYTHO-POETICS OF GENDER

Current debates about the Baining have sought to redeploy Bateson's (1936) intellectual authority, which had hitherto been based on his later Melanesian work (primarily with the Iatmul). It is now being applied retrospectively to rehabilitate and reauthorise his earlier Baining research, even though he regarded it as a 'wretched failure' (Pool 2015:21). Fajans (1997:3–4) argues Bateson did not get it all wrong to suggest the Baining may not use systemic symbolic references. Bateson's suggestion was criticised long ago by Father Carl Laufer (1959:906) using detailed ethnography on Mali myths and rituals. Laufer was a German Catholic priest who resided in the Gazelle Peninsula between 1929 and 1955.[29] Some of his ethnography overlaps with my own and I regard his account as excellent, even if it was often provided by missionary informants at Vunapope (Schlesier 1958:170; Janssen 1975:26). Laufer's claim that the Baining had a culture able to be formulated as having intricate symbolic references is supported by the work of other ethnographers. For

the Mali, it is supported by Whitehouse's (1995, 1996a, 1996b, 2004) detailed studies of millenarian cults, and by Planigale and Stebbins' (2010) study of everyday linguistic practices (Stebbins and Tayul 2012).[30] In terms of other Baining dialects, George Corbin studied gender and colour symbolism in the art of Kairak and Uramot speakers in the Central Baining area. Corbin was a student of fine arts who supplemented his fieldwork with close studies of Laufer's published and unpublished ethnography – much of it in German. For the north Baining, Fathers Hesse and Rascher document pervasive religious cosmological themes in myths and rituals (see also Parkinson 1907). From 1966, for about seven years, Hesse lived with the Qaqet (Cachet, Chachet) – close to where Fajans and Pool did fieldwork.[31] Hesse takes the opposite position to Fajans, when he agrees with Laufer in likening Baining culture to a medieval mystery play because it is full of multiple layers of secrecy and meaning (Hesse and Aerts 1978). In turn, Fajans dismisses the perspective of both priests as coloured by their religious vocation and lack of professional anthropological training. In a posting on the ASAONET, 31/08/2015, Fajans writes: 'It is true that the Germans wrote about Baining myths and cosmology, but much of what they say is redolent of German beliefs, some of which appear to be transposed onto the Baining rather than emerging from the people themselves.' Laufer especially is accused of projecting religious interests, assumptions and meanings onto a group that supposedly lives more through habits than intellectual speculation. His rich ethnography is too quickly dismissed by Fajans. Instead of taking it on its merits, she aligns her interpretation of the Baining with Bateson who did just 14 months of fieldwork, when he was new to anthropology and Melanesia. Initially, he had struggled to learn Pisin and he never mastered the difficult Baining language with its diverse dialects. He also never felt accepted by them. In contrast, both priests spent decades with the Baining and gained their trust. Hesse learnt the local dialect whilst Laufer often used his trusted and knowledgeable missionary informants (Janssen 1975:26).

Fajans lived with the Qaqet for two and half years in 1976–78, and returned in the early 1990s. Like Bateson, she discounts the spectacular masks as exceptions to normal Baining culture. She cites informants dismissing the masks as 'just play' and then argues that play is culturally devalued and equated with the lower realm of animals.[32] For the Baining, the masks are supposedly superficial activities and decorations removed from the more important practical aspects of life. It is only as work that the masks are meaningful, for work differentiates and affirms the human over the merely animal.[33] I do not accept these hierarchical distinctions (work *versus* play, human *versus* animal) as being so sharp among the Baining, where ritual is work, and work requires ritual activity. Moreover, the animal realm is far from devalued, for animals can be spirits that assume a human form. These anthropomorphised animal spirits feature in night-time firedances – as a *masalai* (*e.g.* a wallaby or cassowary spirit from the bush) that can possess a male dancer who wears its costume-mask. The dancer behaves accordingly – as a *masalai* – which is why dancers reportedly feel no burning coals at their feet or hot sparks on their skin when they jump into the ceremonial fire. Informants emphasised how a normal human body would not remain unscathed, without blisters, unless it was inhabited and protected by a second powerful body. It is not a disembodied spirit that enters the human body but an embodied spirit, an anthropomorphised animality that tests, reconstitutes and highlights the dancer's masculinity with its own corporeality.

In her emphasis that the Baining 'lack notions of symbolism and exegesis,' Fajans sidesteps the possibility that they often use pragmatism to deflect inquiries into their religious cosmology. Fajans (1977:36) describes an incident when the men did not invite her to a special bush shelter where they were constructing new masks. The shelter is a highly taboo site that women must avoid (Bateson 1932:336–7; Poole 1943:224). Fajans went and found the men did not respond with deep significant meanings to her questions about the

masks. She especially was surprised by their pragmatic answer to her query about why women did not carry the large pole masks – the masks were 'too heavy.' For Fajans, the answer was absurd, given the heavy loads that women carry every day. My experience is that informants may use common sense pragmatic answers to short-circuit any deeper questioning whilst implying the correct answer. Senior men especially, like to talk in riddles that are half-truths, which secretly test the questioner to think and uncover deeper meanings that contain more truth.[34]

Pollution, heaviness and reproduction

Among the Mali, the men's answer to Fajans would refer in a cryptic way to a secret, here to the secret male myth that tells how women first held the pole masks but relinquished them as they became too heavy to carry. Such myths of women having first possessed secret male religious objects and then lost them to men are common in Melanesia and among indigenous groups worldwide. Anthropologists often call them myths of matriarchy (Bamberger 1974; Gewertz 1988; Herdt 1982, 2003). According to Mali myths, women – often condensed into the persona of Naepalm – struggled to hold the Mendas masks, some of which require two poles to support them, because their own bodies had suddenly changed to become *hevi* (heavy). This occurred after Naepalm covered her genital area by using a piece of decorated barkcloth left over from making Mendas masks. All women now acquired breasts and vaginas, which made their bodies *hevi* with added physical weight but also *hevi* with new polluting fluids. At Karong, the respected elder, Clement, gave this account:

> … when the bullroarer first cried [warning the Mendas would start] at the entrance [Karong's foreshore] … there were no breasts [*susu*] and no vagina on women's bodies. God asked who would go first to dance and she [Naepalm] said she would. She took *malo* [barkcloth] and put it on her backside, on her body. It was *malo* for the Mendas and it had writing [designs] on it, and it was then the body of women came up, the *sik-mun* [sick-moon, menstruation] and breasts. It was then this *sik* [bleeding] of women came, this water [menstruation and vaginal secretions] of women came, this *hevi* [heaviness, pollution, sickness] came up and it fell on all women and their bodies. This *malo* made the body of women come up. This something that we write with, the red paint, it marks the water of women - the first time that menstruation and breasts came up.

'Heaviness' has many meanings. It is not just a pragmatic reference to physical weight, for heaviness can also include pollution (**meran**) and moral sin-stain. Along with heavy masks, women now had to carry the extra weight of their new breasts and the 'heaviness' of new fluids emanating from their reproductive bodies. Overburdened, Naepalm – who is emblematic and the archetypal form of all womanhood – was unbalanced by the heavy masks. She struggled to stay upright and could not dance properly with grace and poise. Clement especially noted how Naepalm was unable to stomp and shake the ground firmly with strong steps – something Mendas dancers must do to this day.

> When she [Naepalm] danced she was now heavy, she was heavy with water and pollution, and heavy with breasts. The Mendas were heavy and her breasts were heavy, and she could not dance strongly. He man [husband, male twin, God] then took everything to dance with. The man had the strength to dance, and woman

> then struck the *garamut* [slit wood drum, **athunepki** MD] and it cried well. With custom, women plays the garamut and it follows the shape of woman.

Art and sexuality

Displeased with the first performance of the Mendas – by women's weak dancing, clumsy postures and lumbering movements – God took the masks away from women and gave them to men – or at least most of them. Some masked disguises (*tumbuan*) that were not heavy were left with women. To this day, women perform these in secret, hiding their sacred knowledge from men, just as men hide theirs from women (Read 1931; Bateson 1932:339). Above, Clement notes that woman's inept dancing and loss of masks is compensated by her receiving the *garamut*: a slit drum that informants – with embarrassed humour – likened to her reproductive body. Naepalm plays this musical instrument with skill, matching men's beautiful yet firm dancing. The art of music and the art of masks were exchanged between the sexes. They were substituted – made to complement and socially balance out each other. Mythologically, aesthetics take priority over everything. Art must ultimately be pleasing to the eyes and ears of God. Performances must satisfy his divine standpoint. His personal taste makes art sacred and his aesthetic judgement is passed down to the living as their aesthetic. A cosmic consciousness comes to inhabit masks and music. God's finely attuned taste is what performers must realise and satisfy and what an audience must appreciate.

Some informants did not mention women's clumsy dancing as displeasing God but the clapping noises made by their new maternal breasts. This spoilt God's appreciation of the first Mendas and so God took the masks away from Naepalm and instead gave women an alternative percussion instrument – the *garamut*. Though diverging in detail, both mythic accounts tie women's loss of religious artefacts and secrets to their reproductive bodies. Women's new-found biology, their feminine sexuality, removes them from ownership and control of sacred rituals. These are transferred to men, becoming part of men's initiation rites – tying male strength to religious knowledge. The new social order of gender inequalities and religious hierarchy merges corporeal realities with aesthetic conditions (*cf.* Gillison 1993; Mimica 1988). Power comes to be aestheticised.

The art of power and the power of art

Mali masks are bound up with the emergence of sexuality, reproduction and desire. Prior to the first Mendas, women were asexual. They were neuter in form rather than androgynous (a mixture of male and female). Some claim that because God put on the Mendas headdress, after Naepalm had danced with it, he became sexually excited. Naepalm's body had already changed to become feminine and her sexuality permeated the mask. God's body became 'tight', that is erect. This allowed him to stand tall and firm so as to grip tightly the cords that balance tall Mendas masks. As Clement put it:

> The Big Man got up and held this something [Mendas mask] after woman [Naepalm]. He got up and wanted to move his body, tighten his bones and he wanted to hold the two ropes [controlling the mask] and everything was tight.

Symbolically, men's present-day dancing with large elevated Mendas masks is phallic and stimulated by the traces of women's sexuality that originally flowed into Mendas masks.

Women's new sexual body gave them heaviness -menstruation and pollution – but it also gave them feminine beauty and sexual allure. As Clement put it: 'When the body of

woman came up [vagina] including her breasts, the *malara* [bewitching charm] of woman and *mangal* [desire, **avelagagi**] also came up at this time.' Women's new found magnetism compensates for men's triumph over women's weaker bodies, their poor mask performances and loss of ownership over sacred objects. Ideologically, the myth sexualises and aestheticises power and domination. For the mythic conditions of women's subordination – their loss of religious artefacts and their polluted bodies – renders them beautiful and reproductive.

Informants associated the emergence of women's sexuality with the origin of desire in all its various enticing forms. Women's new feminine bodies had *malara* – pull and charisma. It was the earthly origin of lust, desire and attractions of all kinds. More especially, women's new found sexual attraction was the source of the pull or *malara* that an audiences witnesses before masks. The attraction of painted masks, their seductive hypnotic charm, was explained as due to women having first held these items when their bodies changed. Likewise with the garamut, the seductiveness of its cry comes from it resembling women's new attractive body. Art objects participate in the hypnotic mesmerism of women's bodies. To quote Clement again: 'with the *malara* of woman, just like a video pulls (captures, attracts) your eye, a woman pulls your eye, the Mendas must pull your eye.' There is a sexualisation of the aesthetic that is read mythologically into the aesthetic pull of masked performances.

Male initiation rituals and the Mendas

Mali myths associate Mendas masks with: the emergence of sexuality, sharper gender distinctions, male social-religious empowerment, and the phallic masculinisation of men. Accordingly, along with public masked dancing, Mendas ceremonies also contain secret initiation rites to strengthen and reclaim young boys. In 2015, at Karong, while Mendas masks were dancing in the plaza, young boys were being ritually cleansed of female pollution in the bush by senior men.[35] Hitherto, their bodies had been soft and stunted – weighed down – by close proximity to their mothers' and sisters' 'heaviness' or pollution. To some extent, the pollution taken away from boys in Mendas rites is a continuation of the original pollution women received when the bark cloth of Mendas masks made them mothers.

The initiation rites for young boys, which take place secretly in the bush, are publicly marked by senior men constructing an earth mound in the ceremonial plaza. Yellow capped tumbuan (**awan'ga** MD) will inaugurate the mound by planting cordylines on top and sprinkling ash around it so as to protect the ceremony from jealous sorcery. This occurs before any Mendas masks come out to dance in the plaza. Both Laufer (1959:926) and my informants called this mound *pikinini* (**athoemga** MD).[36] There, each father of an initiate (**iringga** MD) will take turns to stand.[37] Like his son in the bush, a father will wear new barkcloth. Around his neck or in his hand will be a netbag containing two or four baked taro tubers. Each father will also hold a parcel of smoked wild pork or more traditionally a snake.[38]

Mendas masks will dance around each father and the earth mound. They will thump the ground strongly with their feet – just as the male twin did at the beginning of time after God took the masks away from Naepalm. The reverberations of those first dance steps were needed to compact and strengthen the original earth that had just been created. This ground was still soft, just like the skin and body of a newborn child.

The ceremonial mound is constructed by standing a section of a banana stem upright, and then strengthening and stabilising it with a circle of hard volcanic stones. This is then all buried under earth, which as we shall repeatedly see has strong feminine and, indeed,

Figure 5: A father of an initiate wearing new barkcloth and holding ritual food parcels at the mound. The nearby Mendas is of Jesus (**rēveikpēmka** MD, *pikanini*). It and Naepalm's Mendas were the largest masks to appear at Karong. Both were shaped like an **iringga** stick insect. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Figure 6: **Gerkachēna** flattening the central ceremonial earth mound. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

womb connotations. Laufer (1959:926) notes the earth mound is sometimes called 'mother hill' and 'the dance floor . . . is considered the maternal womb of the ancestress.'[39] My informants explained: 'the ground is our mama, when we work this play [Mendas], we work with this *bilum* [earth, earth womb]. We must work ground with stones first [inside the mound]. God gave this power of the *bilum* [earth womb] to the Baining'.

The daytime Mendas ceremony ends when dancers known as **Gerkachēna** (Apostles) encircle the mound and use their thumping feet to flatten it (Fig. 6).

I interpret this as the final ritual strengthening of the feminine earth by the dancing masked spirits, which re-enacts the secret ritual strengthening of the soft feminine bodies of young male initiates that is occurring in the bush. The mound is an extension – an objectification – of the initiates in the bush, but also of the first soft body that needed to be strengthened; an original soft earth-womb.

The celestial womb that became the earth

Secret Mali myths claim that at the very beginning of time, before there was ground or indeed anything else, there was only an original *bilum* (netbag, **sēgēnacha** MD) or womb. It

hung from the sky by a rope; in effect, a cosmic umbilical cord (Forge 1967:70; Hauser-Schäublin 1996:98–9; MacKenzie 1991:143). It dripped blood and amniotic fluids before it finally came down from the sky to form the soft ground. It formed the earth, which is a second version of the celestial womb, being an alternative material version of the primary cosmic *bilum*.

While up in the sky, this *bilum* housed the two twins – God and his sister or wife, Naepalm, the mother of humanity.[40] At noted earlier, theirs is an incestuous relationship. I was told that *laik* – desire (**avelagagi**) – was there in the celestial womb. For everything was originally inside the womb, there was nothing outside. After the *bilum* came down, God tried to create the earth by moulding together the womb's blood, amniotic fluids and soft tissue. The first time he did so, the ground was too soft and broke apart when he tested and shook it with an earthquake. This earthquake is what the thumping feet of Mendas dancers must repeat. On his second attempt, the male twin repeated his first attempt but now inserted large trees and stones (**dulki** MD) inside to strengthen the earthly womb.[41] He shook the ground again with an earthquake, but it again broke apart, and indeed became liquid once more. The third time, God repeated his second attempt but now the ground held together. The large stones and trees, which strengthened it, were in reality the hard, enduring homes of *masalai* spirits. These became the cosmic womb's skeletal structure, its masculine hard bones to support its soft feminine flesh. Relevant here is Laufer's (1946/1949:533–4) observation that in the spells, myths and rituals of the Mali and Uramot, stones are often likened to bones.

After I returned a number of times to Karong, Clement expanded his above account, adding that Naepalm had watched God's repeated failure to create earth from the remnants of the celestial womb. After the first and second attempts, she came forward to help God. As his cosmic sister and wife, she is said to have equal creative knowledge. For the third attempt, she asked him to repeat his second attempt that had inserted large trees and stones, but now the earth remained strong. It did not break apart when shaken. Informants emphasised Naepalm did not really do anything; her presence alone was sufficient to transform the moulded mixture into strong earth. Clement explained Naepalm standing next to her brother as being a generative act, akin to the sexual coupling of married couples that produces offspring.

> God worked this ground; God worked another *bilum* [netbag, womb] that comes to us now, to the ground. . . God worked the ground three times; the first and second time, it was too soft. He worked it the first time and it was just ground, he shook it [earthquake] and it become just water [liquid]. He worked it again a second time but he now put inside large stones and trees. He shook the ground again and it still broke. This woman [Naepalm] had *save* [knowledge, intelligence], she saw him working the ground, she could work whatever God worked. She came with her *save* and said that the two of them had to work it together and everything [earth] was then strong. It is the same with us married people now. The hidden talk [secret meaning of the myth] is his water and her egg had to come together.

This myth affirms the cosmic interdependence of the male and female, for their fertile union is necessary to beget anything new. The male god works with futility to procreate until Naepalm came, with her fertile knowledge and presence, or as Clement put it: 'his water and her egg had to come together'. Naepalm brings a sexualised cosmos into existence, revealing how acts of worldly creation must participate in a cosmic coupling of the male and female. This was there in latent form at the beginning of time inside the cosmic womb,

Figure 7: A netbag with two 'rooms', picturing the original womb with its two celestial inhabitants and their spiritual placenta. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

but today it continues in the creative labour of married couples, in their reproductive potential.

Spiritual twins and bifurcated wombs

Woven netbags loom large in the ceremonies of the Mali because they secretly refer to the celestial womb and its cosmic twins. Visiting dignitaries will have netbags holding two baked taro tubers hung around their necks. The tubers are of equal size and shape – symbolising the cosmic equality of the twins. Ceremonial netbags are also given to newly married couples, for as Clement notes above, each marriage re-enacts and continues the generative coupling of the original twins. Sometimes special netbags are woven with two compartments (Fig. 7), symbolising the bifurcated nature of the cosmic womb, where each twin had their own 'room.'

Some ceremonial netbags will have four baked taro, which was explained as the original twins plus their spiritual placenta-doubles. Like other East New Britain groups, the Mali understand each person's placenta (**lavaitigel** MD) to be a spiritual double – **ailachi** – or what the Mengen call **vitona** (or **sipona**).[42] My informants invariably used the latter term because of our shared familiarity with Mengen culture. Detailed accounts of the celestial womb describe God and his placenta double residing in one 'room' while the other room contained Naepalm and her placenta double. This is Clement's account:

> They came up, like we come up in the womb of our mothers. There was Mama [Naepalm] and her *vitona*, and there was God and his *vitona*. They were hanging from a rope, and the rope was not hanging from anything. . . When they became big enough like we do [gestation], this *bilum* went down. . . . This *bilum* they resided in, it was soft and it no longer had anything inside it. . . He then put the stones and trees inside this *bilum* that they had lived in. They were not stones but people [*masalai*].

Now grounded, the celestial womb gained new inhabitants, both on top – with humans – and in the underground – with masalai spirits. The landscape acquired a hidden consciousness and intentionality. It acquired a subterranean world, an invisible world to be addressed and placated by those above it.

Figure 8: A spider mask dancing in the background among other firedance masks at Dadul. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

The celestial rope that held the original womb is often likened to a spider's thread. The delicate threads and patterns of a spider's web are seen as reproduced in the netbags woven by women. The Mali word for spider's web, **masar,** refers to weaving a netbag; while an unfinished netbag is called **masarka** (MD:121). Spiders feature heavily in Baining myths and folktales (Bley 1914). Laufer (1959:935) records a mythic analogy of the moon as a spider, as the star that climbs higher every night, weaving its web. Baining masks depict the patterned webs of a spider. *Hesse* and Aerts (1978:53, 69) note how spider masks open and close firedance ceremonies and are interspersed among other masks (Fig. 8). I interpret them as unifying masks that incorporate the diversity of other masks into the celestial origins they mirror and embody. The other masks are more earthly (often monstrous animal forms) and bound up with masalai bush spirits. Spider masks span and ritually weave together again the different strengthening aspects of earthly existence into the cosmic web-womb from which everything came and now secretly still resides.

In ceremonial contexts, netbags can be decorated with black and white clam shells, which mark the original strengthening of the soft womb-earth with hard stones. The hard shells are gendered male. They contrast with the soft netbag woven by women that symbolises a womb and its reproductive contents.[43] Sometimes netbags are decorated with other shells that may also be hung directly around a dancer's neck (Fig. 9). One or two white conch shells are said to symbolise God and his placenta double, whilst one or two black-iridescent mother of pearl shells stand for Naepalm and her placenta double.

At Karong's Mendas ceremony in 2015, the placenta spirits of both God and Naepalm appeared as prominent masks. In mythic accounts that I collected, God's placenta spirit does not feature as highly as Naepalm's **vitona**. The latter is often portrayed as an old decrepit grandmother with a dirty, smelly skin full of sores. She is a version of Naepalm, her mirror double. Many believe she was Kolman's late night visitor. Stories portray this old *rubis meri* (rubbish woman) as living alone or with her orphan grandson. She is sometimes called Maria (Mary), for she is like a virgin mother without a husband. Her orphan grandson, who also has a filthy skin covered in sores, is thought to be Jesus. For he, like Jesus, is despised, persecuted and misunderstood by those around him.

God's placenta spirit, like God, is unnamed but can be referred to in the local context generally as the Holy Spirit. Like all **vitona,** he provides the guiding light of spiritual knowledge to his double.[44] This is how Clement described the Holy Spirit inside the celestial womb.

Figure 9: A Mendas decorated with a white conch shell and two black-iridescent clam shells. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

> The Holy Spirit gave him [God] knowledge … They were there living with *tudak* [darkness, implying also ignorance, moral darkness]. They were growing inside. A third something was between them, the Holy Spirit. He was giving light [knowledge, sacredness] to them all.

Clement went on to clarify that the Holy Spirit had originally directed God to mould the flesh and fluids of the celestial womb and then to insert strengthening *masalai* stones and large trees. Those two first attempts by men failed, until Naepalm came with her knowledge and presence – to join her egg to his water. My incorporation into Mali knowledge was organized like this, as progressive multiple readings that built, subverted and transformed earlier versions. Hesse's characterization of this as a medieval mystery play has insight but ignores the gender logic that unfolds in these re-readings. Truth effects are created as the progressive unveiling of the original generative power of womanhood. Initial mythic accounts, which are often more public and given to novices like myself, will position male creators as primary. Such accounts are safe to give, for they participate in western patriarchal Biblical accounts. Later, those accounts will be corrected by unveiling the hidden cosmic power of women's sexuality and how it is the Baining who know and control the secret truth of creation as grounded in the power of the *bilum*.

Woman, fertility and the powers of creation

At Karong's Mendas, on either side of the doorway where masks entered and left the ceremonial ground, two mature women stood with exposed breasts signalling their primary maternal nature. They were dressed traditionally with grass skirts and each held a large taro plant. During the ceremony, other women came forward to dance and thrust taro sticks near

the bodily joints of Mendas dancers. Later, when planted, the taro sticks will render a whole garden productive. Out of feigned modesty – that 'he is not a good man who works good gardens' – a Mendas mask will try to avoid the women. They are seeking to capture its fertility which emanates from the sweat and smell of the labouring joints of dancing masks. For this is like the sweat and smell from the labouring joints of gardeners, only more powerful. This spiritual *doti* (dirt, **sichiērki** MD) is also like that from the polluted body of the decrepit grandmother. Her foul smelling, putrid skin bestows fertility and is invoked in garden magic by the Mali, Kol, Mengen and Tomoip.

In his study of Mali millenarian movements, Whitehouse (1996a, 1996b:185, 2004:52–3) noted how they drew on traditional fertility themes. However, it is not just the Mali Baining who use the mytho-poetics of gender as a deep organising ontology to reproduce society and the cosmos. For the Qaqet (Cachet), Corbin notes how painted cloth from Mendas masks would be given to women as a fertility blanket to help them bear children (Corbin 1982:9). Father Hesse quotes Father Laufer (1946/1949:528) when noting the similarity of 'the blatantly sexual nature' of Qaqet ritual performances to those of the Mali and Uramot (Hesse and Aerts 1978; see also Bley 1914; Corbin 1976). Indeed, Laufer (1946/49:528) claims to have been shocked by some of the obscene, sexually suggestive dances. However, both priests also seek to protect and rescue the Baining's moral reputation by excusing and normalising their fertility symbolism as no more than that found elsewhere in the world (Hesse and Aerts 1978; Laufer 1959:925; 1946/1949: 528). Such claims sought to fend off pathologising labels and criticisms of Baining culture as grounded in crude, primitive themes. Hesse, in particular, argues the sexual themes should not be isolated and treated as a separate fertility cult but located within broader relations with ancestors, spirits and mythic time.

While I agree with the latter, it should not be at the expense of downplaying the reproductive ontology of Baining culture as grounded in gender and sexuality. In everyday life, many Mali direct their ritual-magical practices to their original mother Naepalm or her *vitona*, asking for their help. As the female twin from the celestial womb, Naepalm more closely embodies its cosmic generative powers and those of the earth that this womb became. As noted earlier, the earth is a second cosmic womb: a grounded version-transformation of the first celestial womb. Hidden spirit women in the ground, referred to as 'Naepalm's line' (her angels and Maria's), serve to parcel out and further localise the cosmic powers of creation and fertility belonging to the celestial womb and its female child Naepalm. Likewise, the bodies and personhood of living women also parcel out and further localise the original powers of creation and fertility belonging to the celestial womb and the original mother, Naepalm. Mali women are thus important ritual specialists with whom men must work even if men gained control of important ceremonies and sacred objects originally held by women. Men must sing out to women who can then sing out to Naepalm and her 'line'. Sharing a common body, which is closer to and participates in the generative powers of the first cosmic womb, living women's pleas to female spirits are seen as more powerful than those of men, and as more likely to convince them.[45]

Gender and ritual interdependence

The complementary nature of maleness and femaleness in Baining rituals was noted by Corbin (1976, 1982). He explains the day time Mendas ceremonies as gendered female and as fertility rites celebrating women's cosmological powers. In contrast, the night-time firedance ceremony is gendered male. It consists of aggressive, short, faster moving masks that dance around a fire, kicking it and leaping into its flames and coals. During the day, the larger,

slower, vertical and heavier Mendas masks dance to a female choir. Women sing the songs of creation and beat the wooden slit drum that resembles their procreative bodies. At night, men form the choir, and for percussion they strike small, rounded, strong and heavy volcanic stones at the end of bamboo tubes. When I first arrived, I was teased by older men, 'do you know why the drums of the Baining are stones?' Later, I would learn that such drumming refers to the strengthening of the earth with *masalai* stones.[46] At night, men's singing and drumming calls up the wild bush spirits so these *masalai* can inhabit the firedance masks and thus further strengthen male initiates. I believe that underpinning the complementary nature of all male and female pairing practices is the Mali myth of the cosmic womb that came down and then needed to be strengthened with stones to create human earthly existence.

Unlike Whitehouse (1995:14), I found the symbolic opposition of male and female did inform other terms positioned as opposites locally, such as hot and cold, white and red, semen and blood, dry and wet, hard and soft. These are complex pairs that are not just posed against each other but are also acknowledged as interdependent. They are used to counterbalance, augment, unlock, contain and channel each other's powers. Though Mali men and women had been mythological rivals, they must now join together, become coupled, in order to create anything worthwhile. Men openly state they depend on women's rituals just like they depend on women's everyday labour, nurturance and power to give birth. Though men acquired important secret religious artefacts, they did not acquire all the original sacred knowledge. Women kept some of their original artefacts, rituals and magic upon which men now rely. The gender division of labour that divides up the symbolic universe of the everyday – hunting *vs*. gardening, tree cutting *vs*. weeding, barkcloth making *vs*. netbag weaving – extends into each sex being dependent on the ritual-religious knowledge of the other sex. Indeed, as Mary Douglas (1966) and Turner (1969b) note, magical-cosmological power often resides in those people and activities that are seemingly marginal or subordinated.

Female rituals and the cooling light of the moon

Many ethnographers have noted how women perform a secret night ritual prior to a major Baining ceremony (Bateson 1932:334; Read 1931; Laufer 1946/49:528). Among the Mali, women have two such rituals, the **Siviriki** (or **Asuviriki**) and the **Mandeburichi**. Both seek to cool the whole village but especially the main ritual site where men will perform with masks so as to attract spirits and become possessed by them. Women's night dances are credited with preventing any outbreak of fighting or ill-feeling from the potent heat generated by the forthcoming rituals and their spirits. At Dadul, in February 2017, just prior to a night firedance, women came up with their secret *tumbuan* to perform the **Siviriki**. Men fled the village so as to avoid seeing women's masked disguises. Compared to men's tall and heavy pole masks, women's *tumbuan* are short and light. Their masked disguises do not feature the painted barkcloth that has been bleached in the hot sun. Instead, women's tumbuan are made from the green leaves of a short growing plant called **saguiaga** that grows around small streams in cool valleys. Clement's son, Kevin, explained women's relinquishing of clothes and the wearing of bush materials, as women going inside what is cold, cool, dark and powerful. Women went inside these aspects of the bush so as to cast away all false forms of concealment and find what is true and originally powerful.

> They dance covered with something from the bush. Women dance with the bush, and this means they go into darkness [*tudak*, what is hidden, outside society]. They throw away this *karamap* [concealing covering, clothes]. They throw away the bad pieces, so as to keep what is good.

In the **Siviriki**, women dance around a choir of women who sing and beat a garamut. Later, the short masks of men will appear holding threatening sticks. It will then be women's turn to flee with their tumbuan into the bush. The village plaza will again be accessible to men. Such ceremonies repeat the original sequences of mythic time when women's pre-eminence in society was based on their control of masked rituals before this gave way to men's pre-eminence and the dominance of their masked disguises.

Kevin also explained the **Siviriki** and **Mandeburichi** as night rituals that allowed women to use the coolness of their bodies and bush costumes to call forth the cooling influence of Naepalm and the moon. They did so as to counteract the dangerous heat of the sun, which was 'picture talk' (*piksa tok*, allegory, metaphor) for women preventing any outbreak of fighting and ill-feeling from the heat of forthcoming rituals and spirits being added to the heat that men ordinarily possess – both corporeally and emotionally. In myths, spells and rituals, the moon is a symbolic representation and link to the archetypal mother, Naepalm. Both Laufer's and my informants saw the moon and Naepalm not as identical but as participating in each other's being.[47] In Mali myths, Naepalm created women's reproductive bodies with their moon cycles. The balancing of ritual obligations between men and women is rendered celestial: as balancing the burning heat of the sun with the cool and fertile moon. Another reason that women cool a village is to prevent the evil female witch from being attracted by the coming heat.

> The **Siviriki** and **Mandeburichi**, both belong to women and mama Naepalm. Women must dance before a firedance or Mendas so as to cool the village. Women must first decorate themselves completely with something from the bush. They must dance to work the village to be cold. This goes to the sun and moon, the moon makes the village cold, the sun heats up the village. The moon must first cool the village. . . When the Mendas dances, it has its own heat. If it was just this something, the Mendas, then this *meri nogut* [witch, **aurachi** MD] would come.

Though men's bodies, emotions and rituals invoke the dangerous burning sun, this heat must not be destroyed but rather ritually cooled by women, Naepalm and the moon. Women's rituals must contain, channel and render productive male ritual labour. Informants proudly claimed this ritual use of women's cooling influence to be something practised only by the Mali and no other Baining group. For them, such practical rituals took them back to the beginning of time and the regrounding of the celestial womb. Contra Fajans and her misrepresentation of Bourdieu (1977), we can see how many Baining practices in the field do not deny or disavow but rather emerge out of a richly symbolic mythological worldview; in this case one involving and evolving out of women's primary procreative powers.

A dome-shaped Siviriki and the moon

The Siviriki tumbuans that I saw at Dadul (Fig. 10) were different to the Siviriki mask (Fig. 11) drawn up by Laufer's male informants (1946/1949:528–9). The latter was a large dome-shaped mask used in female initiation ceremonies by the Uramot and Mali, pictured below (Corbin 1988:236–37).

At the onset of first menstruation, a group of young girls of the same age were secluded in a small bush hut. There, the girls received special education from close female kin. Nearby, women built the frame for the dome mask so it had a large flat roof of 4–5 metres in diameter. Men would later provide its covering of barkcloth even though men were prohibited from seeing the frame and even women's collection of bush materials for building it.[48] On its lower edges, the mask had a dense curtain of hanging leaves and

Figure 10: Siviriki tumbuan at Dadul, women must cover themselves with the bush, go into the truth and fertility of its cold darkness. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

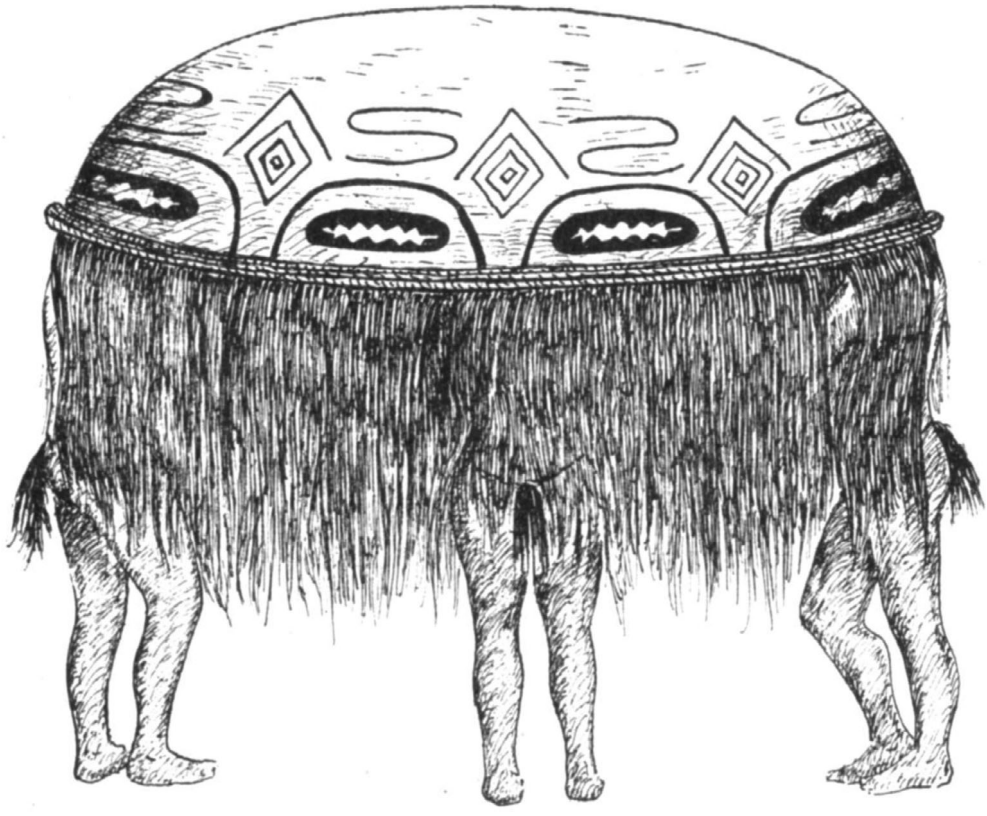


Figure 11: Dome siviriki mask (reproduced from Laufer 1946/1949:529

grasses that, according to Laufer, made the whole mask look like a jellyfish. I would add this is a floating sea creature without bones and thus like the celestial womb, which became the first soft earth before it received its skeletal structure of stones and large trees.

Laufer reports that women and girls would crawl under the dome mask's roof, lifting it onto their shoulders. To conceal their bodies and identity, their feet and legs were painted with white lime. Accompanied by singers, the **siviriki** dome would enter the village where men were prominent spectators. Laufer's male informants saw the dome mask to be a representation of the moon. I would add that a jelly fish hovering and moving through the sea is similar to the moon hovering and moving through the sky. Laufer's informant went on to provide a myth about the moon, which is similar to the celestial womb myth I collected.

> The moon disk hangs in a net in the sky like a spider. Once she let herself down by a thread on the earth and landed next to a woman scraping the dark crust from roasted taros. The woman reached for the moon with her dirty hands but it-she slipped away again and climbed up to the sky. The smudges on the lunar disc have been preserved to this day. (translated by author from Laufer 1946/49:529)

Instead of a celestial womb hanging in the sky by a cosmic rope or umbilical cord, Laufer's moon hangs inside a netbag woven like a spider's web. These are not inconsistencies but mythological transformations of an underlining ontology that assimilates cosmic generative forces to the procreative powers of womanhood.

The elliptical Mendas basket

Figure 12: Ceremonial sewing of barkcloth and netbag for the elliptical basket, the coupling together of the male and female. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

For the Mali, mytho-genesis is fundamentally corporeal whilst the corporeal is fundamentally cosmic and mythological. At the start of a Mendas, the cosmic coupling of maleness and femaleness is marked by senior women and men publicly constructing an elliptical basket (Fig. 12).

This ceremonial basket is carried by a female elder across her head (an iconic portrait of Naepalm, her *vitona*, and everyday labouring women). The basket is hung on a post where the female choir will sit publicly to sing and strike the *garamut* while men dance hidden inside Mendas masks. The basket is made by sewing painted barkcloth (*malo*) onto the outside of a plain brown netbag. Men's labour is sewed onto women's labour. Maleness is positioned as a protective skin enclosing women's reproductive powers. Inside the sewn elliptical basket is a second smaller netbag (**athalka** MD; Fig. 13) that is brightly coloured. It contains a tomahawk and food, such as taro but most prominently red sugarcane stood upright in what seems a phallic representation.

Figure 13: A suspended elliptical basket with a smaller basket. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Informants hinted the sugar cane had deep meanings but would say no more than that it stood for garden produce and the new initiates. The Mendas will make both grow stronger and quicker.

The exterior painted barkcloth of the basket is called **asekgounga** which means it lifts (**nasek**, MD) and gets rid of (*rousim*) darkness (*tudak*). Informants noted the barkcloth was carried into the village at the same time as initiates were being carried on men's shoulders in the bush. There, away from women's eyes, initiates were ritually cleansed and dressed with new white barkcloth. Around each initiate's neck was hung a small netbag (**athalka**) that was of similar size and shape to the small netbag inside the elliptical basket. To make them grow quickly and strong, initiates were beaten by older men with sticks rubbed in red earth (blood, procreative connotations). I would now suggest that the red sugar symbolises these initiates – as well as the ceremonial earth mound frequently called *pikinini*.

Like the *garamut,* the elliptical basket resembles the female body. However, this ceremonial basket also has two *bilum*: a larger plain *bilum* that encloses and holds a smaller colourful *bilum* that in turn holds red sugar cane. I interpret the elliptical basket suspended on the ceremonial post to be the suspended celestial womb, and the smaller basket to be Naepalm. For Naepalm is the fertile womb of woman held inside the celestial womb. Some informants hinted that the red sugar cane is Jesus, the child of God, and Naepalm, the offspring of their incestuous union, whose light the Mali await.

Bark-cloth, netbags and the sun-child

In its joint use of barkcloth and a netbag, the elliptical Mendas basket resonates with a Mali myth about two childless sisters who used both barkcloth and a netbag to capture a small boy. His name was **kunēngga** which means sun (MD). He embodies light and knowledge and so is sometimes equated with Jesus.[49] The sisters were out collecting food for a Mendas ceremony, when they found the sun-boy. He was swinging on a vine hanging from a tree – echoes of the celestial womb hanging by a rope from the sky. Initially, one sister tried to capture the sun-boy using barkcloth, but he was too hot to hold. The second sister succeeded when she used a netbag. It was male heat that the two infertile sisters scooped up and caught inside their netbag – with its womb reference. The myth is an allegory for human procreation as women capturing and placing the hot seed of men in their cool womb, so as to carry a child.[50]

In the myth, the two sisters carry the sun-boy back to the village inside the netbag. They hang him up on the central post of the round house in front of which a Mendas ceremony is taking place. Likewise, at Karong, a senior woman hangs the upright red sugarcane – inside its *bilum* and elliptical basket – onto a post in front of which the Mendas would take place. In the sun-boy myth, the leaves of the roundhouse need to be replaced each day as they become dry and brittle from the hot boy inside. The coolness of the round house needs to be maintained for it becomes an extension of the cool netbag-womb of women that caught the boy. The two sisters are called Rogwem. They are known for their power to revive people who have died. Initially childless, the sisters come to embody the life-giving powers of women.

I first received the sun-boy myth from Elisa of Sunam village. Later, Dadul informants claimed the story belonged to them, the Mali of the interior hills, and that the coastal Mali were ritually and mythologically focused on Naepalm.[51] The coast was said to work with *meri* (femaleness, coolness and rain magic), whilst the bush Mali worked with the sun-boy (maleness, heat-sunshine and dryness). Here, the topographical divisions of geography provide a mythological landscape divided along gender lines with engendering potential. Coast and bush are ritually coupled together in a cosmic interdependence whose archetypal form is the original twins in the separate 'rooms' of the celestial womb. Their incestuous coupling is denoted every time barkcloth and netbags are ritually used to capture and hold sacred or fertile contents. I will now briefly leave my own ethnography, but use its analysis to reanalyse some related ethnography on ritual parcels documented by Laufer.

Round houses with netbags of blood and bones

Laufer (1946/49:511) discusses ceremonial round houses with netbags that held sacred stones, crossed bones and material that he dismissively calls 'simply a lump of red earth'. I disagree with Laufer's claim that all these items have the same meaning. Stones and bones are gendered male, and placing them in a netbag is like the captured sun-boy hung in his ceremonial netbag. These are masculinity enclosed and hung in a suspended feminine-womb, so they repeat the celestial womb that held the male twin. On the other hand, the 'red earth' in the ceremonial netbag is the female twin, Naepalm, inside the celestial womb. The red earth is not just a representation of her but another version of both her and the celestial womb.

Informants often located the descent of the celestial womb at the headwaters of the river Merai, making it the sacred birth place of the Mali and the world. This echoes Laufer's (1946/49:511) description of 'places of pilgrimage in the mountains' that had ceremonial round houses. South coast Mali still build these houses. They are dedicated to Naepalm to whom rituals are performed to renew rain, crops and people.[52] Informants at Illi and Karong emphasised that special kinds of red earth were collected to be suspended in ceremonial netbags, namely, from areas where the celestial womb dripped blood or had come down. Laufer's 'simply a lump of red earth' is the sacred blood and flesh of the original womb that housed the twins, and of which Naepalm, like all women, is the human embodiment.

South coast villagers build Naepalm's House in river headwaters around August. It is the start of the rainy season and a time of food shortage. The rituals are performed to promote the growth of gardens, and the rituals stop only when it rains. As with the elliptical ritual basket and sun-boy myth, women carry Naepalm into the roundhouse in a netbag that is hung on a central post. She is red dirt and is accompanied by bones inside the netbag. My informants described not Laufer's crossed bones but 'the jaw socket of Adam'. This is a

Christian gloss for Laufer's first man, the sun man. The ceremonial netbag with red clay and bones repeats the original coupling of blood and stones (earth's bones) which created the ground and everything on it. This is how Clement explained it:

> The ground [earth] is the body of woman [made from blood and womb tissues]. He [God] worked the ground from this *bilum* and its power. This is the power of us Baining, this mama. They will [today] work a house [ritual roundhouse] and they will put a *soket* [socket, lower jaw bone] and ground in it. This something belonging to Adam [jaw bone of the first man] works with something of every woman [blood, womb]. We [men], we sing out to women [to work magical spells] and then they sing out to the number one mama, this number one mama is this *bilum* and this mother, Naepalm. Naepalm hides, she hides her big power. If something hides, it has big power. A *bilum* is at [strung across] her head.

Laufer (1946/49) noted that some ritual parcels in roundhouses were regarded as the sun-man coupled with his wife. Likewise, for Clement, bones ritually bundled with red earth allowed 'something belonging to Adam' to work 'with something of every woman'. It allowed the celestial male twin to work again with the bilum, that is, the egg of woman: the procreative powers of his celestial sister-wife; and also the procreative bilum of the celestial womb and of the earth that this celestial bilum became. The magical power of roundhouses comes from their parcels re-coupling together an original maleness and femaleness whose incestuous labours created everything. Ritual parcels bundle up diverse paired contrasts – bones or stones with earth, white with red, hardness with softness, and barkcloth with netbags so as to repeat a cosmic coupling of sexual differences that engendered the world.

Round houses and other ritual parcels

Laufer discuses ethnography by a fellow German missionary, Mayrhofer, on the Uramot and how they, like the Mali, visited pilgrimage sites in the mountains to sing out to the creator. In 1934, near Mararap, one 'sanctuary' had a large round house. Inside was hung 'a precious netbag (**a sanenacha**)' that was never to touch the ground; otherwise the world would end. The netbag contained a stone wrapped in leaves (**nambel**, possibly banana leaves, **nēmbēlvēs** MD). The stone and the pilgrimage site was 'a relic of the sun-man', while the leaf wrapping was 'his wife' (Laufer 1946/49:511). I believe this ritual coupling of a stone within leaves, of the sun-man with his wife, was repeated differently at another sanctuary – at Maranaeichi (possibly Maranagi) – where a ceremonial stone was embedded in red earth (*op.cit.*:534). Earlier, for the Mali, we saw how red earth can be God's wife-sister, Naepalm, or the celestial womb's blood and flesh, which later became the womb of the earth. Laufer's ritual parcels are transformations of each other. Many are material re-instantiations of an original maleness enclosed inside an original fertile, soft and cool femaleness. In its original form, this was the celestial womb holding the male twin. It later became the womb-earth holding *masalai* stones.[53] It also echoes the myth of the twin sisters who caught the sun-boy in their netbag.

Laufer (*op.cit.*:533) is aware of symbolic transformations among the Baining, arguing that where the Mali ritually used stones the Uramot used bones. Laufer mentions secret stones (**kunenqa**) honouring the sun (**kunena**, **kunēngga** MD). These were cylindrical, smooth and extremely hard. He describes Mali sun houses, which contained stones at pilgrimage sanctuaries (**a riqenmucha**) that were secluded and taboo. At Laminqi, there was an elongated, spindle-shaped stone, wrapped in barkcloth. At another nearby site, villagers

'worshipped' a large stone surrounded by a few smaller stones and all tied into a package.[54] Laufer notes the ritual parcels were enclosed in fine barkcloth (**a simal**) and tied with laces; cords that had deep meaning. The **a simal** cloth-cords that Laufer mentions seem to be **simalachi** (MD), the barkcloth-cords that men traditionally wore around their genitals. The cloth was passed between their legs and attached to a waist rope. Earlier, we saw that Naepalm had first worn this girdle, when she took *malo* left over from making Mendas masks and placed it around her genital area. However, its effects were not to masculinise her. Instead, the cloth-cords cut into her body as she adjusted them, creating her vagina, menstruation and maternal breasts. In creating women's reproductive body and feminine sexuality, the painted cloth got up or awakened men's desire and desire in general. It created the procreative conditions for the world and for sin.

Laufer (1946/49:511–2) relates roundhouse parcels tied with cords to other coupling practices that involve ritual tying. He perceptively discusses how the expected permanent or lifelong nature of Baining marriages underpinned traditional practices of widow-killing where a wife would join her recently deceased husband in the after-world: with 'the two bodies together tied and hung up to decay on a tree'. Unsure how widespread the custom had been, Laufer notes such corpse parcels resemble another custom where a young couple were ritually tied together on their wedding night. At their inception and conclusion, Baining marriages re-enacted other ritual couplings – suspended parcels in round houses, elliptical Mendas baskets and, perhaps above all, the cosmic coupling of God with his wife-sister in their suspended womb.

To return to Baining mortuary rituals, a grieving widow would indicate her desire to join her husband in the spirit world by throwing herself over his corpse. In this position, she was ritually killed by her brother using a stone club (Laufer 1946/49:542).[55] Both corpses were then laid out as during the day of their wedding. They were wrapped, re-coupled together, using ginger leaves and strong cane. This corpse parcel was then hung on a tree overhanging a waterway so its decomposing fluids could drip into the water to be washed away. Later, the skeletons were taken down and placed in an earthen grave, except for the lower jaw and arm bones. These were stored in netbags for hunting and garden magic.[56] Laufer explains the hanging of the corpses over a waterway as protecting them from being eaten by wild boars. Whilst true, I believe it was also part of a Mali cosmology that recirculated bodily fluids to regenerate life, which is still an important part of secret women's rituals.

Coolness, women, water and fertility

In 2015, the night before Karong's Mendas ceremony, I asked women if I could watch their secret performance of a **Mandeburichi**. While they did not reply 'no', they did not answer 'yes'. My male friends interpreted this as a polite refusal so together we left the village. It became a social space occupied by women, reproducing the original mythological pre-eminence of women in society, knowledge and ritual life. In public contexts, men deny knowing anything about women's rituals. However, in private, men whispered how during a **Mandeburichi** women dance naked under the cover of night. This was so their bodily secretions could fall unimpeded onto the ground. There, those procreative fluids could be worked with by the female spirits, who were part of Naepalm's line, so as to render gardens productive. Women danced naked so their bodies could participate in Naepalm's creative labour, so their fluids could recharge the world. This is Kevin's explanation:

> Women dance naked because in the beginning they had nothing hiding their bodies. Naepalm was naked in the beginning. . . Women dance naked and their bodies

> are open so their water, the power of creation in their bodies goes down to Naepalm. This number one mother of them all [women], she gave this power originally to them . . . . she takes it ['water', procreative fluids] and will work with it, she will work with their water to create food.

The reproductive powers of living women are circulated back to their mythological origins – Naepalm and her female line residing in the womb-earth. The joint fertile powers of female corporealities – past and present – are conjoined to work with each other, to recharge and augment each other's generative potential. Living women provide their polluted yet fertile corporeal resources to ancestral women, who augment the procreative potentialities of the present with the greater generative powers of the mythological past.

When explaining women's rituals, Kevin likened the sweat and sexual secretions from their dancing bodies falling onto the ground as like Naepalm's cool, fertile water flowing down to the hot coast. Naepalm and her line of female spirits were said to reside in the mountains, and their cold water came down in rivers to meet and merge with hot sea water. Only then could gardens be fertile and food have a good flavour. According to Kevin, male and female had to be balanced, along with hot and cold, bitterness and sweetness.

> The water of God [male twin] is said to be the sea, it has bite. But the water of mama [Naepalm] is cold. He put her up on top in the mountains and now her cold water comes down to us. When this [river] water of woman comes and joins with the water of man [sea], it is tasty and sweet. If you taste only the water of woman, then it is cold. If you put it on food, then it is not sweet, it has no taste. If it mixes with the sea then it balances and this water is sweet to taste. If you taste just the water of man, the sea, it is bitter.

Later, Kevin clarified that his talk of the mixing of hot and salty sea water with cold and fresh mountain water was a *piksa*, which had hidden truer meanings, namely, the water of men had to join with the egg and water of women.

> I hid this body part [sexual meaning] from you. Women have to dance this something [rituals] first to cool the village, because the water of women is cold. It is different to the water of men. It is their own kind of water. When they dance naked, their water and sweat falls down, goes down to their mother [Naepalm]. Their mother will return it back. This copies the earlier talk of cold mountain water coming down to create edible food, to make life sweet.

In secret night rituals, women dance naked on a ground formed from the blood and tissues of a celestial womb so women can renew this fertile ground with their own fecundity, and so the earth can also boost their own procreative power. In this way, gardens can be fertilised anew and the Mali can be numerous and healthy. The corporate solidarity of the Mali lies in reproducing their mytho-biological ties to a feminised womb-earth whose original generative powers are active in the procreative bodies of Mali women. They give back to their primordial spiritual mothers the fertile resources of their living bodies which the spiritualised earth recirculates and returns as food and children. Women's sexuality and procreative potential gains its power through its exchange, through its circulation.

Keen to elucidate the *piksa tok* of Mali cosmology, Kevin mentioned stories of Naepalm visiting river headwaters to collect cold water along with freshwater crabs and crayfish.

> They say that at the river Talol, this woman Naepalm goes to this area to collect crabs and crayfish. But this is a picture [allegory], she goes there to collect water. However, it is not just from there, but from everywhere and everything; from people, animals, fruits, birds and everything. She is collecting the water of everything. She is also giving back water; she creates new things to come up; she is creating new water and new things to come up.

Naepalm spiritually collects and recirculates the watery souls of the world. Everything has its own water, or life force. As things die, the waters of their existence regather in the headwaters of Mali rivers, for these are their origins where the celestial womb went down. Kevin's claim that everything has its own water echoes another Mali claim that everything has its own Mendas, or spiritual design, which is also its soul, hidden spirit or animating force – and so similar to the diverse waters that Naepalm collects. In her hands those waters become, if not interchangeable, then able to renew each other.

I would suggest this is because those waters, like everything else, came up from the original waters (amniotic fluid and blood) of the celestial womb. The euphemism of Naepalm collecting crabs, crayfish and water is really her gathering her own resources to send down again as the fresh, cool, fertile waters of the cosmic womb. When Naepalm draws up and re-pools its waters she gathers the lifestream of everything to send back as the fluid life-force of people, animals, garden, fish and 'everything in the bush'.

Women's watery corporeality, her reproductive powers, are deterritorialised and made to flow into everything. The cosmic coolness of the celestial womb, with its moon evocations, is made manifest in river headwaters and their refreshing, regenerative flows. For Kevin, women's naked night dancing made their upright bodies into alternative mountainous headwaters, with their own brisk and fertile flows coming down from their bodies into the ground, and to the ancestral past residing there. Women's corporeality becomes a geosexual flow of earth, sweat, smell and fluids, which have the cosmic potency to regenerate, indeed to give re-birth, to the world. Here the corporeal becomes cosmic (world-formative) only because the world originally had a corporeal form. More specifically, women's corporeality remains truly cosmic because the cosmic had her original corporeal form.

Marriage as an exchange of wombs, of female sacrificial Labours

For the Mali, women's sexual procreative power is augmented through its circulation. I believe this geosexual principle informs Mali marriages as another social circulation of female reproduction. Unlike their neighbours, the Mali do not have bride prices. They exchange women in what can be considered delayed forms of exchange, where villages and families pay back the previous gift of a woman. Informants proudly noted they did not sell women. They mocked the high bride prices of coastal villagers whose modern lifestyle has commoditised women at the expense of understanding her true value. Mali marriage practices were justified as acknowledging foundational myths of the celestial womb, mama Naepalm, and the everyday sacrificial labours of women who give birth and nurture offspring. When Mali women marry, netbags are given away as a symbolical exchange of wombs marking the exchange of womanhood between communities. This is sometimes referred to euphemistically as the Mali buying women with netbags rather than with shellmoney. But this is not taken literally, for a netbag has womb connotations and the giving of netbags in marriage ceremonies evokes the exchange of wombs that will occur in the future as the true exchange of woman for woman. The labour of making a *bilum* by women is referred to as a sacrifice, **merno**. It involves long hours, hard tedious work and much pain. Though other parts of a weaver's body may be used, informants emphasized how the

plant fibres were turned into threads by being rubbed across a weaver's thigh, which burns and pulls out the skin's hairs. The exchange of netbags is therefore an exchange of sacrificial labours borne from the thighs of women. It is not only a netbag's capacity to hold objects that makes it womb-like, but also the pain that women experience when weaving. This pain comes to stand for women's other labouring pains – notably birth and child rearing but also gardening, cooking, carrying firewood and indeed the burden of all women's labours.

The primal colours of creation

The masks of other neighbouring groups (Mengen, Kol, Sulka, Tolai) are adorned with many bright colours. However, Baining masks only have three colours; likewise with the bodies of masked dancers. Red, white and black are the only ritual colours used, for they embody the primal forces that generated the world. As noted earlier, red (**alolka** MD) stands for women's blood – especially menstruation and child birth – and thus also the fertile powers of the celestial womb and Naepalm. Red can also refer to general everyday creativity: 'to the hard work of people to get something up'. These procreative aspects of red and blood are traced to Naepalm's body which became feminine and reproductive after she decorated herself with *malo*. Its cords cut into her and the resulting blood was smeared over her whole body to provide its red body paint. This made her body even more attractive, adding to the attractiveness it gained from becoming sexualised as feminine.

Traditionally, red paint came from using red clay (celestial womb-blood-earth connotations) or by men bleeding their tongues (Bateson 1932:335; Hesse and Aerts 1978:47). Some men reportedly sprayed blood directly onto a bark canvas (Read 1931:236). During initiation rituals, boys were taught the secret of bleeding their tongues – a practice hidden from women and children. Dadul informants claimed that before painting any new mask, it was good etiquette for a big man to visit a respected older woman to inform her that he needed to use something of hers. Informants emphasised he did not have to say any more, as everything was understood: he needed to use something emblematic of woman's being. Here meaning resides not in explicit exegesis but in knowing how not to say things (Basso 1988). The Baining are masters of euphemisms, they love the craft of cryptic meanings, of 'picture talk' where truth is produced through concealments that are never complete.

The colour black (**achluing**) is said 'to picture' secrecy and darkness; and thus, *tudak* – evil, desire, disorder and hidden powers. *Tudak* was in the celestial womb; most notably, as the emerging incestuous desire of God for his twin sister. Black can refer to all desires (*laik*, *mangal*). In 'picturing' the power of what is hidden, black can also picture the two sides of power – good power (as in secret magical spells) and bad power (as in hidden sorcery). Informants related this to how Naepalm and her placenta twin, the old grandmother, protect their power by hiding it under a decrepit skin. To quote Kevin again: 'Naepalm hides, she hides her big power. If something hides, it has big power'.

The colour white (**achabap** MD) can stand for male semen (**anun**), but also bones and stones.[57] Ideally, the white on masks should come from the sun bleaching the washed bark, and so white is also the light of knowledge, *save*. Earlier, we explored how heat and sun **(kunengga** MD**)** are gendered male and associated with stones and bones. Traditionally, the seminal phallic nature of whiteness was marked by the bleached barkcloth that covered men's genitals. In ceremonies, male dancers may wear a large white mushroom-shaped sculpture that both hides and accentuates their genitalia. Large mushrooms (**kunengga ava lēm** MD) are associated with the sun (**kunengga**). They come up after it rains, after Naepalm's coolness ends and the sun shines again.[58] White paint can also come from limepowder made by baking hard shells (with their bone-like qualities) over a fire.

Snakes and dancers

Early ethnographic accounts referred to the Mendas as the snake dance because dancers and other participants often held snakes (Bateson 1932; Poole 1943; Read 1931).[59] The father of an initiate would stand at the earth mound holding a snake and other food parcels.[60] The painted markings on the bodies of Mendas dancers often resemble pythons (**aulan'gi** MD), which are regarded as sacred and immortal. Naepalm and her line of female spirits can change into pythons. As vehicle for spirits, snakes may possess an individual or a snake spirit can change to appear as a particular person – a spouse, lover or maybe a white person. Like other Melanesians, the Mali regard snakes (along with crabs and prawns) as immortal because they shed their old decrepit skins (**slavarki** MD) to acquire new shiny young bodies. They have the power of rebirth. The Mali also regard snakes as holy (**arēktēm**), because snakes shed pollution and sin along with their dirty skins. Sin is partly corporeal, more akin to pollution than to the abstract insubstantial form it has in western culture (despite widespread use of phrases like a 'stain' on the soul). Given that sin resides on the skin, sin is cast off by exfoliating snakes which now become morally-physically clean (**achumer** MD). Snakes are therefore appropriate vehicles for initiation rituals, which aim to purge young boys of pollution and to give them cleaner bodies that can grow strong and fast (*cf.* Herdt 1982, 2003). The Mali equate initiates with a brown stick-insect known as **iringga** (MD). It is known for carrying many pure white eggs. The largest Mendas mask at Karong, which depicted Jesus – the *pikinini* of Naepalm and God, had the shape of this insect. An **iringga** is so clean and pure that if it runs or crawls onto a human path it will fall down dead, from the heaviness (pollution-sin) of people who have used the path. Tommy from Dadul explained:

> This something is holy, we [initiates] have to come out of this something [**iringga**]. This is our picture, we have to come up holy, we must be born again.

Liminality and comedy

Earlier, I noted that the sequence of masks and ceremonies in a Mendas is not random but repeats the original formative events of creation. The secret initiation rites for young boys in the bush end with the approach of night and the conclusion of the public daytime Mendas ceremony. It is gendered female and is replaced by the night firedance of men. The female choir will depart. Its singing had summoned the Mendas masks and orchestrated their dancing. The male choir will come up and their singing will call up the smaller, wilder masks of the firedance. These masalai masks will continue the boys' initiation, strengthening and purifying them. Whereas the choir and Mendas masks of women followed the beat of a slit-drum, the choir and firedance masks of men will follow the beat of bamboo tubes struck with stones. This echoes the role of stones in strengthening the original soft earth.

Between the different day and night ceremonies of women and men, there appears a mediating trickster mask called **Amēchēlingga** (MD). Its playfulness does not fit the caricature of the puritanical Baining opposed to play. **Amēchēlingga** is named after a large brown lizard that has a red neck and a 'saw' (spikes) on its back. An **Amēchēlingga** dancer will wear a **guaremgi** mask and adopt this lizard's appearance and movements. He will wear a tail and scratch the ground. He will twist his body sharply and awkwardly. Above all, he will not follow the beat of any drumming or singing. Though a Mendas, this mask's comic antics are said to 'bugger up' (destroy) 'the good work of God' – the Mendas ceremony. This is how Kevin described its subversive antics.

> He is a *paniman* [funny man, comic figure]; he buggers up the work. He works *pani* [comedy]. He does not follow properly the beat; he dances according to his

> own *laik* [desire, whim]. He has a long tail and he works all kind of *pani* with it. He buggers up people [their composure with laughter]. He comes last and he buggers up the good work of God. This is his Mendas [masked representation]. He is a man no-good.

Though Kevin ostensibly scolds the trickster lizard, he does so with fondness for how its mirth engenders disorder and destructiveness that undoes the ordered composure of the audience and the ordered work of God. Both Douglas (1970) and Kapferer (1983) have analysed similar ritual techniques where comedy comes to the fore during liminal times of transition so as to realise the transformative power of ritual. The comic plays with ambiguity and transgression so as to undermine and destabilise established meanings, existing forms of order. The comic 'buggers them up' to make possible a movement towards something new.

I interpret the trickster mask as undoing the earlier ritual-cosmic order of women, but also of Naepalm as the moon-woman, and of the original soft earth created from the celestial womb. That soft earth needed to be strengthened by hard stones, just like the soft bodies of young male initiates. As a 'man no-good,' **Amēchēlingga** clears the way for men's night rituals, for the rites of the male celestial twin – the sun-man and the strengthening power of fire and wilder masalai spirits. The firedance is the heat of cosmic masculinity deployed not to erase the fertile coolness of the moon, the celestial womb, Naepalm, and women, but to strengthen what these female powers engender. They alone have the power to bear something new, to create the soft flesh and body of the earth and to create the soft flesh and body of initiates. Both will respectively, however, require a skeletal structure of stones and bones to be provided by strengthening masalai.

The good whites *vs* the bad whites

I suspect the Baining's reluctance to explain their 'snake dance' to Read and Bateson was because their beliefs and rituals had assumed syncretic millenarian aspects under the colonial period. For the Mali, snakes are spirit vehicles for ancestors who can appear as white people; such as a *wel masta* or *wel misis* (wild white man or wild white woman). These alternative white people reside locally – in the underground and surrounding bush. They are masalai or dead relatives who have shed their black skins to become white. They hold out the promise of being more sympathetic and generous as opposed to the foreign greedy surface white people, the Australians, who aligned themselves with the Tolai to steal Mali resources.[61]

After the First World War, such criticisms of the Australians grew whey they took over the colonial administration and the plantations from the Germans. The Australians became the bad whites, whilst the Germans became increasingly idealised as the good whites who sympathised with and sought to help the Baining. For Clement, the Germans' greater concern and respect for the Baining was evidenced by their ethnographic interest in Baining culture.

> The Germans came up and they were good men. They helped people and they collected all the good stories of the old Baining, all the good thinking. The Germans wrote down the stories of the Baining in their books

I suspect one reason why some German priests were able to collect rich ethnography was because the Germans came to be seen in millenarian terms as a better version of whiteness and thus like the dead and masalai. Indeed, with the outbreak of World War Two, the Germans became the basis of a *Masta* Hitler cult that extended from the Gazelle Peninsula into the *Nakanai* area of West New Britain (Valentine 1955).

Figure 14: Initiates in the bush with their new barkcloth. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Localising Christianity

Within the academy, the hasty marginalisation of Laufer's rich ethnography was partly due to Laufer downplaying Baining practices that localised Christianity.[62] As evidence of his ethnographic unreliability, Fajans repeats Janssen's (1975:19) observation that Laufer believed God had been in Melanesia before Christian missionaries arrived. This belief was part of his 'Sacred Heart' religious order, but I suspect Laufer also received such claims from his informants, as I often have. Schlesier (1958):170; Janssen 1975:26) criticised Laufer for relying on missionary informants and for disregarding possible Christian influence in his ethnography. Seeking to undercut such criticisms, Laufer (1946/49:532) cites himself asking his Mali and Uramot informants about possible foreign Christian influence. He naively accepts their firm denial and goes on to support this denial by noting: the Mali's seclusion in mountains; their commitment to tradition; and their reluctance to come into contact with more westernised coastal groups. Laufer was naive in explaining how Christian beliefs and liturgy entered Mali rituals, but it is ungenerous to say he was totally projecting or making stuff up. Instead, he was unwittingly documenting the processes whereby villagers re-empowered themselves by appropriating and localising the colonial racial authority of Europeans and their version of religiousness and the sacred.

Other writers, from religious studies (Trompf 2006:272; Janssen 1975), have more generously treated Laufer's belief that missionaries should search for the fragments of God's word among the diversity of human culture. These writers argue Laufer anticipated the inculturation of the church in Melanesia (Kolbrunner 1999:386). In reality, this adaptation of Christian belief and liturgy to local culture was happening clandestinely and unsupervised in Melanesian villagers well before the church sought to co-opt and mainstream it. This secret localisation of Christianity is what Laufer discovered amongst backward marginalised villagers where it was not expected (Laufer 1946/49:524–25; Laufer 1955:55–56; see also Jeudy-Ballini 2008). For Laufer, this confirmed that compassion, atonement for others, the sacraments and other important aspects of Christianity were indigenous to the Baining. In 2015, the two elders from Marunga who supervised Karong's Mendas ceremony explained its secret initiation rites to me as the Mali's version of the seven sacraments of Christianity.

In the bush, the old loin clothes of the young boys are discarded; placed on a stick of a plant noted for reshooting and growing quickly, just like the boys must do now. The initiates receive new clean white *malo*. The boys are washed (baptised) with the leaves of special plants that are also used for healing sick people. The boys are also beaten with red sticks; and they

are schooled in morality and ritual secrets. Henceforth, those initiated together form an age grade whose members respectfully call each other **goroga** and not by their previous personal names. My informants often used this term to refer to each other. Mediating the social death and rebirth of initiates are threats and warnings at the bush shelter that the initiates would soon be eaten by wild spirits. However, luckily, the older men intervened to negotiate their release by reassuring the forest spirits that the boys were no longer mischievous but well behaved.

Like other villagers in New Britain (Lattas 1998), the Mali have a well-developed clandestine Melanesian theology which merges Christianity with local geography, myths and rituals. At Illi, breakaway Kivung villagers showed me their River Jordan where Jesus was baptised by John, an event commemorated in their cult songs. Both Jesus and John are Mali ancestors – *blakskin* (blackskin). Other sites at Illi that prove God's original presence include his footprint, which was impressed into stone when the earth was partially soft and had not fully hardened. It occurred before God left his homeland for the land of Whites, where he called himself Jesus. He gave Whites their Bible, an inadequate one that missionaries later brought to PNG with missing pages that removed the empowering aspects of Baining tradition. Beforehand, there was an original, truer, more powerful bible, that God gave the Baining; it was their Mendas masks.

Writing and millenarianism

Some Mali big men have books depicting different Mendas masks. Some drawings are traditional designs while others are new. Some are experiments in trying to rediscover the original marks, the first sacred knowledge, that created the world. As we saw earlier, current gender differences and inequalities and the procreative power of women's bodies originated from painted barkcloth left over from the construction of the first Mendas masks. Whilst one big man was keen to show me his book, another was worried and made excuses for not bringing it. He was apprehensive; it would not be good if a white man also stole this powerful local knowledge. Along with being the first Bible, the sacred writings on the original Mendas masks contain fragments of the magical power of **amaranaski** (Mengen **quenga paga**), the power to utter something and for it to materialise. Given that Mendas ceremonies are seen to repeat the original processes that created the world, they also have the power to create it anew so as to offer a new future.

For this reason, I would interpret differently Bateson's (1932:338) observation that the Baining copied the form of everything – flowers, opossums' tails and even the Ace of Hearts. The latter is too quickly dismissed as copied 'from some cook-boy's pack'. For Bateson, these studied patterns are not 'naturalistic' – meaning an interest in representations – but 'purely geometrical,' meaning merely an interest in the structure or abstract design of forms. I believe Bateson misunderstands the local culture of abstraction, if one can call it that, and more especially the ways in which images are deployed to capture the essential forms of reality, in its shadowy, animating soul dimensions.

Like much of Melanesian art, Baining paintings are never realistic but, as Bateson notes, figurative depictions of leaves, whirlwinds, spider's webs, animals and birds. However, these are deployed to capture the hidden alternative reality of those objects or phenomena, their invisible spirituality (**chēlochacha**, **mirana** in Mengen). Their pictorial remaking, their figurativeness, denotes that it is their hidden life-force or soul that must be brought forth and not the skin of those objects or phenomenon (**chēdenggi** or **kēndenggi**, **patuna** in Mengen). I believe there is more to Bateson's (1932:338) observation: 'It is usual too to see a Baining native studying the white man's books and boxes with great attention – he is looking for scroll designs, trade-marks and such like, which he hopes to remember and to use as **aios**' (Uramot for ghost, shadow, pattern, reflection, masked figure). My fieldwork

experience in both West and East New Britain is that writing and copying can have millenarian overtones (Lattas 2001, 2005, 2010). They can be part of a deep interest in the shadows and ghosts of modernity, its occult signs or forms. Scrolls, trademarks and other iconic representations of western culture offer the promise of providing access to the hidden, animating spirit of modernity so villagers can re-own and remake modernity for themselves (Whitehouse 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 2004).

Bateson's fieldwork site at the Uramot village of Latramat (Kainagunan), now Gaulim, has a long history of millenarianism. My informants at nearby Dadul describe Gaulim as still part of a large cult that includes Mali, Simbali and Qaqet participants. Whitehouse (1996a:183) notes how prior to the Kivung movement, there emerged a cult at Gaulim led by Melki. Janice Clark, who was a missionary with the Uramot, claims Melki's followers 'frequently assembled in specific locations often close to burial sites and performed rites and military styled ritualistic acts'.[63] According to Trompf (2006:114), Melki's myth of a cosmic egg influenced neighbouring cults, including those of the Tolai. Köhnke's description of this myth has similarities to the Mali celestial womb story.

> Melki teaches that a bomb will drop on New Britain killing everybody except the Bainings. Then a giant egg will be delivered full of cargo which will be shared amongst the survivors. It is their belief that the goods which will arrive will be sufficient to allow them to live comfortably for the rest of their lives. They will have no need to work again. (Köhnke 1973:14)

Köhnke contextualised the above myth by noting that Melki's father was a paramount luluai and some suspected Melki of using his cargo cult to expand control over people. Followers were taken by Melki on pilgrimages to Mt Sinivit where they visited the female deity of the Baining, Namugi. There Melki communicated with the goddess and pointed to thunderstorms and earthquakes as proof of his power. Though Melki names the female ancestress as Namugi, rather than Naepalm, his cult mythology points to a shared Baining concern with grounding their future in women's procreative potential.

Like other New Britain groups, many Baining developed a culture of resistance that reformulated traditional myths of matriarchy which had linked a new social existence to the emergence of men's house secrets and gender relations (Lattas 1998, 2006). These traditional myths featuring women's fertile powers as the true source of knowledge, rituals and social relations were re-empowered by Catholic Christianity and its veneration of Maria as a sacred creative mother – another reason perhaps for why German priests became idealised as carers of Baining tradition. In Catholicism, Maria is like her child, Jesus, as the human form of the sacred, an embodied Sanctity. Maria is also a marginalised immanent sacredness. Her statues and other icons often reside outside the church in nearby bush grottoes. Likewise, Naepalm and her line of female spirits reside underground and at special bush sites. There ceremonial round houses are built, which contain suspended netbags with red earth, to which rain and garden magic are addressed. Mali concerns with Naepalm and female spirits are reinforced by Catholic understandings of Maria as a mediator of worldly concerns, a figure who carries the everyday worries of her children to a loftier, removed male God. Like Maria, local female spirits embody the sympathetic caring attitude of all mothers that can be appealed to by their children. Traditionally, people's spiritual appeals were for help with rain, gardens, hunting, fishing and illnesses. Today, those spiritual appeals include requests for a new modernity. For many Mali, Naepalm – as the original mother – embodies the creative power of mythic time; that is, she holds within herself the creative power of the first womb that became the earth. Naepalm thus has the power to

recreate the terrain of existence, to reground modernity in a new beginning that reverses current inequalities of gender, race and ethnicity. As Cyril of Illi put it 'the *bilum* is the picture of woman, we come up from this something, the *bilum* of women. We have to go back to the power of number-one *bilum*'.

CONCLUSION

During any masked Mali performance, a dancer's identity has the potential to disappear and merge with the mask he wears. This occurs when the mask is no longer just a material artefact or picture but embodies the spiritual side – the animating soul of what it represents. Through painted designs and ritual performances, the sacred time of origins is alive again – with the act of creation being fundamentally corporeal in its realisation and in its goals, bound up with gender, reproduction, fertility and sexuality (Forge 1967; Gillison 1993; Hauser-Schäublin 1996; MacKenzie 1991; Mimica 1988; Tuzin 1995). A Mendas ceremony is not a surreal sequence of abstractions divorced from reality as Bateson and Fajans argue. Its sequence of different ceremonies and masks is not random but repeats the events of myth that formed the earth and world. This point was made by both Laufer (1970) and my informants. It is why there is a plethora of Mendas masks and why villagers seek new ones for the new aspects of their modern existence. Pernet rightly focuses on this translated passage from Laufer's work.

> While a choir of women chants the story of creation, eighty masks enact its various phases: the birth of the sea, the appearance of the earth, the primordial forest, the flora, the winds, the animals and birds, and, when the stage has thus been set, the appearance of the first human couple and their sons. In this festival the ngoaremchi masks portray whirlpools and explain thereby the birth of the sea, which swirled forth in all directions, and the ngavoucha masks show how the earth was separated from the waters. (Pernet 2006:68)

In repeating the events of creation, a Mendas regenerates the world, indeed gives birth to it anew so as to render people, animals, gardens and the bush plentiful and healthy. Mali myths explore the separation of waters from land in order to create the fertile stronger womb of the earth able to sustain life. The emergence of a hotter, drier land does not abolish the cooler, more fertile waters of the cosmic womb but relocates them in mountain headwaters and women's bodies from where their fertility descends. Masked performances involve a continuously pairing together of maleness and femaleness, for it is their emergence together with their merger, that creates a world, and that re-creates the act of creation.

It is no accident that Mali myths trace the origin of women's procreative being to painted barkcloth and masks, for these created women's second nature – her newly sexualised feminine being. Art and sexuality are good to think with. They provide ways of reobjectifying each other's doubling powers and creative potential. The painted cloth-cords of Mendas masks cut Naepalm's body to create her eye-catching sexual allure (*malara* and *mangal*), which in turn flowed back to create the eye-catching allure of masks. The painted cloth of masks gave rise to women's breasts, vaginas and procreative bleeding. Symbolically, the latter still inhabits the red paint on masks and dancers' bodies. One version of this myth claims that the original blood emanating from Naepalm's cut body was painted onto the bodies of the placenta spirits of both Naepalm and God. It was their *vitona* or spiritual doubles that first came out to dance. Naepalm sat down to play the drums, whilst God carried a parcel and walked behind his dancing *vitona*. In locating the performative persona of

the creative twins in their placenta doubles, this mythic version highlights the doubling power of art and ritual representations, as calling forth a second human nature. Art made Naepalm into new generative force. Naepalm's original celestial powers were regrounded into her procreative body. I thus interpret Naepalm and women in general as also partaking and developing in a new way the inventive retracing power of painted cloth and masked personhood. Women became an extension of art's ability to posit an alternative reality, to recast and refigure reality.

In fabricating ritual objects and performances, materials such as bark, paint and bamboo are transformed as they create something new – a masked representation that can access a spirit being. In Mali myths, this creative power of art was remade as it both created and merged with woman's sexuality. The act of adorning and decorating the self to create a new bodily appearance or persona took a new firm hold in Naepalm's body, reinventing woman's bodily appearance in unexpected ways. Placed on Naepalm's backside, the decorated designs of barkcloth end up not concealing her backside but transforming and highlighting it anew as the basis of new sexual roles and attractions. Art was folded back to recreate its creators and, indeed, to recreate the creative potential of humans. What Bateson and Fajans dismiss as surreal abstract forms are formative forms. And they are certainly not boring.

NOTES

1. Posted Jul 20, 2012 https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/freedom-learn/201207/all-work-and-no-play-make-the-baining-the-dullest-culture
2. https://kottke.org/12/07/the-most-boring-culture-on-earth
3. https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/freedom-learn/201207/all-work-and-no-play-make-the-baining-the-dullest-culture?collection=112977, henceforth FtL.
4. https://thomashyllanderiksen.net accessed December 2017
5. https://io9.gizmodo.com/so-called-dullest-culture-on-earth-frowns-upon-sex-an-5929918?IR=T
6. kottke.org/12/07/the-most-boring-culture-on-earth
7. To quote Malinowski at his worst: 'The road from the wilderness to the savage's belly and consequently to his mind is very short, and for him the world is an indiscriminate background against which there stand out the useful, primarily the edible, species of plants and animals. (Malinowski 1974:44).' 'We can certainly discard all explanatory as well as symbolic interpretations of these myths of origin. The personages and beings are what they appear to be on the surface, and not symbols of hidden realities. As to any explanatory function of these myths, there is no problem which they cover, no curiosity which they satisfy, no theory which they contain.' (*ibid*.: 126). Ironically, Malinowski's ethnographic analysis of myth as charter and lived reality often surpasses and undercuts his anti-symbolic, anti-representational, functional reductionism.
8. Jeremy Pool did fourteen months fieldwork with the north Baining group the Qaqet in 1969–70. Though wary of Bateson's caricature of the Baining as culturally dull, their reputation as unstudiable was reinforced when Pool (2008) failed to gain enough information for his PhD thesis and then changed careers to computer science.
9. In 1927, Bateson did 10 months of fieldwork with Uramot speakers in the Central Baining area.
10. Another irony is the use of Bateson to authorise a neo-Malinowskian view of Baining culture as totally pragmatic given Bateson's (1936) critique of Malinowski's theories of the native mind.
11. The caricature denies the inherent hermeneutic nature of human thought (Heidegger 1927; Ricoeur 1970).
12. In terms of possible intellectual influences, Fajans was married to Terrance Turner (1969a), who was an early critic of Lévi-Strauss' structural analysis of hidden grammars.
13. The absence of chiefs or inherited formal status positions does not make Baining society anarchic. Nor is it unusual in PNG, where leadership can emerge out of informal structures of control over knowledge, rituals, ceremonies, magic, women, pigs and food (Allen 1967; Herdt 2003; Whitehouse 1995). Their exchange creates debts, obligations and interdependence that empowers senior adults able to command authority.
14. For the spelling of Mali words, I use the Mali dictionary (henceforth MD) of Stebbins and Tayul (*2012).* There can be variations in the pronunciation of Mali words, for brevity and simplicity, I have only listed one.
15. Peter Gray's (2011, 2013) sole-authored books include the textbook *Psychology* (six editions) and another with the self-explanatory title *Free to Learn: Why Unleashing the Instinct to Play Will Make Our Children Happier, More Self-Reliant, and Better Students for Life*. Gray describes his research as merging developmental-educational psychology with a comparative evolutionary approach so as to explore 'children's natural ways of learning and the life-long value of play'.

16. New Britain villagers often tell such apocryphal stories of a violent past to legitimise the civilising, domesticating effects of modern institutions like government and church, or their millenarian cult versions.
17. Mark Planigale and Tanya Stebbin did over 12 months fieldwork at Marunga – near Karong where I worked. Planigale rightly criticised bloggers' postings as 'essentially based on a single source – Fajans'. He agreed the Baining worked hard, like other subsistence gardeners, but argued their 'pace of life is a lot more leisurely than ours'. He noted they had 'a rich mythology,' often joked and gossiped and 'played a wide range of sports and games'. Planigale 'never saw any sign of play … being discouraged, let alone children being punished for it'. He denounced the postings as 'a form of racial vilification' that used 'massive generalisations based on the experience of a handful of westerners who apparently never established anything beyond a superficial relationship with the Bainings they knew'.
18. In 2015, after witnessing a Mendas ceremony at Karong, I inquired if a film crew could come to record a future ceremony. Informants were pleased with the prospect, but warned their on camera explanations could not go 'too deep' but would need 'to just float on top'.
19. I have treated God as a proper name, it is the public name of God which hides his truer sacred and more powerful secret Mali name.
20. Whitehouse (1995:159) discusses the Maranagi cult. Some of its followers, especially those at Dadul, began to return to the main movement after 1988. This followed visits and intense pressure from the Kivung's political leader, the late Francis Koimanrea. At the time, he was Governor of East New Britain and his brother, the late Alois Koki, was the national member for Pomio. Both threatened to call in the riot squad to punish and arrest the secessionists for cargo cult activities! Until he had a severe stroke in 2015, Francis often slept overnight at Dadul when he visited Kokopo. Whilst Dadul has re-affiliated with the main movement, Maranagi has again broken away under the influence of new shamans and a new cult leader, Konrad. Current Kivung leaders at Dadul are wary of *nius man* and some even criticise the mythological-ritual focus on Naepalm as both helping to foster the breakaway cults that have destroyed the Kivung's unity and electoral.
21. In Pisin and Mali, God is called Big Man (**Morka**, **Lengenacha**), whilst Naepalm is called Big Woman (**Amorki**, **Lengenachi**, **Lēngaem**) (MD: 37, 243).
22. Another story claims Kolman gained his money magic after stealing the skin of a huge Mali python called Kalenga. It had gone to wash at a site with the same name. There Kalenga removed his snake skin, changing into a human so as to bathe. Kolman was hiding and watching. He crept up and ran off with Kalenga's skin. When Kalenga returned, he was not able to go back into his previous snake body. Kalenga caught up with Kolman who offered to return the skin in exchange for magical powers.
23. The old decrepit grandmother is another version of Naepalm: her spiritual double or placenta spirit-shadow (**ailachi**, *vitona*). The squalid grandmother is a mythic figure found throughout East New Britain. Kol and Mengen speakers call her respectively Ragireh and Alamunsa. Her abject, persecuted grandson is said to be the black Jesus and she the local Mary. The Mali equate the mythological travels of this grandson and grandmother across the landscape with the night time travels of the morning-evening star accompanying the moon.
24. In the Kaliai bush, in the early 1960s, cargo cult leaders such as Aikele and Censure also reportedly acquired their knowledge from touching or kissing a large python (Lattas 1998: 75–6, 87–8). Censure had worked on copra plantations in the Gazelle Peninsular. His cult beliefs and rituals are remarkably similar to the Mali in emphasising the fertile powers of underground ancestral women (Lattas 1998).
25. The Maranagi cult leader, Konrad, piggybacked on the story of Naepalm giving knowledge to Kolman. Konrad claimed that Kolman 'straightened' (compensated) 'the cry of the young pig' when Kolman repaid this gift from the Baining by giving his own knowledge back to Konrad and thus the Baining. Konrad's euphemism refers to a young pig crying as it is carried away as a gift from its home village. Later, the piglet will grow to carry its own litter, which will provide a returned pig that 'straightens' the cry of its mother. The Baining gave a debt of knowledge to a Pomio man who then grew it and returned its offspring back to its source. Cult knowledge here grows and has procreative potential in its exchange. Another, more implicit, reference relates to women exchanged in marriage – where the original woman given to another group carries a daughter that is given back to repay her mother's home village.
26. The domestic houses of Kivung followers at Dadul and Karong are still built largely from bush materials, unlike those of nearby settlers. Few informants had completed a secondary education. Informants could not name a fellow villager who held a government position or owned a modern house in Rabaul or Kokopo. At Marunga, which has a Catholic mission and oil palm plantations, there has been some upward social mobility.
27. Like the Mengen, the Mali equate such leaders with the central post of a menshouse (MD: 34).
28. When Kolman returned to Pomio in 1974, he quickly acquired a large following. In 1975, he became the official spiritual leader of the Kivung after Bernard Balatape's death. Kolman came into conflict with Michael Koriam Urekit – the movement's political leader and for many followers its true spiritual origin. Koriam criticized Kolman's ritual innovations, especially offerings and prayers to new Novena bottles. For Koriam, these undermined the central place of the *Tenpela Lo* that he received from the mysterious wandering white man known as *Brata*. After Koriam's death in 1978, Kolman intensified a process of deification that claimed he was Number Two Nutu – the Second God who would replace and improve on the first inferior God of white people.
29. Rohatynskyj (2000: 179) claims Laufer lived with the Mali for 15 years after the Second World War. Janssen (1975: 26) claims his missionary work was only with the Tolai but he regularly visited other language groups.
30. Stebbins did not study the religious secrets of men and women. However, her publications document the subtle poetic-metaphorical and mythological references of the Mali that have cosmological connotations.

31. Hesse was appointed Bishop of Kavieng in 1978 and then Archbishop of Rabaul in 1998.
32. Stebbins and Planigale (2010) have criticised Fajans' narrow interpretation of play. When Fajans' informants dismiss their rituals as 'just play', I interpret them as seeking to minimise their need to disclose further meanings, especially secret explanations. My informants never dismissed masks as without significance even when they mischievously denied knowing any further meanings about them.
33. Fajans argues that for the Baining work is 'effort expended to overcome or resist the natural. To behave naturally is to them tantamount to behaving as an animal'. When the Baining say, 'We are human because we work,' there are many ways in which they work on their humanity apart from tasks 'turning natural products (plants, animals, and babies) into human products (crops, livestock, and civilized human beings) through effortful work (cultivation, domestication, and disciplined childrearing)'. In their cults, the Mali treat the search and transmission of deep secret meanings-knowledge as producing a new humanity. This is also an important aspect of tradition such as initiation rituals for boys and girls.
34. Like elsewhere in New Britain, Mali myths often feature a trickster hero who feigns dumbness and not knowing. His feigned forms of humility are a way of articulating cleverness.
35. The bullroarer know as *Papa bilong Mendas* cries continually in the bush to mark the boys' initiation. It comes up the night prior to a Mendas to inform women to start cooking and preparing firewood, water, decorations, *etc*. The mother of the *Mendas* is bamboo tube blown to create a tune; some cries are its laughter.
36. **Athoemga (arvemga)** is also the mountain where God first resided and that later grew.
37. The father of each initiate is also the "papa" or sponsor of a Mendas mask. A father cannot "work" (initiate) his own son so he asks a relative to do so by giving him a piece of wild vine with a knot. Much humour surrounds this entrapment of a friend or relative in this obligation.
38. To avoid the meat stinking, those who hunt and smoke the wild pork must abstain from sex with women.
39. While I did not collect such explicit references to the ceremonial plaza, informants often called the earth 'mama', a new *bilum* (womb-netbag) and Naepalm's body. All are versions of each other, of the cosmogonic powers of the feminine that was in the celestial womb, which housed Naepalm before becoming the earth.
40. I heard no reference to Rigenmucha, the bodiless spiritual God who Laufer (1946/1949: 510) credits with creating the Baining-pair: the sun-man and moon-woman (MD lists God as **thēchēnmucha**, which I suspect is a linguistic transformation). Informants mostly spoke of the male twin as God. The twins were not explicitly equated with the sun and moon but strongly associated with them *via* myths, rituals and gender codifications of the sun as hot and male, and the moon as cool and female (see Bley 1914: 198). Whitehouse (1995, 1996a) documents circle symbolism at Maranagi's cult that, I interpret, to refer to the sun-man and moon-woman.
41. Close to the shore at Illi is a remnant of the celestial womb, a large red boulder known in the local language as '**graun**' (*graun*, ground).
42. Both terms – **ailachi** and **vitona** – can also refer to shadow, reflection, photo or any image and representation of a person. Such representations are used in sorcery spells to capture a person's animating soul.
43. I only ever saw taro inside, but Parkinson (1907: 266) records netbags containing stones and areca nuts.
44. In the Kivung, the placenta spirit of a follower is their invisible moral guardian. Having not lived on the earth to become sinful, it is an indigenous guardian angel that may reward or punish the actions of its visible twin.
45. In the bush Kaliai area, the cargo cult of Censure also drew on traditional myths of matriarchy, of women creating everything of value and importance. Female followers were placed at the centre of cult rituals, like the telephone holes that communicated with the underground spirit women making cargo (Lattas 1998: 132–5).
46. For the northwest Baining, Bley (1914: 198) recounts a myth of the masculine nature of stones that originated from the incestuous union of the sun-man with the moon-woman. Originally there was only the sun and the moon, who loved each other and got married. Their children were stones and birds who became respectively transformed into the first men and women.
47. Laufer (1946/49: 510) never uses the name Naepalm, but Jachongki and Dom for the moon wife of the sun man.
48. There were some exceptions. A respected male elder seen as committed to tradition was recruited by senior women to paint the mask's barkcloth covering. At Dadul, women recruited a senior man to prevent other male visitors into their ritual area. Though aware of women's secrets, he respectfully looked away from their Siviriki tumbuan performances and towards incoming paths. Senior Mali men also recruit respected female elders into men's religious secrets ostensibly because they need these women to help organise other women in the collection of food and bush materials for forthcoming ceremonies.
49. Laufer (1946/49: 533) records Mali myths of the moon mother and sun father producing two sons. The first but smaller son had the father's name, Kunagem, and is 'full of spiritual superiority'. He is equated with the evening star as a 'little sun'. The evening star is also said to be the black Jesus, the persecuted decrepit grandchild who accompanies his rubbish grandmother, Maria.
50. Informants claim this event happened recently and a European priest took away the sun-child, took away their Jesus whose return is awaited. Many missionaries adopted Baining children. In 1890, two Baining boys were taken to Europe by Bishop Couppé.
51. Laufer (1946/49: 501, 534) notes the division bush-Mali (**a raunda**) and coastal Mali (**a tributa**) but does not relate it to gender, to the sun-father and moon-mother (see MD:11).
52. Whitehouse discusses fertility rituals at Maranagi's break-away cult. Its followers often wore customary dress: men wore bark girdles and women wore leafed-skirts. The cult also built a roundhouse along traditional lines

that was different to the Kivung's communal houses for feeding the dead. There, according to my informants, food was offered to Naepalm.

53. Mimica (1988) has powerfully analysed the mytho-poetics of the human body in Melanesian cosmology as a feminine enclosure of blood and flesh around masculine bones.
54. Among the Sulka, Laufer saw similar stones surrounded by ornamental herbs and stuck into the ground-dance floor in front of large roundhouses. In the Mengen area, such stones are called Mahagina. They have a guardian spirit or **malyav** who looks after a village's well-being - in terms of rain, sunshine, health and game.
55. In the Kaliai bush, a grieving widow could 'volunteer' to be killed. To avoid escalating conflicts, it was done by her brothers, her matrilineal moiety. They would break her neck using painted barkcloth.
56. Such bones keep dead spirits close as helpers; so did burying deceased children under their parent's bed.
57. Corbin did fieldwork with the Central Baining in 1972–1973 and 1982–1983. He argues red encodes masculinity and men's activities: firedance ceremonies, blood from war and hunting, and self-sacrificial ritual practices, such as men's blood taken from their tongues to paint masks. He also argues: 'Black is the female color, associated with ashes and soot of cooking fires, the fecundity of earth and mud, the dark wet places where powerful spirits live'.
58. Laufer (1946/49: 533) mentions a protruding high, mushroom-shaped stone on the Sikut river where offerings of food and bark cloth were made to the Great Spirit.
59. At Dadul, I have witnessed a firedance mask holding a snake.
60. In 2015, at Karong, each father held not a snake but a parcel of dried smoked pork from captured wild pigs.
61. Bley (1914) notes northwest Baining myths of whites as originating from an ancestor who ran away.
62. Laufer was better received by comparative religious studies experts (Eliade 1969: 117; Janssen 1975; Pernet 2006; Trompf 2006).
63. http://clarkservinsalone.blogspot.com/2010/11/need-for-church-unity.html?m=0

REFERENCES

ALLEN, M. 1967. *Male Cults and Secret Initiations in Melanesia*. Melbourne, Australia: Melbourne University Press.
BAMBERGER, J. 1974. The myth of matriarchy. In M. ROSALDO and L. LAMPHERE (eds), *Women, Culture and Society*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, pp. 261–280.
BASSO, K. 1988. 'Speaking with Names': Language and landscape among the Western Apache. *Cultural Anthropology* 3(2): 99–130.
BATESON, G. 1932. Further notes on a snake dance of the Baining. *Oceania* 2: 334–341.
———. 1936. *Naven*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
BLEY, P. 1914. Sagen der Baininger auf Neupommern. *Anthropos* 9(1/2): 196–220.
BOURDIEU, P. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
CASTORIADIS, C. 1998. *The Imaginary Institution of Society*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
CLIFFORD, J. 1988. *The Predicament of Culture*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
CORBIN, G. 1976. *The Art of the Baining of New Britain*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, MI.
———. 1979. The art of the Baining. In S.M. MEAD (ed), *Exploring the Visual Arts of Oceania*. Honolulu, HI: University Press of Hawaii, pp. 159–179.
———. 1982. Chachet Baining art. *Expedition Magazine* 24(2): 5–16.
———. 1984. The central Baining revisited. *Anthropology and aesthetics* 7(8): 44–69.
———. 1988. *Native Arts of North America, Africa, and the South Pacific*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
DOUGLAS, M. 1966. *Purity and Danger*. London, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
———. 1970. The social control of cognition: Some factors in joke perception. *Man* 3: 361–375.
EDMUNDSON, A. 2019. 'Preserving the Papuan': JHP Murray and doomed race theory in Papua New Guinea. *History and Anthropology* 30(4): 1–20.
ELIADE, M. 1969. *The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
FABIAN, J. 1983. *Time and the Other*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
FAJANS, J. 1997. *They Make Themselves*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
———. 1985. The person in social context: The social character of Baining "psychology". In G. WHITE and J. KIRKPATRICK (eds), *Person, Self and Experience*. Berkeley, CA: University of California, pp. 367–397.
———. 2015. n.d. posting 31/08/2015 on ASAONET.
FORGE, A. 1967. The Abelam artist. In M. FREEMAN (ed), *Social Organization. Essays Presented to Raymond Firth*. London, UK: Cass.
FOUCAULT, M. 1977. *Discipline and Punish*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
GEWERTZ, D. 1988. *Myths of Matriarchy Reconsidered*. Sydney, Australia: Oceania Publications.
GILLISON, G. 1993. *Between Culture and Fantasy*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
GRAEBER, D. 2001. *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value*. New York, NY: Palgrave.
GRAY, P. 2011. *Psychology*. New York, NY: Worth Publishers.
———. 2013. *Free to Learn*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

HAMILTON, V., H. BOWER, and N.H. FRIJDA (eds) 1988. *Cognitive Perspectives on Emotion and Motivation*. Boston, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
HARRIES-JONES, P. 1995. *A Recursive Vision: Ecological Understanding and Gregory Bateson*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.
———. 2016. *Upside-Down Gods: Gregory Bateson's World of Difference*. New York, NY: Fordham University Press.
HAUSER-SCHÄUBLIN, B. 1996. The thrill of the line, the string, and the frond, or why the Abelam are a non-cloth culture. *Oceania* 67: 81–106.
HEIDEGGER, M. 1927. *Being and Time*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
HERDT, G. (ed) 1982. *Rituals of Manhood*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
———. 2003. *Secrecy and Cultural Reality*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
HESSE, K. and T. AERTS 1978. *Baining Life and Lore*. Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea: Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies.
HIATT, L. 1971. Secret pseudo-procreation rites among the Australian Aborigines. In L. HIATT and C. JAYAWARDENA (eds), *Anthropology in Oceania*. Sydney, Australia: Angus & Robertson, pp. 77–88.
———. 1979. Queen of night, mother-right, and secret male cults. In R. HOOK (ed), *Fantasy and Symbol*. London, UK: Academic Press, pp. 247–266.
JANSSEN, H. 1975. Creative deities and the role of religion in New Britain. In H. JANSSEN, J. STERLY, and K. WITTKEMPER (eds), *Carl Laufer MSC*. Freiburg, Germany: Herder, pp. 19–39.
JEUDY-BALLINI, M. 1998. *Review of* H. Whitehouse, inside the cult. Religious innovation and transmission in Papua New Guinea. *L'Homme* 148: 310–312.
———. 2008. Cargo cult or sin cult? In S. TCHERKÉZOFF and F. DOUAIRE-MARSAUDON (eds), *The Changing South Pacific*. Canbera, Australia: ANU Press.
KAPFERER, B. 1983. *A Celebration of Demons*. Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press.
———. 2013. How anthropologists think: Configurations of the exotic. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19(4): 813–836.
KOLBRUNNER, F. 1999. Carl Laufer. In G. ANDERSON (ed), *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*. Macmillan Reference: New York, NY, p. 386.
KÖHNKE, G. 1973. *Time Belong Tumbuna*. Milton, Australia: Jacaranda Press.
LANGNESS, L. 1974. Ritual power and male domination in the New Guinea highlands. *Ethos* 2: 189–212.
LATTAS, A. 1987. Savagery and civilisation: Towards a genealogy of racism in Australian Society. *Social Analysis* 21: 39–58.
———. 1990. Aborigines and contemporary Australian nationalism. *Social Analysis* 27: 50–69.
———. 1992. Primitivism, nationalism and individualism in Australian popular culture. In B. ATTWOOD and J. ARNOLD (eds), *Power, Knowledge and Aborigines: Journal of Australian Studies*, Vol. 35. Carlton, Australia: La Trobe University Press, pp. 45–58.
———. 1996. Humanitarianism and Australian nationalism in colonial Papua. *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 7(2): 141–165.
———. 1998. *Cultures of Secrecy*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
———. 2001. The underground life of capitalism. In A. RUMSEY and J. WEINER (eds), *Emplaced Myth*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, pp. 161–188.
———. 2005. Capitalizing on complicity. *Ethnohistory* 52(1): 47–80.
———. 2006. The utopian promise of government. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 12(1): 129–150.
———. 2009. Cargo cults and cognitive science: The dynamics of creativity and repetition in the Pomio Kivung. In C. CUSACK and C. HARTNEY (eds), *Religion and Retributive Logic*. Brill: Leiden, DE, pp. 101–129.
———. 2010. *Dreams, Madness, and Fairy Tales in New Britain*. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.
LAUFER, C. 1946/49. Rigenmucha, das Höchste Wesen der Baining (Neubritannien). *Anthropos* 41(44): 497–560.
———. 1955. Aus Geschichte und religion der Sulka. *Anthropos* 50: 32–64.
———. 1959. Jugendinitiation und Sakraltéinze der *Baining*. *Anthropos* 54: 905–938.
———. 1970. Die Mandas-Maskenfeier der Mali-Baining. *Jahrbuch des Museums für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig* 27: 160–184.
LIPSET, D. 1982. *Gregory Bateson: The Legacy of a Scientist*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
LÖWITH, K. 1982. *Max Weber and Karl Marx*. London, UK: George Allen & Unwin.
MACKENZIE, M.A. 1991. *Androgynous Objects*. Amsterdam, NL: Harwood Academic.
MALINOWSKI, B. 1926. *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*. New York, NY: Anchor Books.
MIMICA, J. 1988. *Intimations of Infinity*. Oxford, UK: Berg.
PARKINSON, R. 1907 (2010). *Thirty Years in the South Seas*. Sydney, Australia: Sydney University Press.
PENTONY, P. 1940 (1979). *An Intensive Study of Depopulation in the North Baining Area*. Unpublished MA thesis. University of Sydney. Microfilm, Sydney, Australia.
PERNET, H. 2006. *Ritual Masks: Deceptions and Revelations*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock.
POOL, G. 2015. *Lost Among the Baining*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press.
POOL, J. 1971. *Final Report to the Wenner-Gren Foundation: Field Work among the Northern Baining, New Britain (1969–70)*. Unpublished manuscript. New York, NY.
———. 1984. Field research among the Northern Baining, New Britain (1969-1970). *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 79: 219–233.

———. 2008. Shoot-Boy, Driver-Man. http://www.maprecord.com/private/ShootBoy.pdf
POOLE, J. 1943. Still further notes on a snake dance of the Baining. *Oceania* 13: 224–227.
READ, W.J. 1931. A snake dance of the Baining. *Oceania* 2(2): 232–236.
RICOEUR, P. 1970. *Freud and Philosophy*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
RIESENFELD, A. 1950. *The Megalithic Culture of Melanesia*. Leiden, DE: Brill.
ROHATYNSKYJ, M.A. 2000. The enigmatic Baining: The breaking of an ethnographer's heart. In S. R. JAARSMA and M.A. ROHATYNSKYJ (eds), *Ethnographic Artifacts*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, pp. 174–194.
———. 2005. On knowing the Baining. In P. STEWART and A. STRATHERN (eds), *Anthropology and Consultancy*. New York, NY: Berghahn Books, pp. 25–45.
SAID, E. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York, NY: Pantheon.
SCHLESIER, E. 1958. *Die Melanesischen Geheimkulte*. Gottingen, DE: Musterschmidt.
SCOTT, J. 1990. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
STEBBINS, T. and M. PLANIGALE. 2010. 'Explaining the unknowable': Accessibility of meaning and the exegesis of Mali Baining songs. *Australian Journal of Linguistics* 30(1): 141–154.
STEBBINS, T. and J. TAYUL 2012. *Mali (Baining) Dictionary*. Canberra, Australia: Asia-Pacific Linguistics.
TOMLINSON, M. 2006. The limits of meaning in Fijian methodist sermons. In M. ENGELKE and M. TOMLINSON (eds), *The Limits of Meaning*. Berghahn: New York, NY.
TORGOVNICK, M. 1990. *Gone Primitive*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
TROMPF, G. 2006. *Religions of Melanesia: A Bibliographic Survey*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
TURNER, T.S. 1969a. Oedipus: Time and structure in narrative form. In R.F. SPENCER (ed), *Forms of Symbolic Action*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, pp. 26–68.
TURNER, V. 1969b. *The Ritual Process*. London, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
TUZIN, D. 1995. Art and procreative illusion in the Sepik: Comparing the Abelam and the Arapesh. *Oceania* 65(4): 289–303.
VALENTINE, C.A. 1955. *Cargo Beliefs and Cargo Cults Among the West Nakanai of New Britain*. Unpublished manuscript. Canberra, AU: Pacific Manuscripts Bureau.
WHITEHOUSE, H. 1995. *Inside the Cult*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
———. 1996a. Apparitions, orations and rings. In A. HOWARD and J. MAGEO (eds), *Spirits in Culture, History and Mind*. London, UK: Routledge, pp. 173–194.
———. 1996b. From possession to apotheosis. In R. FEINBERG and K.A. WATSON-GEGEO (eds), *Leadership and Change in the Western Pacific*. Athlone: London, UK, pp. 376–397.
———. 2004. *Modes of Religiosity: A Cognitive Theory of Religious Transmission*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.