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Gifts of grief: performative ethnography and the revelatory potential of emotion

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Abstract

After participation in the funeral of a beloved friend in the Western Highlands of Papua New Guinea, I was drawn to contemplate the revelatory potential of emotions such as grief. With reference to literature on the anthropology of emotions and the concept of empathy, I consider the relationship between ethnographic knowledge and deep emotional responses in the context of fieldwork. I argue that moments of intense emotional engagement, which many researchers record as having experienced during fieldwork, have the potential to lead to rich ethnographic understanding, particularly when such moments productively draw us into participatory cultural performances that help mediate the conceptual divide between meaning and feeling, observer and observed.

Keywords

Western Highlands, Papua New Guinea, grief, funerary ritual, mourning rites, anthropology of emotion, empathy, ethnographic fieldwork, performativity

In April 2009, I attended the funeral of a close friend from the Western Highlands of Papua New Guinea. My friend Maggie Wilson was born in Kunguma Village in the hills above Mount Hagen town, daughter of a Highland woman and Patrick Leahy, older brother of Michael and Daniel Leahy, the Australian gold prospectors who were among the first white men to encounter the peoples of the highland valleys. Daniel Leahy established a gold mine at Kuta, near Kunguma Village. Maggie's mother, Jara, was a Melka woman married to Kuan, from the Penambe Wia clan. According to Maggie, Kuan had not been able to have children with either of his two wives, so he sent Jara to the white man to conceive a child for him. Maggie grew up as a much loved and favoured child in the village, bright, wilful and determined. When she was about 12 years old, Daniel Leahy recognised Maggie as the daughter of his brother Patrick, and decided to send her

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to school, first in Vunapope, then Port Moresby and lastly in Australia, where I met her in 1969. We were among a handful of students at the Catholic girls' boarding school in north Queensland who were from Papua New Guinea (my family was living in Kerema in the Gulf District at the time) and we quickly became close friends.

Maggie returned to Papua New Guinea in 1974, on the eve of the country's independence. Although her uncle had urged her to apply for Australian citizenship and stay in Australia after completing her high school education, Maggie preferred to go home to Mount Hagen. She confided in me at the time that she felt that it was her calling to return and make a contribution to the successful development of an independent Papua New Guinea. Maggie became an important business entrepreneur and a 'big woman' in the Western Highlands. As the years progressed she gained deep respect not only among her own immediate clan but also more widely, particularly for her contribution to the tourist industry in Papua New Guinea and for her determined struggle to improve the welfare and political participation of women. Yet, her efforts were not always successful and her status was often challenged in the highly competitive social world of the Western Highlands. The road that Maggie had chosen was not an easy one.

In 2008, Maggie and I began to plan a book on women in politics, featuring the experiences of women, including Maggie herself, who had stood as candidates in the 2007 Papua New Guinea elections. On 1 April 2009 we met in Cairns, Australia, where we listened to a preliminary interview she had done, fine-tuned our interview questions and excitedly planned to meet in Papua New Guinea later in the year to conduct further research. Maggie returned to Mount Hagen from Cairns the following day and died in her sleep a few days later on Monday 6 April 2009.

In this paper, I reflect upon my experiences at Maggie's funeral and two funerals I attended while in the field some years earlier, in order to explore the revelatory potential of emotions such as grief. Is there a relationship between an anthropologist's emotional responses in the context of fieldwork situations and the ethnographic understandings that we develop? My approach to this question is here autobiographical. During the 1970s and 1980s, a flourish of anthropologists began to tackle questions of reflexivity in relation to ethnographic writing (e.g. Scholte, 1974; Marcus and Fischer, 1986; Clifford and Marcus, 1986). A new genre of experiential, or reflexive, ethnography was born (e.g. Crapanzano, 1980; Rabinow, 1977) and anthropologists began to experiment in various styles of 'autoethnography' (Reed-Danahay, 1997). The way that ethnographic knowledge is produced and 'the blurred borders between ethnography and life' continue to be the focus of much scholarly examination (McLean and Leibing, 2007; see also Dickson-Swift et al., 2009; Duranti, 2010; Forsey, 2004; Throop, 2003, 2010).

Renato Rosaldo (1989: 7) expressed some discomfort about this turn towards reflexivity in his seminal paper 'Grief and a headhunter's rage':

> Introducing myself into this account requires a certain hesitation both because of the discipline's taboo and because of its increasingly frequent violation by essays laced with trendy amalgams of continental philosophy and autobiographical snippets. If classic ethnography's vice was the slippage from the ideal of detachment to actual indifference, that of present-day reflexivity is the tendency for the self-absorbed Self to lose sight altogether of the culturally different Other.

While I too am somewhat uncomfortable with the potential of the reflexive turn in anthropology to lead to narcissistic navel-gazing, or an indulgent over-emphasis on the research self in favour of an understanding of social situations, my participation as a mourner at Maggie's funeral (or *haus krai*[1]) in the Western Highlands has led me to reflect upon the ethnographic value of paying some attention to one's own bodily experiences and the 'experiential bases of knowledge production' (Leibing and McLean, 2007: 9).

Empathy in the production of ethnographic knowledge

The idea of emotional understanding and the importance of 'empathy' in ethnographic knowledge production have been of interest and discussion in anthropology and other fieldwork-based disciplines for at least the past 30 years, and the problem continues to be explored in insightful ways (see Throop, 2008, 2010; Hollan, 2008; and Hollan and Throop 2008).

Lutz and White (1986) point out a number of 'classic theoretical or epistemological tensions' in the anthropological literature on emotion. These include whether emotions are irrational or whether they are potential sources of knowledge about the world, the universality versus the cultural particularity of emotions, and the material basis of emotions as psychobiological facts versus their basis in ideas. A number of scholars have attempted to go beyond such body–mind dichotomies, arguing that emotions involve both thinking *and* feeling (Leavitt, 1996: 516). Kirschner (1987: 218), for example, argues that empathy involves an *interplay* between cognitive and affective processes and Wikan (1991: 292) suggests that anthropologists adopt as an analytical tool the Balinese concept of 'feeling-thought', based on the idea that 'no one can think but with their feelings, indeed that feeling and thought are the same'.

Other anthropologists, such as Jackson (1989) and Csordas (1993, 2007), have advocated the phenomenological paradigm of embodiment as a means 'for analysing human participation in a cultural world'. This includes analysing the participation of ethnographers in the cultural worlds or social situations they are trying to understand. Fieldwork by its very nature involves 'somatic modes of attention', which Csordas (1993: 138) defined as 'culturally elaborated ways of attending to and with one's body in surroundings that include the embodied presence of others'. In other words, as Csordas (1993: 136) puts it, we are 'not isolated subjectivities trapped within our bodies, but share an intersubjective milieu with others'. There are some ethnographic moments, in which we become particularly aware of, or attuned to, this intersubjective milieu; in other words, there are moments when one's 'somatic mode of attention' becomes sharper and more focused. In an account of certain spontaneous experiences arising from his ethnographic fieldwork, Csordas (2007: 106) proposes that such a moment 'can best be described as a transmutation of sensibilities' in that it 'could have been experienced by an indigenous person in the sense of its form and its relevance to the immediate setting'. He argues that when an ethnographer experiences empathy and/or intuition spontaneously in the field, then it is fair to call such a moment 'revelatory', even when it does not occur in a ritual context (Csordas 2007: 115). Yet Csordas does not elaborate upon what is actually being revealed, nor why such moments are more pertinent in the context of ritual.

Rosaldo (1989) famously drew on his experience of grief, following the accidental death of his wife Michelle Rosaldo in the field, to reflect upon the 'emotional force of death' among the Ilongot. His own loss led him to question the interpretive adequacy of semiotic approaches, or 'the common anthropological assumption that the greatest human import resides in the densest forest of symbols' (p. 2). He argued that: 'The human sciences must explore the cultural force of emotions with a view to delineating the passions that animate certain forms of human conduct' (p. 19). Rosaldo noted that in spite of over 14 years of fieldwork he had not been able to grasp what Ilongots had repeatedly told him about the connection between grief, rage and headhunting, until he drew on his own experience: 'Only after being repositioned through a devastating loss of my own could I better grasp that Ilongot older men mean precisely what they say when they describe the anger in bereavement as the source of their desire to cut off human heads' (1989: 3).

Rosaldo's explanation for Ilongot headhunting has been challenged as inadequate because 'the headhunters' rage is conventional…and the motivation for raiding is linked to culturally specific ideas of prestige and manhood' (Beatty, 2005: 21). Yet his case for the value of analogous experience in ethnographic interpretation remains convincing (Throop, 2010: 771). Rosaldo's essay raised a number of important questions that require further exploration. Firstly, is common personal experience *essential* to the understanding of a social situation? In other words, as Wikan (1991) puts it: 'How valid is knowledge that is not anchored in experience?' Secondly, what is the *nature* of this experience-based knowledge? What does it say about the relationship between emotion and reason, feeling and meaning?

Although Rosaldo emphasises the importance of empathy for ethnographic understanding, his paper is actually a reflection upon the relative value of different theoretical approaches. Thus, it could be argued that it was not so much an understanding of Ilongot emotional states that Rosaldo's personal grief facilitated as his capacity to reflect upon, or reason about, anthropological theory and various interpretive approaches within the discipline. After all, one of the key aims of his paper was to question the value of semiotic approaches.

Drawing on comparative ethnographic evidence from Melanesia, where many people insist that it is impossible to know what is in another person's mind, Robins (2008) questions the claim that the capacity for empathy is essential for anthropological fieldwork. Robins and Rumsey (2008: 417) argue that Melanesian ideas about 'the opacity of other minds', provide a 'strong challenge to any impulse we might have to ground our arguments in our empathetic abilities'. They call upon fieldworkers who want to continue to argue for this ability, in the face of assertions to the contrary by their research participants, to offer a more 'compelling account' of how we *do* empathy (my emphasis). I attempt in this paper to answer this call and make some contribution to the discussion, by drawing on Beatty's (2007) suggestion that ethnographers would do better to focus on emotional *practices* and the *pragmatic contexts* of emotion use, than become trapped in quandaries concerning the cross-cultural validity of shared 'interior states' or the 'subjective element of emotions' (p. 34). I treat the three different funerals I describe below as such 'pragmatic contexts of emotion use' and, influenced by the work of Judith Butler (1990, 1993), I turn to the concepts of 'performance' and 'performativity' in order to offer some insights into how fieldworkers might *do* empathy by engaging with the emotional practices of the people with whom they work.

Three funerals

During my field trips as an anthropologist to the Western Highlands of Papua New Guinea, I experienced moments when my somatic mode of attention seemed more enhanced than at others. Being able to neither speak nor understand a word of the language (Temboka) and very little Tok Pisin during my first field trip in January 2000, I became intensely aware of the bodily attention that I was paying to the people around me. I felt as if every hair on my body was standing on end, reaching out to understand the significance of what people were saying and doing. Actually, I felt incredibly alive; exhaustedly so. During that first field trip, my colleague Chris Morgan and I were conducting research on the films *Joe Leahy's Neighbours* and *Black Harvest* by Bob Connolly and Robin Anderson. The films record the complexities of the relationship between Maggie's cousin, Joe Leahy, and the customary owners of the land on which he had established a coffee plantation, the Ganiga people.

In the early days of our fieldwork, we attended the funerals of two men, one on our very first day among the Ganiga at Kilima Plantation and the other a week later in Kunguma, where we were staying with my friend Maggie. At the Ganiga funeral I began to play the role of an ethnographer, observing the proceedings, listening to the speeches, discretely taking notes and the occasional photograph. However, as the visitors came up, group by group, towards the mourning family, keening and crying, to offer their condolences, I began to cry too, involuntarily in concert with the mourners. As it was my first day in the field, I did not know the deceased nor, in fact, anyone else at the event apart from Joe Leahy, but I could not help the tears streaming down my face. An old man noticed; he came and cupped me under the chin, saying something in Temboka which I did not comprehend, but which I took to be recognition and appreciation of human empathy. At that moment we appeared to share something; but what, I later wondered? Perhaps it was simply a mutual desire for understanding.

At the second funeral, which took place in Kunguma Village, the deceased was of the same clan as Maggie (Penambi Wia) but of a different lineage (*haus line*). Before we proceeded to the area where the *haus line* of the deceased was seated in mourning, Maggie and others from her line gathered together to collect and tally their contributions into a single sum of a few hundred kina (to which I also contributed) for presentation to the lineage of the deceased. Once a suitable sum had been collected, Maggie's line proceeded slowly, walking together in group formation towards the *haus krai*. Men put their arms around each other and pulled at their beards or at imaginary beards (those who were clean shaven); women also clung to one another and all adopted facial expressions and bodily comportment associated with grief the Western Highlands. Again, at first I tried to approach the event as an ethnographer might, walking with Maggie's group but observing everything carefully and filing it away in 'my mind' in order to be able to write up some field notes later. Again, however, I became immersed in the event emulating the bodily comportment of Maggie's line, my tears flowing freely in concert with theirs.

Little did I know as I participated with Maggie at the *haus krai* in Kunguma Village in 2000 and witnessed the presentation of a pig she had contributed and the gift of money from her *haus line* that nine years later I would be returning to Kunguma to attend a *haus*

krai for Maggie's herself. It was a huge event that took place over a period of six days. To my dismay, due to travel problems, I was only able to attend on the last three days.

Each day members of her lineage, including her children and I, sat in mourning accepting from group after group their gifts of grief. Men took the opportunity to display their skills in oratory before presenting funerary gifts on behalf of their *haus lines*. On one of the days, a big man invited the women to stand up and speak if they so wished. He said that Maggie was a 'big woman', a business woman, who had been able to talk like a man during her lifetime and, while it was not customary for women to give speeches in public, because Maggie had paved the way for them, they should feel free to speak at her funeral. Several women shyly stood up to give speeches and present gifts of money on behalf of different groups of women, including a group of widowed and unmarried women of Kunguma Village who had pooled earnings from the sale of their garden produce and woven net bags (*bilums*).

I was expecting to dissolve into an emotional mess at Maggie's funeral, but, unlike the other funerals I attended, during Maggie's *haus krai* my tears did not flow as readily. An old woman came up and threw her arms around me, sobbing and crying as she did so. I performed as expected and held her close, cradling her head on my shoulder, but I could not bring myself to cry. It seemed like I was holding the woman forever, and I was just beginning to wonder how long I could keep it up, when a man came and dragged her away from me, admonishing her to move on.

Why did my tears flow freely and, apparently involuntarily, at the funerals of two men I had never met, while at the funeral of a woman with whom I had shared a deep and abiding friendship for nearly 40 years, I shed relatively few tears? I find it hard to describe how I felt at Maggie's *haus krai*; I think I was mostly tense and worried. My somatic mode of attention was on Maggie's daughters and how they were feeling, as well as on the nature of their relationships with Maggie's *haus line* (including her nine brothers and sisters and their extended families), other Penambe Wia lineages living in or near Kunguma and neighbouring groups. Some of these groups I knew had been in conflict with Maggie over compensation demands for the land on which she built her tourist lodge, or compensation for use of the road. I felt a motherly concern and sense of responsibility for Maggie's children, particularly her two elder daughters who had brought their husbands to Kunguma Village and had settled and built houses there.[2] Their security of tenure seemed to me to rest rather precariously on Maggie's lifework of relationship-building within her own group and with neighbouring tribes. Moreover, there were palpable tensions within Maggie's own *haus line* because of the fact that Maggie's death had been sudden and unexpected. There were whisperings of potential treachery and betrayal by one or more of her kinsmen, who may have been jealous of her success in business, as well as suspicions that she was poisoned by someone from another tribal group, in revenge for an incident that had occurred at the Hotel she owned in Hagen town. None of these suspicions could be revealed publically at the *haus krai* but everyone knew that eventually, in order to ensure the continued wellbeing of the *line*, a revelatory meeting was required at which members of her close kin could confess any 'sins' they may have committed against Maggie.[3]

Maggie was buried on the fourth day of the *haus krai*, which continued for another two days. Each night an armed party sat watch over her grave for fear that witches

(*sanguma*) might tamper with it. One night there was a small earth tremor that set the dogs running around and barking and the night guard on tenterhooks. The next day I was told that one of her nephews had tried to contact Maggie's ghost by dialling a special number on his mobile phone and that some people thought that the earth tremor was a sign of her anger at being disturbed.

It is almost a truism to suggest that, in the context of death, what are crucially at stake are the nature, quality and continuity of the web of social relations that bind the participants through their links with the deceased. But it was actually my experiences at Maggie's *haus krai* that substantiated for me the anthropological characterisation of death as a time of 'provisionality, indeterminacy and contestation as social relations are reordered' (Kaufman and Morgan, 2005: 319). In truth, I was too busy to cry. I spent much of the time during the *haus krai*, helping Maggie's daughters keep track of who was who, and who was giving what in terms of funerary gifts. I knew that they would need to comprehend the complex net of relationships into which their mother was woven and into which she had woven herself, in order to be able to manage the expectations of individuals and groups who would, in future, turn to them for assistance, or might challenge them over land tenure rights. Maggie's daughters had both built houses and settled in the village, on land over which their mother held freehold title and on which she had built a tourist lodge. However, over the years there had been intermittent conflict between their mother and some of her clansmen who had demanded further compensation for what they claimed was their customary land.

Ethnographic engagement

Kirschner (1987: 213) classifies ethnographic engagement in the field into two types: the interpretive orientation which emphasises the social construction of meaning, and the subjectivist orientation which emphasises the potential of the fieldworkers' emotional responses as 'an important channel through which ethnographic knowledge is gained'. More recently, Beatty (2005: 22) describes 'two kinds of ethnographer, two styles of engagement in the field: the constructivist, interpreter of symbols, and the empathiser, diviner of feelings; the one pursuing good translations, the other good vibrations'. While typologies are always problematic, let me take the liberty here to consider a third style of engagement in the field which provides mediation between interpretivist and subjectivist orientations, or between the constructivist and the empathic styles: engagement in participatory cultural performance. Numerous ethnographers have described moments of deeply personal emotional response during their fieldwork (e.g. Throop, 2010). I suggest that such moments have the potential to lead to richer ethnographic understanding, not necessarily because they reflect homologous experience or shared feelings, but because they have the potential to productively draw an ethnographer into 'performance mode', thus facilitating mediation of the conceptual divide between meaning and feeling, observer and observed, without dissolving these binaries altogether. A performance mode of ethnographic engagement is responsive to the pragmatic context of the emotional practices of research participants. As actors within the various social fields that we set out to understand, ethnographers draw on feeling to convey meaning and on meaning to convey feeling, as do good performers on any stage.

Whether my tears at the first funeral indicate that I was somehow 'vibrating in harmony' with Ganiga feelings is not the issue. What my tears did do was instantly transport me, if only briefly, from the role of mere observer to that of a participant in a culturally appropriate social relationship initiated by the reciprocal exchange of tears, and sealed by a small funerary gift of 20 kina,[4] which my colleague Chris Morgan presented on our behalf. As Throop (2010: 772) writes, 'empathy is never based simply on shared feeling states. Empathy is, instead, a necessarily imaginative, cognitive, affective, and communicative process.' I would add here that empathy is also a matter of performative display and concrete social practice.

Since the concept of performance is associated with play-acting, such a style of ethnographic engagement may be construed as lacking sincerity, a charge that has been levelled against the practice of ritualised mourning in many different cultural contexts. However, as Lutz and White (1986: 413) argue, while some ethnographers have 'attempted to distinguish "genuine" from "conventional" emotional expression in ritual', this dichotomy does not 'do justice to the variety of ways in which cultural thought and ritual act together to construct emotional experience'. Butler's (1993: 187) notion of 'performativity' provides a fruitful conceptual tool here. Performativity is not the same as bounded performance or 'the efficacious expression of a human will' but a pre-conscious 'discursive production'. In the Western Highlands, as opposed to hiding 'true' feelings, exterior signs, such as bodily states, physical comportment, adornment (or lack of it) and public display (including of mourning), are thought to be revealing of the inner states of both individuals and groups and shaped by 'crucial moral relationships' (O'Hanlon, 1989: 21). While speech, or what people say, might veil what they are thinking and feeling, in the realm of bodily performance, Western Highlanders do not see 'a disjunction between the surface and what lies beneath, but rather a continuity' (O'Hanlon, 1989: 130; see also Strathern, 1979).

Whether my tears were a result of empathy, 'based on a common analogous experience' of bereavement (Beatty, 2005: 20), or the result of 'a transmutation of sensibilities insofar as my sense of performative presence and power was spontaneously manifest in a culturally appropriate form' (Csordas, 2007: 112), I cannot say. Whatever the reason, the point is, I argue that my bodily response made possible a mode of attention to the event and a heightened sensitivity to the context that allowed insights I might otherwise not have had – insights into what an exchange of tears might mean within a wider system of social expectations and obligations in the Western Highlands; that the performative dimensions of mourning (such as tears, sorrowful faces, men puling at their beards, women and men keening, faces daubed with mud) are highly valued as expressions of compassion that should be reciprocated. As Beatty (2005: 35) has written, 'often enough, emotions are a matter not of who we are and what we feel, but of where we are and what is expected of us'. I would rephrase this somewhat as: emotions are not *only* a matter of who we are and what we feel but *also* of where we are and what is expected of us.

I argue that by drawing us into performance mode, moments of intense emotional engagement in the field can lead to important ethnographic insights. Marilyn Strathern (1999) directly addresses this idea of the 'revelatory moment' in relation to ethnographic writing, noting that her attention has been 'transfixed at certain (ethnographic) moments' (1999: 6). She defines the 'ethnographic moment' as

> …a relation in the same way as a linguistic sign can be thought of as a relation (joining signifier and signified). We could say that the ethnographic moment works as an example of a relation which joins the understood (what is analysed at the moment of observation) to the need to understand (what is observed at the moment of analysis)…any ethnographic moment, which is a moment of knowledge or insight, denotes a relation between immersement and movement… (1999: 6).

Such ethnographic moments of knowledge or insight may also occur in the immediacy of fieldwork, particularly in the context of a performative anthropology that involves pragmatic, contextual interplay between 'the understood' and 'the need to understand'.

Yet, such moments are always contextual and, therefore, not equivalent in terms of the depth of insight one might gain, as I have attempted to show by presenting the three different cases. The first two funerals concerned total strangers and I was there as a mere observing visitor, unlike the third funeral at which it could be argued I was a true participant. Yet, even at this funeral of a loved one I was more than a participant in the emotional practices and could not deny the anthropologist in me as I listened to the speeches and observed with fascination the complex accountancy of funerary exchanges as well as the behind-the-scene whispers concerning the possible causes of Maggie's death.

The 'exchange of tears' at the two funerals of strangers and the 'no time for tears' at Maggie's funeral, partly had to do with the difference between attending a funeral as a visitor and the expectations of a person participating in it as a member of the *haus line* that has to organise it. The differences in my responses, I suggest, also had much to do with the fact that the first two funerals occurred during the very early stages of fieldwork. While my brief moments of empathy at these funerals led to relatively shallow insights about the cultural meaning of tears and performative expressions of grief, I had not yet fully experienced the fraught politics of place and identity in this ethnographic context. By the time of Maggie's funeral, however, I had developed a deeper understanding of the political economy of the 'performative conventions and dispositions' that I had so readily absorbed and adopted at the earlier funerals. In the context of Maggie's funeral, '… intuition and empathy as already constituted were amplified within a matrix of symbolic and personal connections' (Csordas, 2007: 115). My close personal connection with Maggie and her daughters led me into not only a heightened 'somatic mode of attention' at her funeral, but also a more ethnographically grounded intersubjective experience and consequent performative response. Performance here involves the interplay between meaning and feeling, cognitive and affective processes, where oneness and separateness, identity and difference are experienced, if not simultaneously then in terms of a movement back and forth. *Feeling* for/with Maggie's daughters drew me into thinking about customary social obligations and exchange relations, as well as customary landownership and the additional tensions and contradictions that arise when private economic development comes into play.

The intensity of my emotional experience was revelatory in the sense that it drew me into a performance mode that served to enhance my ability to understand the contested values at stake in this complex social situation; what Nussbaum (2001) refers to as 'the intelligence of the emotions' was at work, not only for me but also for all the other participants at the funeral. In turn, my understandings of the *meanings* of land ownership,

and of social reciprocities, drew me into an empathetic appreciation of the emotional states of the actors and the fragility of the damaged net of social relations left after the sudden death of this strong highlands woman, my friend Maggie Wilson.

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Notes

1. The Tok Pisin term for funerary or mourning rites.
2. According to custom in the patrilineal, patrilocal Western Highlands' societies, a woman would normally move to live with her husband's family on his clan land. However, Maggie had brought her English husband to settle in her natal village, and her daughters had followed suit with their husbands.
3. On the concept of betrayal in the Western Highlands, see O'Hanlon, 1989, and on the practice of confession see Rumsey, 2008 and Strathern and Stewart, 1998.
4. At that time, 20 kina was approximately 11 Australian dollars, the equivalent of almost one week's wages for an unskilled worker.

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