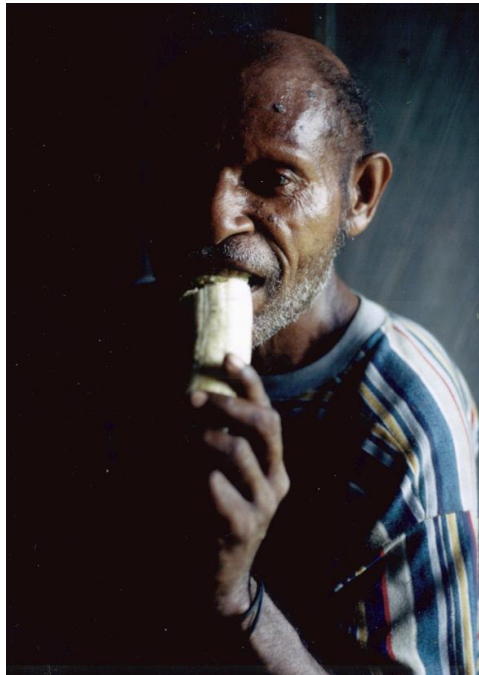


SAYA MAKAN SEMBARANG
(I Eat Anything):
THE CHANGING WORLD OF THE OGE BAGE MEE

BY S. EBEN KIRKSEY



Submitted to the Division of Social Sciences
and the Division of Natural Sciences
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DEDICATION:

To the aspirations of the Papuan peoples.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|------|
| Dedication | ii |
| Acknowledgements | iii |
| Table of Contents | v |
| List of Figures and Tables | vii |
| Abstract | viii |
| Linguistic Note | ix |
| Forward | x |
| Part One: Epistemology in Context | |
| Introduction: Misty Ridge | 14 |
| Chapter One: Exhibitionism in Irian Jaya | 18 |
| Hunting Head Hunters | |
| Representing Colonialism and Nationalism | |
| A Fugitives' Eye View | |
| Conclusion: Deconstructing Irian Jaya | |
| Chapter Two: Contingency | 36 |
| Rites of Passage | |
| A Country in Crisis | |
| Conclusion | |
| Chapter Three: Methods and Disciplines | 46 |
| Natural History | |
| Ethnography | |
| Conclusion: Frames of Analysis | |
| Conclusion of Section One | 59 |
| Part Two: Rats, Grasshoppers, and Rotten Meat | |
| Introduction: Eating Exotic | 61 |
| Chapter Four: "Mee" identity | 64 |
| Semantics | |
| Boundaries | |
| Conclusion | |
| Chapter Five: Subsistence & Ecology | 72 |
| Animal husbandry | |
| Gardening | |
| Silviculture | |
| Hunting & Gathering | |
| Cash Economy | |
| Conclusion | |
| Chapter Six: "Animal" Categories | 95 |
| Bounded Creatures | |
| A-categorical Critters | |
| Conclusion: Idiolects and Competing Authorities | |
| Chapter Seven: Questioning Authority | 111 |
| Eating Gender | |
| Defying the <i>Orang Tua</i> : | |
| Conclusion | |

| | |
|--|------------|
| Chapter Eight: <i>Adat</i> Reworking Etic Knowledge | 123 |
| Ghosts (<i>Tene</i>) | |
| Animal Spirits | |
| Ghouls (<i>Kego</i>) | |
| Conclusion | |
| Discussion: Modeling Cultural Change | 133 |
| Bibliography | 139 |
| Glossary | 146 |
| Index | 149 |

List of Figures

| | |
|--|-----|
| FIGURE 1.1 A backhoe in Misty Ridge | 14 |
| FIGURE 1.2 A map of Irian Jaya | 19 |
| FIGURE 1.3 My initiation into the UNCEN anthropology program | 37 |
| FIGURE 3.1 Behind the scenes of a picture | 56 |
| FIGURE 3.2 <i>Traditional</i> re-presentation | 57 |
| FIGURE 3.3 Presentation of a modern ideal | 57 |
| FIGURE 3.4 Framing the natural world | 57 |
| FIGURE 4.1 <i>Man Eating Bugs</i> | 61 |
| FIGURE 4.2 The boundary of the Kapauku tribe | 67 |
| FIGURE 4.3 The Bird's Neck Region of Irian Jaya | 69 |
| FIGURE 5.1 A domesticated pig | 74 |
| FIGURE 5.2 Sam's garden | 78 |
| FIGURE 5.3 Preparing a garden plot | 79 |
| FIGURE 5.4 Digging for sweet potatoes | 80 |
| FIGURE 5.5 Washing sweet potatoes | 81 |
| FIGURE 5.6 Collecting mushrooms | 87 |
| FIGURE 5.7 Total rainfall for 1997 (mm) | 92 |
| FIGURE 5.8 Average monthly rainfall in Nabire (mm) | 92 |
| FIGURE 6.1 Structure of Oge Bage Mee animal taxonomy | 96 |
| FIGURE 6.2 Consistency among insect names | 108 |
| FIGURE 7.1 Gathering freshwater shrimp and fish | 115 |
| FIGURE 7.2 A fearless shrimp hunter | 115 |
| FIGURE 7.3 Men striking a fierce pose while hunting shrimp | 115 |

Tables

| | |
|---|-----|
| TABLE 5.1 Names of garden crops in Misty Ridge | 77 |
| TABLE 5.2 Fruit trees in Misty Ridge | 82 |
| TABLE 5.3 Imported industrial food items | 88 |
| TABLE 5.4 Industrial products for food preparation, storage, and production | 89 |
| TABLE 5.5 Industrial goods found in Misty Ridge that are unrelated to food | 90 |
| TABLE 6.1 Edible "animal" categories of the Oge Bage Mee | 97 |
| TABLE 6.2 The category <i>isu</i> | 101 |
| TABLE 6.3 A-categorical edible animals | 104 |
| TABLE 6.4 Edible <i>keke</i> (beetle) species | 107 |

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ABSTRACT

The people of Irian Jaya, Indonesia, have been framed by the colonial literature as “primitives” who have a culture that is frozen in the past. Academic theories are closely tied to this construction and function as philosophical justification for the low status that the Irianese occupy in the world economy. These academic models, in conjunction with restrictions imposed through the process of obtaining research permits and through the guidelines of funding institutions, have constrained research in Irian Jaya. I have used the topical focus of this thesis, how the Oge Bage Mee distinguish between edible food and inedible things, to challenge several assumptions about the people of Irian Jaya. Additionally, I critique perceived relationships between emic explanations of eating restrictions and natural sanctions.

The Oge Bage Mee adapt to unpredictable contingencies by maintaining a diverse set of subsistence strategies: animal husbandry, gardening, silviculture, hunting and gathering, and cash economy. Despite previous descriptions of these people as belonging to a clearly demarcated ethnic unit, “Mee” (the people) have complex identities that overlap with neighboring groups. The location of animals within Oge Bage Mee taxonomic classes is an important factor in determining their edible status, yet the diversity of specific names for different animals shows great variation among interlocutors. Different social groups within Oge Bage Mee society have specific eating restrictions. These restrictions may be violated by individuals who maintain their independence from traditional norms. While eating restrictions that have generalized supernatural sanctions may be disregarded, many specific animals and places have dangerous spirits associated with them that continue to foster avoidance. Beliefs are in a state of dynamic transition as people question traditional assumptions and seek new understandings of the world around them.

Maria D. Vesperi
Division of Social Sciences

LINGUISTIC NOTE

I have been certified by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages as having advanced high fluency in the Indonesian language. Most of my interlocutors were also fluent in Indonesian and I conducted all of my interviews in this language. Aside from a few phrases that are local to Irian Jaya I have been able to follow the standardized spelling of Echols and Shadily (1990). Indonesian terms in this thesis are italicized and followed by an English translation in parentheses. For example: *alam* (Indonesian: nature).

As I discuss in Chapter Three, most conversations among people in Misty Ridge are conducted in *Mee Mana*, or the Mee language. While I do not fluently speak Mee Mana I transcribed and learned key concepts. To avoid using fonts that are foreign to my Indonesian and English speaking readers I have transcribed Mee Mana in roman characters. My thesis is the first academic study of the Oge Bage Mee dialect. I have utilized a modified version of the alphabet presented in Doble (1960): a, b, d, e, g, i, k, m, n, o, p, t, s, u, w, and y. Other than the exceptions listed below these sound similar to the analogous English phonemes:

i corresponds to the vowel in the word *feel*
 e corresponds to the a sound in the words: *make*, *cape*, and *way*
 u corresponds to the oo sound in *ooze* and *fool*
 o corresponds to the o sound in *over*, *boar*, and *no*
 a corresponds to the a sound in *art* and *calm*
 ai corresponds to the diphthong in *hi*
 k(l) and g(l) are laterally released (not present in English)
 g(w) and k(w) are labially released (not present in English)

A glottal stop occurs in Mee Mana after all vowels in a terminal position and is thus not transcribed in this thesis. The English phonemes l, r, z, v, f, s, and q do not appear in the highland “Mee” dialect that Doble described. However, the phoneme s does appear in the Oge Bage Mee dialect. Words in Mee Mana are italicized and translated in parentheses. However, unlike the Indonesian words in this thesis they are not labeled as Mee. For example: *tene* (ghost).

FORWARD

Since...it is impossible to present the whole of a culture simultaneously in a single flash, I must begin at some arbitrary chosen point in the analysis; and since words must necessarily be arranged in lines, I must present the culture, which like all cultures is really an elaborate reticulum of interlocking cause and effect, not with a network of words but with words in linear series. The order in which such a description is arranged is necessarily arbitrary and artificial, and I shall therefore choose that arrangement which will bring my methods of approach into the sharpest relief (Bateson 1958: 3).

The advent of word processors and personal computers has made it possible to compose large written works (i.e. a thesis) in a non-linear fashion. This is in contrast to the technology that imposed linear constraints on pre-1970s authors, who labored with typewriters or wrote their manuscripts in longhand. Despite the non-linear process that gave rise to my thesis, the final printed version of this document will proceed in a linear fashion from a discrete beginning to a finite end.

The organization of this work into two sections reflects a conceptual distinction that I have made between the *subject* of study itself, and the processes that have created it—I have contrasted etic constructions with a description of an emic belief system.¹ In Section One, “Epistemology in Context,” I discuss how the people of New Guinea have been framed as objects of study by the discipline of anthropology, and how my own study fits within contemporary politics. Section Two, “Rats, Grasshoppers, and Rotten Meat,” aims to describe the culture of the Oge Bage Mee through an analysis of what they eat.

Despite the categorical distinctions that I make between these two sections, my research proceeded through a process of dialogue with local, regional, and global voices. As I engaged with interlocutors in the

¹ The term etic refers to a broad, comparative analysis of data taken from multiple societies. An emic approach focuses on describing a local language or culture. These two terms are defined in the Glossary and discussed in detail in Chapter Eight.

village that I call Misty Ridge² my constituency in America and the regional centers of Irian Jaya faded in importance. I made my first trip to Misty Ridge without a preexisting research agenda and I became interested in the topic of edible insects. Upon returning for several months to Jayapura, the provincial capital of Irian Jaya, I engaged in conversations with “Mee”³ from all walks of life, took courses at the local university, corresponded with my advisors and other anthropologists who are interested in Irian Jaya, and read academic texts. This engagement with extra-local voices led me to expand the scope of my research during my second trip to Misty Ridge to focus on all aspects of food consumption.

The process of creating an outline for my thesis and then finishing it chapter by chapter has taken place largely since I returned from Irian Jaya in January 1999. Needless to say, the processes of indexing my fieldnotes and making higher level conceptual groupings of my data have gone forward largely without receiving feedback from Oge Bage Mee interlocutors. Only after presenting a modified version of Chapter Seven at the November 1999 American Anthropological Association meetings and talking with other Irian Jaya specialists there (notably Leopold Pospisil) did I make the latent theme of cultural change an explicit focus of my thesis.

² Due to the volatile political situation in Irian Jaya I have decided to keep my field site and my interlocutors anonymous. Indonesian law contains many technicalities that could be used against my interlocutors if the authorities had any reason to persecute them. For example, one of the footnotes of my *Surat Jalan* (Travel Letter) warns [in English]: “Anybody providing the opportunity to stay for foreigners is obliged to report to the office of the state Police or the local Regional administration within 24 hours since the arrival of foreigners.” There were no police or government administrators in Misty Ridge, and it would have been unreasonable for the people to travel to an administrative center to report my arrival. However, this decision to mask my interlocutors poses a double-bind; it could be argued that by leaving these people nameless, I am excluding them from full participation in a dialogue that is about them.

³ The word “Mee” literally means people in several phonologically distinct dialects in the eastern highlands of Irian Jaya. The Oge Bage Mee speak one of these local dialects. In the context of this thesis the term “Mee” is used in an inclusive sense to refer to a group of people who share general cultural traits and an ethnic identity. I will explain why the name “Mee” occurs in quotes in Chapter Five, which is an in-depth discussion of “Mee” identity.

My thesis title is taken from a conversation I had with Jake, a young Oge Bage Mee man who sees himself as breaking free of the superstitious eating restrictions of his elders. He told me “*Saya makan sembarang, apa saja di depan saya makan*” (Indonesian: I eat anything, whatever is in front [of me] I eat). Rapid changes in Oge Bage Mee society are taking place through agents such as Jake, who are negotiating encounters with neighboring ethnic groups. However, despite Jake’s claim to be abandoning all traditional eating restrictions he has aligned himself with a new set of norms, which he is helping to create. The Oge Bage Mee are in a continual process of synthesizing a new cultural world.

**SECTION ONE:
EPISTEMOLOGY IN CONTEXT**

Introduction: Misty Ridge

When I first entered the small village in the interior lowlands of Irian Jaya, Indonesia, that I call Misty Ridge, I was struck by the visual contrast of a huge yellow backhoe against a backdrop of old growth rainforest and simple wooden houses (Figure 1.1). This machine had been left by a road construction company six months before with the instructions that “*orang kampung jaga*” (Indonesian: the [backward] village people take care of it). As one walks from the direction of the city the house of the *Kepala Desa* (Indonesian: Village Head) is the first building after many kilometers of unbroken old-growth rainforest. It sits on the crest of a high, sloping ridge that commands a view of the surrounding mountains. The rest of the approximately thirty houses line the road for the next several hundred meters. Only about half are occupied, since a surplus was built by an overly ambitious government-sponsored project in 1994. According to the principle of *bersatuan* (Indonesian: becoming one) the purpose of the government project was to bring people together, but my interlocutors said that most people did not want to come out of the

Figure 1.1 A backhoe in Misty Ridge.



mountains.

I stayed with Peter and Marcy, a young couple who had not yet had their first child when I arrived in Misty Ridge. Peter cleared out one of the three rooms in his house so that I could store my belongings and sleep there. Even though nobody else permanently lived in this house, there were usually at least one or two guests from other villages who slept in the common room each night. About one week after I arrived, Marcy came down with a high fever. A few days later I decided to move to another house so that she would not have to contend with all of my visitors, and so that I could have access to a household with children who could serve as interlocutors.

I moved into the house of Sam, an older man who had lived in several different cities in his youth, but had returned to Siriwo⁴ to raise his family. During my first trip to Misty Ridge I slept in the common room of Sam's house along with his family. On my second trip to Misty Ridge I again stayed with Sam, and he let me live in the corner of a house that he had built to cook food for his animals. I paid rent to Sam and Peter in exchange for food and a place to sleep.

In addition to the core of approximately 20 people who can be defined as full-time residents of Misty Ridge, I got to know more than 60 other people who lived in the village for varying lengths of time. Some of these semi-permanent residents had homes in Misty Ridge but also had homes in the city, in other villages, or camps at nearby gold panning sites. Other, more transient visitors, visited relatives and friends in Misty Ridge for the Christmas or New Year's festivities. These mobile individuals can be characterized as nomads who both reinforce their social networks and efficiently utilize ecological resources by moving from site to site. Misty Ridge also hosts other travelers who do not have any social ties to the village. Many people passed through while walking along the road to villages further up in the highlands. At times during my stay the number of people in the village on a given day was as high as 80.

Each new day in Misty Ridge brought a different set of events. Rather than synthesize a typical day from all that I experienced in this village, I instead reconstruct a specific day, December 29, 1998, from an edited portion of my fieldnotes:

This morning the pig began squealing at daybreak. Jane got out from under her mosquito net to give the pig some sweet potatoes that she had cut up and cooked last night. I was

⁴ Siriwo is the name of the river that flows near Misty Ridge. People who are from the Siriwo Valley often refer to themselves when speaking Indonesian as *Orang Siriwo*, or the Siriwo People. This is usually used synonymously with the name Oge Bage Mee.

the last one to get up from where I had been sleeping on the floor and to take down my mosquito net. Jane brought me a plastic plate with three sweet potatoes and two bananas that had been skinned and roasted in the coals. Later in the afternoon I went on a gathering trip. Jane and I brought a bamboo tube from home in order to collect *isu*⁵ and I brought my red butterfly net to help net shrimp and fish. Mary also brought a huge net that she had made to catch shrimp. As we wandered down the road we idly snatched *isu* off of the bushes and grasses. We first seined for shrimp at a creek that runs parallel to the road. After trying a few places along this stream we went past Sam's garden and followed one of the branches of the creek upstream into the forest. We made our way slowly, stopping to seine at every deep spot or in spots where there were overhung banks. We netted a total of five large black *ugapo* shrimp, eighteen smaller light-colored *todu* shrimp, in addition to thirty *kewage* (rainbow fish), and eleven *da beu* fish. Our catch was wrapped up in small leaf bundles. Sweet potatoes, taro, and *dade* greens were gathered by the women when we came to the gardens on our way home. They found sweet potato tubers by sorting through the tangled vines and probing the earth with short sticks. Most of us snacked on sugar cane, papaya, and bananas that we also found in the gardens. Mark also found a small wasp nest which he later roasted and ate at home. After the long walk back to the village we dropped off some sweet potatoes at the house of Vera, the "owner" of the garden where we had collected food. We then went back to Mary's house where she salted the shrimp and fish and then fried them up in a wok. Later that afternoon there was violent rain storm. For dinner we ate some steamed greens along with rice that I had brought from the city. In the evening a large group of people arrived in Misty Ridge from other villages up in the mountains where they had been attending Christmas celebrations. Late at night I had a snack of roasted bananas and sweet potatoes.

This passage may seem like a relatively straightforward description. However, December 29, 1998, was punctuated by different events for each of the people I mention. The events that I recorded are directly related both to my research interests and my perceptual abilities. For example, since I communicated with the people of Misty Ridge through Indonesian and not their own language, I was not able to listen to much of the spontaneous gossip that occurred throughout the day. Thus, the above passage does not contain much information about village social affairs. Since the focus of my study was food, this was given special attention in my fieldnotes at the expense of other information.

In Section One I situate my study of Misty Ridge in an institutional, historical, and ideological context. This section is composed of three chapters; each addresses a set of factors which have influenced the direction of my research. The history of research in western New Guinea is reviewed in Chapter One in an attempt to elucidate the connections between colonialism and academic inquiry. The contingent particulars that I encountered during the course of my study are described in Chapter Two. Here I demonstrate how social, political, and ecological environments interacted to shape my position as an

⁵ The category of *isu* includes grasshoppers, praying mantids, and katydids. All members of this class are eaten by the people of Misty Ridge. This category will be discussed in greater depth in the chapter on "Mee" taxonomy.

observer. Chapter Three fulfills the requirement for “scientific” texts to have an explicit methodology, while critiquing the bias that is created when academic disciplines become institutionalized.

CHAPTER ONE

EXHIBITIONISM IN IRIAN JAYA

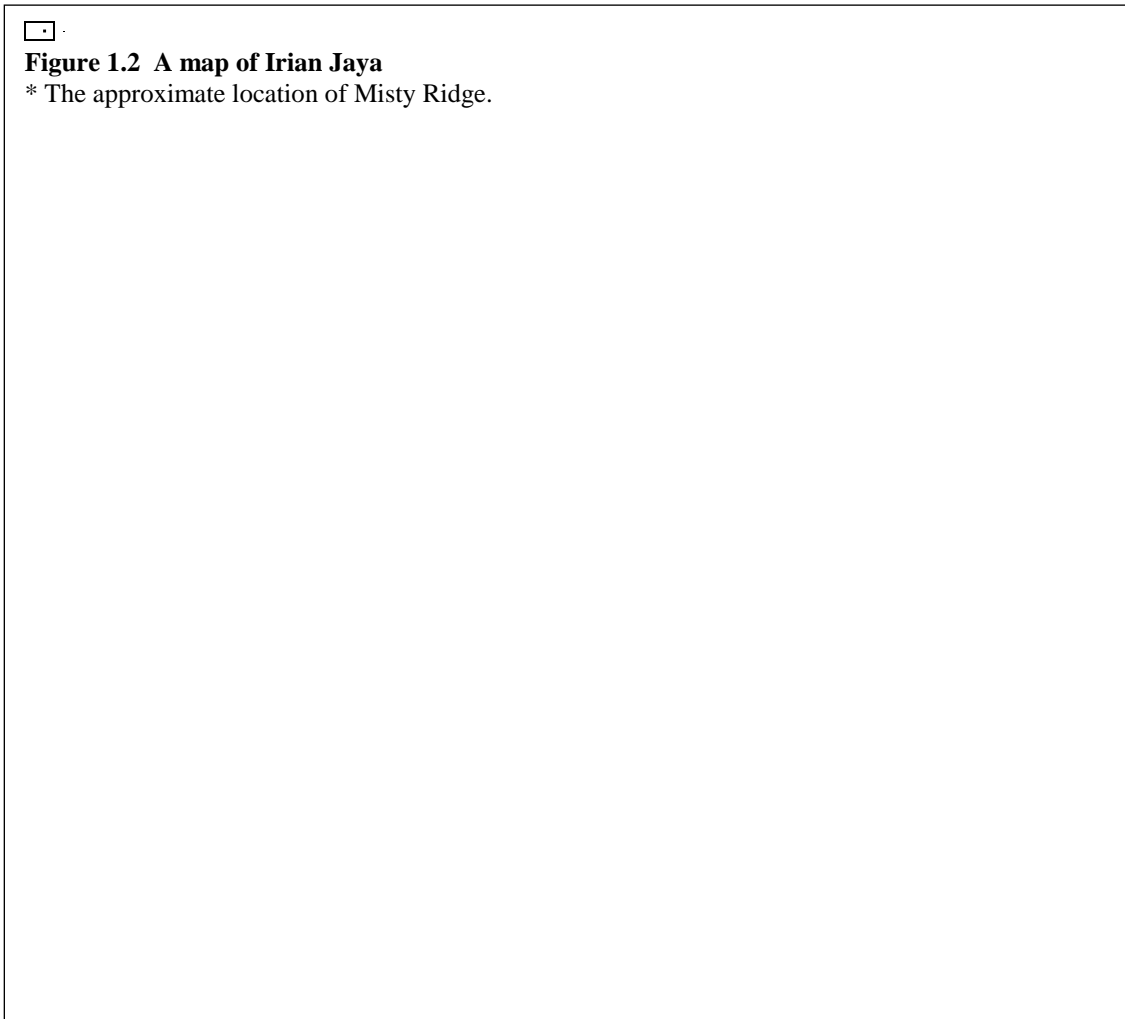
We imagine ourselves caught up in a hall of mirrors from which we cannot find a way out. We cannot find the door that leads back to the real world outside; we have lost touch with reality (Mitchell 1992: 300).

In 1988 Tony Bennett made a conceptual breakthrough with his critique of the “Exhibitionary Complex.” He extended Foucault’s critique of the power and knowledge relations in prisons to show that similar relations exist in museums. Bennett writes:

The institutions comprising “the exhibitionary complex”... were involved in the transfer of objects and bodies from the enclosed and private domains in which they had previously been displayed (but to a restricted public) into progressively more open and public arenas where, through the representations to which they were subjected, they formed vehicles for inscribing and broadcasting the messages of power... throughout society (1994: 124).

Access to Irian Jaya has been similarly restricted by logistical, political, socio-economic, and linguistic factors. As a consequence, the exhibitionary tradition has sought to display this restricted area to an increasingly wider audience. Exhibitions of New Guinea provide audiences with order and meaning for a world that is otherwise remote and undecipherable. Like many other manifestations of Occidental knowledge, exhibitions impose a single dominant perspective on reality. This perspective reflects the agendas of the representers, who are often at odds with the interests of the represented.

The entire island of New Guinea has been framed by colonial literature as a grand exhibition. The flora, fauna, and people have been transformed into curios that await further description and study. Museum displays, books, films, and academic lectures about New Guinea can all be viewed as exhibitions. These representations have been produced by explorers, missionaries, police and military patrols, tourists, naturalists, and anthropologists who are all connected to the colonial endeavor. Since my thesis can also be classed within this genre, I will critique the traditional exhibitionary framework in an attempt to break through its conceptual confines. In Chapter One I draw on ethnographies, travelogues, guide books, and



histories about New Guinea to examine an ideology of domination that is a common theme among each of these texts.

HUNTING HEADHUNTERS

Edward Said writes that the Orient “had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences” (1979: 1). While New Guinea does not lie geographically in what most people consider the Orient, it has also been a fantasy land for European colonizers. The colonial fantasies did not merely exist in a dream world—there were often potent socio-political consequences when colonial myths were projected onto the colonized. The European colonizers of New Guinea distanced themselves from other ethnic groups through wild stories.

The unknown status of New Guinea allowed people to tell believable tales of strange creatures and landscapes. Tregance, a Frenchman who in the mid-nineteenth century was one of the first Europeans to stay in New Guinea for an extended time, reports that he was captured by “native”⁶ kings riding “little ponies, striped with yellow and white” and who “carried shields of pure gold” (in Souter 1963: 8). Captain Moresby, who led a British survey of the northeast coast of New Guinea around the same time period, reports that he discovered tracks of a huge rhinoceros (Souter 1963). It is not possible that either of these creatures were encountered, since the only eutherian mammals indigenous to New Guinea are rats, bats, pigs, and humans. Charles Miller takes these claims a step further with his report of a dinosaur in the southern highlands of New Guinea which he describes in *Cannibal Caravan*, a travelogue which was published in the 1930s.

The most intriguing of all of the strange animals that have been reported in New Guinea are human animals: pigmies, cannibals, and head hunters. Many early explorers speculated that these strange creatures were entirely different species, incapable of breeding with *Homo sapiens*. Such gross distortions served as an ideological framework to justify oppression by European colonial governments in New Guinea, and related misconceptions continue to be employed by the tourism industry in a system of racial discrimination (Kirksey and Dumatubun 1998).

⁶ The accounts of colonizers often refer to all non-Western peoples in New Guinea as generic “natives,” who all are *essentially* the same. There actually were several ethnic groups from other parts of Asia who played significant roles in the colonization of New Guinea, who have all been labeled as “natives.” A large number of ethnic Malay[□] were taken from the western islands of the Netherlands East Indies to serve as administrative assistants, laborers, and prisoners in the colonial outposts of New Guinea. These people belonged to diverse ethnic groups and originated primarily from the islands of Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan (Borneo), Sulawesi (Celebes), and Maluku (Ceram) (Souter 1963). Although they have been relegated to footnotes in most [European] histories of New Guinea, Chinese traders were often the first outsiders to explore new areas. For example, Chinese hunters of the bird of paradise were the first people from outside of New Guinea to establish contact with the Muyu, in the interior southern lowlands of Irian Jaya (Schoorl 1993). In contrast to the historically inconspicuous Chinese trading voyages, the white *expeditions* were huge celebrated affairs. Charles Miller’s 1920s expedition, which also happened to be near Muyu territory, reported that there were about 80 “natives” who accompanied the two brave white explorers. The broad category of *native* in the context of this expedition actually referred to several Malays formerly in the Dutch colonial army, 10 “chain-gangers” or Javanese criminals who had been exiled to New Guinea, 50 Kaya-Kaya[□] warriors, and about 20 local women who tagged along out of curiosity (Miller 1939). As will be further demonstrated in the following section, these generalized “natives” were often viewed as being *primitive* ancestors of Europeans who inhabited an ancient world.

A popular myth that has circulated among European colonizers stationed at remote outposts in various corners of the world is that the “natives” are cannibals.⁷ New Guinea in particular has been stereotyped as having a high concentration of cannibals. However, in all the books I have read about New Guinea, I have not found a single first-hand account of cannibalism that comes from a reputable source. Reports of cannibalism are consistently based on inferences from inconclusive observations or on stories by the “natives” themselves about their neighbors or ancestors. All of the people whom I have met in contemporary Irian Jaya who claim that there is or was cannibalism in this territory refer to the inconclusive literature or myths that are generalized to a large area. Said writes that Orientalist texts are similarly based on “a set of references, a congeries of characteristics, that seems to have its origin in a quotation, or a fragment of a text, or a citation from someone’s work on the Orient, or some bit of previous imagining, or an amalgam of all of these” (1979: 176-77).

Two of the sources published on the “Dani”⁸ illustrate how the citation of inconclusive information can be used to reinforce existing preconceptions. *Cannibal Valley* is an account by a missionary about his conquest of a backward people (Hitt 1962). In a chapter of this book called “Cannibal Feast” Hitt describes the mutilation of the body of a captured enemy warrior. He frames this description as preparing the body for a cannibal feast, but he and the other white observers left the scene before the body was purportedly eaten. Anthropologist Karl Heider, who studied in the same area, cites the previous example in his discussion of cannibalism among the Dani. He had found some human bones that had apparent butchering marks in a cave, which he interprets as evidence of cannibalism. Heider writes: “I brought the matter up with Um’ue [one of Heider’s informants] who said yes, they did eat human flesh, but they then gave it up when his father was young” (1997: 135). This report of cannibalism by Heider’s informant is third hand. Additionally, many cultural groups that did not practice cannibalism (i.e. the Greeks) had creation myths that involve cannibalism. In a group that did not have contact with the modern world until after the time “when his [Um’ue’s] father was young,” this period may already have taken on mythological status.

⁷ This preoccupation relates to the contemporary fascination with the exotic practice of entomophagy that is described in Part Two of this thesis.

⁸ The word “Dani” actually refers to a number of sub-groups that have complex identities. People who live within the Balim Valley refer to themselves as *Balimeke* (the Balim people), while those living to the west of the Balim Valley refer to themselves as the Lani people. The many linguistic dialects of these groups include: Ndugaakan, Walek/Mukako, Kurulu and Assologaima.

Competitive killing among ethnic groups (aka. head hunting) has often been considered to be synonymous with cannibalism in the accounts of colonizers. The evidence about this practice is much more convincing than that which is available for cannibalism. In the photo section of *Cannibal Caravan* (Miller 1939) there is a picture of some prepared heads that Miller says were taken by his porters when they raided a local village. However, despite the paranoid writings of colonizers who were afraid of losing their own heads to the irrational cannibals, these acts can be viewed as similar to the ethnic violence that is found in the urban centers of the most developed nations of the world. Social mourning is a strong motivator for revenge and often lives are taken from enemy groups in order to atone for personal losses (Shah, personal communication, 1998). While some colonizers may have lost their heads, far more people have suffered from legitimized violence at the hand of colonial authorities (Souter 1963). The colonial writings denied legitimacy to armed resistance by constructing the bizarre framework of cannibalism around indigenous acts of violence.

Some colonizers have been downright obsessed with the topic of cannibalism. As early as the 16th Century, Michel de Montaigne, a European armchair theorist, became fascinated with reports of cannibalism from the Americas (Montaigne in Darnell 1974). Montaigne romanticized about cannibals and justified the practice of eating human flesh in European terms. Charles “Cannibal” Miller claims in his travelogue *Cannibal Caravan* that he actually took part in a cannibal feast:

Before my horrified eyes the chief made a quick slash across the boy’s throat. Blood spurted, but even before it could reach the floor the witch-doctor caught the flow in a coconut bowl...Ten times was murder committed on the platform that night...Ten times bowls of blood were passed into the mass of sweating warriors, to be sipped avidly and passed on to the next. Mechanically I went through the motions, and once a shudder of revulsion caused the bowl to splash over and I tasted the warm, sticky saltiness on my lips and saw the dark stain spread on my shirt (1939: 232).

While this tale may or may not be true,⁹ it is interesting that it is published in such gruesome detail. It has been the explorers themselves and their audience at home who have been obsessed with cannibalism, and this fascination continues today. In 1994 a made-for-TV documentary was filmed in the southern lowlands

⁹ In this travelogue, which makes the interesting dual claim of being “a masterpiece of anthropology, as well as first class entertainment,” there are many reports of questionable veracity. This is the same author cited earlier in this chapter who claimed to have seen a dinosaur. For a more complete discussion of the veracity of this account see Kirksey 1998a.

of Irian Jaya called *Treehouse People: Cannibal Justice*.¹⁰ In this film viewers are fed shots of dark-skinned natives deep in a steamy jungle who talk about cannibals who purportedly raid their homestead.

The cannibalistic obsessions of the European colonizers of New Guinea have been projected onto the “natives.” The actual process of inquiring about cannibalism may have led the colonized to invent stories of their own, either as jokes on the colonizers or as a way of displacing the investigation onto other people. Evidence of indigenous people creating stories about cannibalism can be found in the literature about the Karo (Batak) of Sumatra who live in western Indonesia (Steedly 1993). These myths are then tautologically used to reinforce a deep-rooted prejudice that the colonizers have toward the colonized. Cannibals simply are not entitled to the same rights as civilized people. Thus, many horrific acts by the colonizers have been justified by their beliefs that all of the “natives” are cannibals, and therefore, sub-human.

REPRESENTING COLONIALISM AND NATIONALISM

The curator of an exhibition has traditionally been viewed as a transparent lens who was fully capable of objectively representing the world. Yet, the dusty halls of museums have been the sites of battles between the ideologies of colonialism and the ideologies of nationalism. Despite the fact that the images that these institutions represent are contested, museums have attempted to achieve representations of permanence. In the words of Tony Bennett:

Public museums instituted an order of things that was meant to last. In doing so, they provided the modern state with a deep and continuous ideological backdrop but one which, if it was to play this role, should not be adjusted to respond to shorter-term ideological requirements. Exhibitions met this need, injecting new life into the exhibitionary complex and rendering its ideological configurations more pliable in bending them to serve the conjecturally specific hegemonic strategies of different national bourgeoisies. They made the order of things dynamic, mobilizing it strategically in relation to the more immediate ideological and political exigencies of the particular moment (Bennett 1994: 144-45).

In this section I describe the competing representations constructed by antiquated displays in Western imperialistic institutions, nationalistic Indonesian amusement parks, picturesque a-political tour guides, pro-Papuan independence graffiti artists, and Papuan dancing exhibitions.

¹⁰ *Treehouse People: Cannibal Justice*. 1994. 55 minutes. Produced and directed by Judith Dwan Hallet for Hearst Entertainment, with the Arts and Entertainment network (New York) and Tele-Image (Paris)

Many exhibitions continue to be displayed as if they represent ahistorical entities eternally preserved in their original state. The ‘Irianjaya’¹¹ display in the Pacific Islands Hall on the fourth floor of the Harvard Peabody Museum houses net bags, penis sheaths, Asmat shields, and stone axes that are surrounded by artifacts from other places in Oceania and Polynesia. Most of these materials date from Karl Heider’s first trip to Irian Jaya in the 1960s, but they are displayed in Victorian curiosity cabinets as if they were part of the original exhibit when the museum was built in 1877. The text that introduces one to the Hall states: “An attempt has been made to preserve the Victorian flavor of the original hall, with its pale walls, rich, dark woods, and period lighting fixtures... the old hall emphasizes the “savage” nature of Oceanic cultures as illustrated with the inclusion of over 300 Polynesian clubs and spears” (Peabody Museum 1999). This explicit political statement about the nature of the people whom the artifacts represent places them in a subservient role to the cultured curators who currently manage the collection.

The Indonesian government has appropriated the exhibitionary tradition in projects aimed at creating an Indonesian identity. The “National Museum” in Jakarta illustrates this most clearly since the Indonesian curators simply rearranged the artifacts collected by the Dutch in the *Bataviaasch Genootschap* (Batavia Society for Arts and Sciences) to produce a nationalistic exhibition (Taylor 1995). The New Order regime of Soeharto, which came to power in the violent year of 1965, has created *Taman Mini “Indonesia Indah,”* or the Miniaturized “Beautiful Indonesia” Theme Park.¹² This grand, Disneyesque exhibition leads visitors through a transformative experience during which their previous ideas of time, history, and the world are revamped and [re-]created.

One of the more popular attractions at *Taman Mini* is a ski lift that carries visitors over a huge lake where the shapes of each of the major Indonesian islands have been recreated as mounds of manicured grass. These miniaturized “islands” are promoted as things which ostensibly exist in an identical, but larger, physical reality. Unlike a conventional map, this exhibit does not have a scale of representation: the important aspect of the “islands” are the gross outlines of their shapes, and the finer physical and geological features of the actual islands are not represented. This mini-archipelago serves as a metonym for the

¹¹ I notified one of the museum curators of this spelling mistake, but she had not changed it by the time I left Harvard in June of 1997.

¹² See Pemberton for a provoking discussion of the politics of representation imbedded in the conceptual foundations of this park. “The quotation marks surrounding “Beautiful Indonesia” created an “as if” sense of an idealized Indonesia, a perfectly cultural representation viewed by the logic of miniaturization as if from a distance” (1994: 153).

Republic of Indonesia. A plot of Indonesian soil has been molded to represent the whole. This display attempts to persuade park visitors to violate the dictum of Alfred Korzybski that “the map is not the territory” (1941). The bounded archipelago is presented as a real physical object that is isolated from the rest of the world.

The isolation of the island display at *Taman Mini* does not acknowledge the fact that “the precise boundaries of the nation that is Indonesia are more an artifact of a shared colonial past (the Netherlands East Indies) than a precisely bound culture area” (Taylor 1995: 144). During the three-day protest for Papuan¹³ independence on Biak in July 1998 that I describe in the following section I found a powerful symbolic rejection of the notion that Irian Jaya is an inseparable part of Indonesia. One of the protestors had pasted up a map that only showed the Province of Irian Jaya and not western Indonesia. The person had crossed out the Indonesian title of the map and had written “WEST PAPUA” in English.

Taman Mini houses representations of Indonesia’s multitude of ethnic groups in a manner that parallels the miniature archipelago in the lake. The park features regional pavilions which symbolize the distinctive *rumah adat* (customary houses) from the provinces of Indonesia. Since each province usually has several different indigenous groups, many of these houses appropriate architectural elements from several groups to represent a generalized provincial identity. The whole park is like these provincial houses but on a larger scale: it appropriates regional elements to create a generalized national Indonesian identity. It is touted as a place where recent immigrants to Java from other provinces can “return home.” A promotional brochure reads: “Roundtrip airfare from Irian Jaya costs 150,000 Rupiah. If you travel by boat, only after one month will you arrive. Thus, to relieve your longing for your homeland, just go to *Mini* along with your brothers from this eastern province” (*Impian Menjadi Kenyataan* in Pemberton 1994: 159). *Taman Mini* itself becomes a metonym for Indonesia, a substitute for the larger reality which it represents.

The New Order has developed small regional museums to promote the same ideology as the “National Museum” and *Taman Mini*. These institutions are able to reach the masses who cannot afford the price of a trip to Java. Paul Taylor summarizes the message of these museums to the people of the province as “We are distinctive as a province, but we are one with the rest of the *nusantara* (archipelago)”

¹³ This term *Papua* was once employed in racist rhetoric of the colonizers, but has now become a symbol of national identity for citizens of *Niu Gini* (Papua New Guinea). When this word is used by “Irianese” it invokes racial distinctiveness and independence from Indonesia.

(1995: 116). The *Museum Negri Propinsi Irian Jaya* (Government Museum of the Irian Jaya Province) is arranged in a linear progression of the academic disciplines that are used to study this area: Geology, Zoology, Archaeology, History, and Ethnology. One is left with the impression that progressive evolution in the domains of each of these disciplines led to Irian's incorporation into the Republic of Indonesia. This museum plays on the theme of customary houses parallel to *Mini*, but on a more miniaturized scale. One diorama compares typical huts from the highlands and various lowland areas to emphasize that although there may be subtle variations in architecture, these are all just variations on a common theme.

Next door to the local *Museum Negri* is the *Taman Budaya* (Culture Park) which has concrete buildings which mimic the wooden traditional huts from the nine *Kebupaten* (Districts) of Irian Jaya. These exhibitions, which represent increasingly smaller territories, provide a top down model for understanding local variation and serve as a metonym for understanding the larger whole. The unified political units that are hierarchically organized in the Republic of Indonesia are reinforced in these carefully orchestrated images of diversity. *Taman Mini*, with its grassy "islands" in the lake, can be viewed as the central metonym in an elaborate system of nationalistic ideology.

In contrast to the nationalistic and imperialistic agendas, which are described above, the picturesque genre encourages a view of reality that is a-political, yet fascinating and romantically beautiful (Suleri 1992). Tourists who currently visit Irian Jaya are encouraged to view the entire landscape as an exhibition, both by the literature of the European colonizers and by the current Indonesian administration. Both imperialistic and nationalistic agendas are realized when tourists read the prepared exhibitions as intriguing depictions of the real world. The guide book supplies the tourist with an exhibitionary framework for interpreting the world.

For example, according to the government tourist office in Wamena, a popular destination in the central highlands of Irian Jaya, there are twenty-one tourist "objects" in this area. This catalogue includes salt wells, caves, lakes, mummies, sites for staging mock wars, traditional hanging bridges, sites of souvenir production, a museum, a monument commemorating the Act of Free Choice, statues of former war chiefs, and markets. The tourist office also advertises cultural attractions such as mock wars, pig slaughtering and roasting, the playing of bamboo jaw harps, and traditional fire starting. This categorization of the local environment encourages the tourist to view these things as a exhibit set up for

his or her pleasure. The actual people who perform these activities are reduced by this type of promotion to animals that can perform interesting tricks. Karl Heider concludes: “From the standpoint of Wamena, the Dani are poor people in rags hanging around the market selling a few vegetables or garish tourist artifacts” (1997: 169).

Some Papuans have attempted to make cultural exhibitions of their own as resistance to imperialistic, Indonesian nationalist, and picturesque representations. The fate of some of these people illustrates the importance of the politics of representation:

Papuan nationalists, like anthropologist Arnold Ap, have promoted West Papuan cultural solidarity against the domination of their country by Indonesia. As an accomplished musician and an expert on Papuan dance, Ap formed a cultural troupe named ‘Mambesak’ which traveled widely in West Papua to record traditional village cultural practices. Hastings has suggested that it is probable that Ap was executed precisely because he was a West Papuan who personified West Papuan culture (Gietzelt 1989: 214-15).

One way to present a unified exhibit is to edit out the voices that do not fit in with the over-arching conceptual scheme. The Indonesian state has effectively replicated the forces of colonialism to become a total institution with a legitimized monopoly on representation, and, as will be further demonstrated in the following section, violence.

A FUGITIVE’S EYE VIEW

Many Papuans view the current Indonesian presence in Irian Jaya as a neo-colonial situation of occupation and exploitation. John Ondawame, an Amungme Ph.D. candidate at Australian National University who claims to be an international spokesman for the Papuan people, said in a recent speech to students in New York: “In 1969, the Indonesian administration organized a fraudulent referendum, which it called the *Act of ‘Free’ Choice*. United Nations records state that only 1,025 people voted, out of a population of some one million Papuans” (1999, August 23 [Online]). This contested event was the symbolic transfer of power in western New Guinea from the Netherlands to Indonesia, by way of a United Nations protectorate.

Ondawame would not be able to safely make such a statement publicly in Indonesia. The primary reason that he is able to disseminate this alternate view to an international audience is because he is associated with Australian National University, a respected institution in the neo-colonial world. However,

by affiliating himself with the academy he agrees to formulate his ideas in a foreign language and conceptual structure. Only individuals who agree with certain basic precepts are admitted to such institutions. Thus, the dialogue is structured in the terms of the global powers.

Other people within Irian Jaya have sought to break through the Indonesian government's monopoly on representations. Soon after I arrived in Irian Jaya I happened to witness a small-scale, peaceful protest for independence that was held on the campus of Universitas Cenderawasih (UNCEN).

The following is an edited excerpt from my journal written on the day after the demonstration:

There were several hundred students, almost entirely Irianese, and they were chanting songs. While we were walking by, a truck full of soldiers drove by on the road. Many of the soldiers turned their heads in apparent surprise to look at the demonstrators, but the truck didn't stop. I was having a conversation with UNCEN staff about 100m from the demonstration. The conversation was suddenly interrupted by people running from the direction of the demo. Immediately everyone around me began running, but most of them kept an amused air. I managed to get into the nearby canteen, along with most of the people who were talking with me. The proprietor quickly locked the door and pulled the curtains over the windows. We continued our conversation as other students flashed by the windows outside of the building. Some minutes later intense bursts of popping explosions began from the direction of the demo. My first thought was that it was from firecrackers, but then I quickly realized that it was gunfire. I asked the others if this was the source of the sound and with little surprise they said yes. They reassured me that it must only be rubber bullets and blanks. The shooting continued in drawn out clouds for several minutes and then there was a pause. It suddenly began again, this time much closer, and everyone scrambled to find some limited protection on the floor under furniture and against the wall. After several minutes of silence we returned to our seats and ordered some orange drinks. We chatted nervously for a while and when we could see students walking calmly outside we left the canteen by the back door. We walked down towards the road and at a closed gate that was being guarded by students we heard the first news that people had been shot. They said that there were two students shot. One male law student was shot in the head. They said that the bullet entered near the eye and exited out the back of his head, along with most of his brains. There was also a young girl shot in the leg. None of the people who I was with seemed particularly surprised or outraged by the news.

When I checked my e-mail the next day there were several news articles about the shooting that had been sent to me by the West Papua Listserv. According to one article: "A free speech forum being held by the students turned violent when they beat a person suspected of being an intelligence officer and threw stones at military personnel" (Indonesian agency says student injured 1998, July 3 [Online]). This account, which was written at a distance from the actual event, is distorted by the perspectives of the numerous gatekeepers through whom the information passed. The way that this article is written justifies the troops for opening fire on an unarmed crowd; it implies that the students were the agents of the violence.

My perspective on this event, as someone who had to run and hide from these troops, competes with the perspective of the Indonesian military. However, since those who fled the troops do not have direct and ready access to mass media, the governmentally regulated representations have gone uncontested as far as the world beyond Irian Jaya is concerned. While stories did circulate about some students roughing up a plainclothes intelligence agent, many people believed that this was a rumor started by the military. The rock throwing took place in downtown Jayapura, which is a 30-minute bus ride from campus. Rocks were thrown at banks and government buildings, not at troops.

The published accounts of this event have changed over time. According to the unofficial reports that I heard, both of the students died from their wounds. In July, the newspaper reports about this incident said that the man was shot to death, while the girl and the purported intelligence officer eventually recovered from their wounds. The English newspaper in Jakarta, which is considered to be one of the news sources in Indonesia that is the least influenced by government censorship, recapped this incident several months later: “A student and a police intelligence officer were killed in another pro-independence rally at the Cenderawasih University” (Irianese want more 1999, January 23 [Online]). If the authority of these representations are to be judged by their internal consistency, then this example casts serious doubts on the integrity of the structure of the mass media. History is being recreated to serve the agenda of the Indonesian state.

The day after the shooting at UNCEN I boarded a ship that would take me to Nabire by way of the island of Biak (Figure 1.2). In Biak I happened to witness a demonstration of much larger proportions than the one at UNCEN a few days earlier. This event is an example of how different perspectives compete within the media framework:

When the ship docked in the Biak harbor a crowd shouting “*Papua merdeka*” (Papuan freedom) greeted us. The West Papua flag was flying on a nearby tower. As soon as the ship docked several young men boarded and ran around the ship waving banners and shouting. Some of the other passengers said that these men were asking for money. The harbor was devoid of any government authorities. These youths had been occupying the harbor for the last several days. Graffiti that proclaimed freedom for West Papua covered the buildings, and many offices in the harbor had been ransacked with papers strewn all over the lawn. No police or military troops were to be seen and all of the shops had been boarded up. I stopped to chat with some of the men who were guarding the gate to the harbor. They said that a few days earlier they had turned over a police truck, killing four men. At that point no Irianese people had been killed in retaliation. A Hercules troop carrier had flown in the day before carrying about 500 troops and the men who I talked with were afraid that there could be a major retaliation any time. They were afraid to leave the dock area. They thought that if they left they would be singled out and killed.

The city was blocked off by the troops for the next two days. During the first night I occasionally heard sporadic gunshots from the direction of the city. Throughout the next day I heard various reports about how many people had been hunted down and killed. The numbers ranged from two to sixty. One man told me that during the night large groups of people had been running through the streets, fleeing the police and military troops. The people had set up warning systems to let each other know when troops were coming. They would make noise by beating on oil drums. In the early afternoon I heard a single gunshot from a nearby building. I peered around my door and all of the people who I could see were staring in the direction of the shot.

While there was little coverage of this horrendous event, many of the reports that did emerge were concerned mainly with exactly how many people were killed. According to the official military version of this two-day siege, only one person died: “The National Commission of Human Rights and the Armed Forces said one activist died in the incident. He was identified as 27-year-old Ruben Orboy” (Bodies found near Biak 1998, July 30 [Online]).

Other organizations have reached much higher estimates of the death toll. A letter from the *Komite Solidaritas Rakyat Irian* (Committee of the Irian People’s Solidarity) to The Secretary General of the United Nations, Dr Kofi Annan, states: “Eyewitnesses say, however, that on July 6th, 139 (one hundred thirty nine) people were loaded on two frigates and headed in two directions to the east and to the west and these people were dropped into the sea” (Polet 1998, August 8 [Online]). At least 15 decaying bodies washed ashore on Biak on the 27th and 28th of July but government officials attributed these bodies to a tidal wave that hit Papua New Guinea, over 600 km away, on the 17th of July (Bodies found near Biak 1998, July 30 [Online]). No bodies were found in other areas of Irian that were closer to the site of the tidal wave. The *Komite Solidaritas Rakyat Irian* documented that a total of 70 bodies had been recovered. Some had their heads or hands missing; one male body still had a Papuan flag painted on its chest; and a body of a child was found still embracing its mother (Polet 1998, August 8 [Online]). Australian investigative journalist Mike Head put the death toll at more than 150 (Head 1998, November 28 [Online]).

The details of the acts committed by the military at this time were horrific. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reports: “Human rights and church groups who have investigated the massacre and the military's subsequent abuse of the survivors have failed to establish how many people were killed, raped, tortured or thrown into the sea from two Indonesian navy ships, never to be seen alive again” (Head 1998, November 28 [Online]). Two Australian witnesses reveal the unusual suffering that many of the Biak people had to endure: “They were forced to lie by the docks and look at the sun for two hours while soldiers marched on

their stomachs and faces. After further beatings they were then forced to crawl along the road to the cells.” (Head 1998, November 28 [Online]). There were approximately 200 people who were jailed and there were about 28 people per cell since the jail was limited in size. The jail was so cramped that the prisoners could not sit, they “were forced to urinate and defecate where they stood” (Head 1998, November 28 [Online]). Many of these prisoners were still in jail several months later (TAPOL 1998, October 21 [Online]).

Many human rights groups based in industrialized countries, such as the East Timor Action Network and Watch Indonesia!, are actively working to achieve independence for West Papua (Irian Jaya) and other nearby territories because of reports of such killings. Many Indonesians¹⁴ with whom I spoke said that the concept of “human rights” is often used by westerners to covertly control post-colonial governments. Some Indonesians also believe that human rights NGOs dramatically publicize severe events primarily to secure funding for themselves. While these critiques may not reflect the conscious motivations of many people who are members of human rights organizations, it is important to consider this criticism in the context of the relationship of dominance that industrialized military powers continue to have with the country of Indonesia. This relationship stems from a history of colonialism. Colonial administrations were no less violent than the current regimes that exist in the post-colonial territories.

International NGOs concerned with human rights in Indonesia have frequently projected the responsibility for abuses entirely onto the Indonesian government. For example, a booklet produced by Minority Rights Group International states, “The Indonesian government has the responsibility of meeting international human rights standards” (Suter 1997: 26). This booklet suggests that western governments should paternalistically “press the Indonesian government” to improve its human rights record. However, it would be more appropriate for activists to begin demanding change in their own governments before adopting a demanding attitude toward post-colonial states. Western governments, including the United States of America, have directly aided the government of Indonesia in campaigns of military oppression.

Until the recent crisis in East Timor the United States maintained close military ties with Indonesia. Investigations over the past few years by the U. S. House of Representatives demonstrate the

¹⁴ Irianese often use the term *Orang Indonesia* (Indonesian People) to refer to people from western Indonesia who have only recently come to Irian. These people are considered to be racially and ethnically distinct from Papuans, and are considered by the Papuans to be the oppressors.

systematic connections between the Department of Defense and the Indonesian armed forces (TINI). Transcripts from the July 24, 1998 hearing before the Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights reveal that the US government may have been directly involved in recent human rights abuses in Indonesia. The Department of Defense has been sponsoring JCET (Joint Combined Exchange Training) exercises with Kopassus, the division of TINI responsible for special operations. This group has repeatedly been charged with torturing, killing, and abducting political dissidents. The JECT exercises included sniper training, camouflage, stealth approach, close quarters battle, combat swimmer operations, special reconnaissance, light infantry tactics, and military operations in urban terrain. Recently eleven members of the Indonesian military establishment were indicted by the Habibie administration for involvement in the abduction of political activists. According to a statement made by Franklin Kramer, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, all of the indicted soldiers whose names were announced in official reports had been trained in the JCET program (Committee on International Operations and Human Rights 1998). Public outcry led the embarrassed Clinton administration to suddenly sever military ties with Indonesia during the height of the crisis in East Timor in early September 1999. However, Clinton recently offered to restore military ties with Indonesia during the visit of Gus Dur, the newly installed Indonesian president, to the White House.

The Papuans, who do not have the benefits of being trained by US special forces, have waged a war of resistance against Indonesia. A loosely defined group called the *Operasi Papua Merdeka* (OPM, or Operation Papuan Freedom), founded in the early 1960s, has taken ideological resistance to the level of armed confrontation. This group is fragmented geographically and ideologically but all members strive for the common goal of Papuan independence. There are probably only several hundred people who are OPM soldiers actively fighting in the jungle, but it is common to hear in Irian that everyone who has curly hair is a member of the OPM. According to the figures cited by Suter, TINI forces in Irian Jaya have killed 43,000 people in a province that has a population of only 1.8 million. The OPM claims to have killed 2,800 military personnel in retaliation (1997: 22). While the OPM lacks the resources to wage large-scale campaigns against TINI, they have persistently attacked the morale of TINI soldiers and others associated with the Indonesian government in western New Guinea.

While war is a concept that industrialized countries readily understand, the Indonesian and international media have consistently framed this as an illegitimate war. Like earlier colonial administrations that applied the label of cannibal and head hunter to indigenous soldiers, labels such as *rebel*, *guerilla*, and *insurgent* have been systematically applied to the Papuan fighters by both the Indonesian administration and the English-speaking media. This effectively paints the OPM as an unlawful and disruptive element in Indonesian society. In a more explicit attempt to make this group seem illegitimate, Giay and Godschalk (1993) claim that the OPM are like a cargo cult.

This background of illegitimized war is related to the framework of justification that allowed the Indonesian troops to kill the protesting students and the civilians in Biak. By employing the media to connect the freedom fighters in the jungle with the intellectual and civilian protestors in urban centers, the Indonesian government has maintained a degree of legitimacy in the eyes of domestic citizens in Java, and international observers around the world. The protestors make easy targets when compared with furtive troops.

CONCLUSION: DECONSTRUCTING IRIAN JAYA

Above I have demonstrated that the exhibitionary tradition has been used to deny agency to the indigenous inhabitants of western New Guinea. Colonial fantasies, academic models, museums, and skewed media representations all speak past indigenous demands for freedom to paint a picture of the so-called province of Irian Jaya. Yet, as Papuans have frequently pointed out to me, the boundaries of the Province of Irian Jaya are not ontological phenomena that exist independent of human political divisions. I will conclude this chapter by challenging Indonesian nationalist ideology.

The following history abstract appears in *Your guide book Irian Jaya province*, which was published in awkward English by the Regional Office of the Department of Tourism of the Indonesian government:

In 1511 a Portuguese seaman Francisco Serrano entered Irian Jaya in seeking spices, and in 1521 came Magellan in his world adventures. Another European is James Cook from England who arrived in Irian Jaya in 1770 and occupied the island until 1795. Finally the Dutch with its Netherlands Indies occupied the land and stated Manokwari as the capital... The Dutch governed Irian Jaya until 1942 when the Japanese forces arrived in Humbolt Bay and occupied all parts of Irian Jaya. Allied forces, led by General Douglas McArthur from the United States, attacked the Japanese troops and forced them away from Irian Jaya in July 1944... After the World War II ended, the Dutch came back to

Indonesia and in July 1947 fighting broke out between the Republic of Indonesia and the Netherlands... [A]s a result of the 1969 vote the people of Irian Jaya chose to be part of Indonesia (Ismani 1998: 13).¹⁵

The major changes in administrations mentioned here had no effects for many people who live in the interior of Irian Jaya. There are still some groups in Irian that have not developed strong contacts with the industrial world. For these people who live far from population centers, changes in the administrators of New Guinea have been largely irrelevant. For such people this time period was marked by totally unrelated events, and thus the histories that they tell speak past, without reference to, this official history. For example, the oral histories of my interlocutors in Misty Ridge referred only to local wars and supernatural events before the arrival of a missionary named Troutman who walked into the Siriwo area in the 1940s.

It goes without saying that there has been a long and complex history in New Guinea that took place before the arrival of the first European in 1511. Archaeological research has been of limited scope in New Guinea, but the existing data clearly demonstrate that the people were not part of a larger nation state prior to Dutch colonization (White and O'Connell 1982). This directly challenges the Indonesian concept of *nusantara* (archipelago), described above, which justifies the existence of the Indonesian nation state in historical terms. The first dates of human settlement in New Guinea range back to approximately 38,000 BP, but it is suspected that humans were present at earlier dates (White and O'Connell 1982).

The existing biogeographical data can be interpreted to argue for the artificial nature of the boundary between Niu Gini and Irian Jaya (DeBoer 1995), which was created in negotiations between the Dutch and English in 1910. Together these two territories form the largest populated island in the world, which has had an unique biogeographical evolution. The island itself is not a fixed entity and was created when the sea breached the Torres Strait barrier about 8,000 BP, separating it from Australia (White and O'Connell 1982). New Guinea sits at a crossroads between the continental populations of mainland Asia and Australia, and has developed an endemic biota of its own. The boundary between Irian Jaya and New Guinea does not reflect any natural division.

The distribution of groups of living biological organisms in New Guinea suggests that it has as many affinities to Australia as it does to South East Asia. For example, there are few groups of beetles (Coleoptera) in common with Australia but there are many species that overlap with South East Asia and

¹⁵ This flat rendition of Indonesian nationalistic history is interesting in itself, since it refers primarily to western colonizers, rather than Indonesian or Irianese local heroes.

Melanesia (Gressitt 1982). In contrast, the bird fauna is predominantly Australian. But there are also a few tropical Asian groups of birds, as well as high numbers of endemic species. Thus, based on the distribution of living organisms, we can conclude that the biota of New Guinea originate from many regions.

CHAPTER TWO: CONTINGENCY

In the words of Donna Haraway, objectivity claims “the power to see and not be seen, to represent while escaping representation” (1991: 188). The elimination of the observer from the frame of analysis is obvious in ethnographic texts from Irian Jaya. Peter Matthiessen writes in the preface of his widely-read ethnographic novel from the highlands of Irian Jaya, *Under the Mountain Wall*: “Reference to the tribe’s exposure to the expedition has been omitted...because the Kurelu (Dani) offered a unique chance, perhaps the last, to describe a lost culture in the terrible beauty of its pure estate” (1962: xiv). *Cannibal Valley* (Hitt 1962) is a missionary account which is based on work that took place *before* Matthiessen arrived in the same valley. In contrast to Matthiessen, Hitt details the complex logistics involved in getting to the highlands of Irian Jaya and in setting up an infrastructure in the valley. Such expeditions have undoubtedly had a profound effects on the subjects of ethnographic study, yet until recently this topic received little critical attention in the literature.

Matthiessen and many other ethnographers in New Guinea (i.e. Bateson 1958; Koch 1974; Rappaport 1984) have made editorial decisions to exclude contextual information from the reports of their studies. By doing this they create a distorted picture of the world by presenting only a fraction of the available information. At the same time, those who write according to this convention present themselves as transparent lenses with omniscient authority. Such texts do not have a sound epistemological basis. They systematically distort the world according to the presuppositions of the author.

In Chapter Two I aim to demonstrate that there are powerful worldly forces that direct, control, regulate, influence, and fund research. I will explicitly describe my perspective of the roles that I am playing in the neo-colonial project. To do this I examine the contemporary contingencies that are relevant to my work. I include this chapter at the risk of being criticized as an “I-witness” ethnographer (Geertz 1988). It is important for academics to be both aware of forces that are operating to influence their research

and responsible for the ultimate implications of their work. Academic enquiry has direct, palpable effects on the world.

rites of passage

I made an initial request to study at UNCEN (Universitas Cenderawasih, or Bird of Paradise University) through the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in August 1996. By June 1, 1998, one week before I was scheduled to board my plane for Irian Jaya, I still did not have a letter of visa sponsorship from UNCEN. In a last minute effort to try to find a visa sponsor, I used my identity as a biologist to request space at Pusppenssat, a field research station near the town of Nabire (see Figure 1.2). The director of the station faxed a letter of sponsorship to the Indonesian Embassy in Washington within a day. Due to the economic and political crises that hit Indonesia in May 1998 (see below), the Consulate General at the Embassy was willing to be flexible with my rapid changes in plans. He accepted my new sponsor and stamped a visa in my passport the day before I boarded my plane. Several days later when I landed in Jakarta, Indonesia, I was unsure of my sponsorship, so I checked the neutral status of “tourist” on my immigration papers.

UNCEN was actually quite eager to have me as a visiting student. When I arrived in Jayapura (see Figure 1.2) I found all of the necessary permits waiting for me in the office of the Provost. Since in-country government institutions are forbidden to directly correspond with foreign individuals, copies of all of my permits had been sent to the United States Embassy in Jakarta, instead of to me directly. I was able to change the sponsor of my visa to UNCEN after several months of haggling with local bureaucrats. However, the bureaucratic rites of passage did not end at this. Throughout my stay in Indonesia the Immigration Office kept me in a liminal state by making me repeat a monthly ritual of filling out the same set of forms. This gave them the power to simply not renew my visa if they had any reason to suspect that I was involved in activities they did not like. Since *penelitian* (“research”) is a subversive practice according to the New Order regime in Indonesia, it was imperative that I emphasize my identity as a “student” to pass through the immigration rituals.

My full incorporation as an anthropology student at UNCEN came through an explicitly framed rite-of-passage. All of the other new students and I went through a four-day *inisiiasi*, or initiation, near a small village which was located a one-hour truck ride from campus on the shores of Lake Sentani (see

Figure 1.3). This event followed van

Gennep's model of the stages of ritual

incorporation (van Gennep 1960). We were

divided into seven groups, each named after a

totemic figure of anthropology. Among the

honored were Mauss, Malinowski, Radcliffe-

Brown, Kroeber, and Levi-Strauss. We all

wore identical outfits: long black pants, white

t-shirts, orange headbands, and we all had to

carry oranges and betel nut in burlap bags (see Figure 1.3). My special [high] status as a white foreigner

was stripped and I was made to endure as much ritual humiliation as the other initiates, if not more. The

kakak tingat (Indonesian: higher level brothers) closely regulated when the initiates performed even basic

functions such as eating, sleeping, bathing, and going to the bathroom. On the final night of the *inisiiasi* we

were brought out of our home-made shelters at 2:00 AM. We were led on a hike thorough the rainforest

where older students taught us the UNCEN anthropology song. When we reached a road we were

blindfolded with our own headbands and led on a roundabout walk back to the camp. For the final stage of

the ritual we were led into the lake. One by one we were led out of the lake and told to crawl on our bellies

through a low passageway made of sago palm leaves. One of the professors sat in the middle of this palm

leaf structure. He gave each of the initiates, in turn, a drink of foul-tasting liquid. After this final step we

removed our blindfolds and gathered around a huge bonfire to watch the sunrise.

My entry into Misty Ridge was a drawn out process of incorporation. I received an introduction to a young Oge Bage Mee man named Sid and I decided to accompany him and his family to his camp, which

was located on a recently built road into rainforest. Due to the condition of the road it took us more than

four days to travel the distance to Sid's house. I lived with Sid for one week. At this site I became inspired

Figure 1.3 My initiation into the UNCEN anthropology program.



with the topic for this thesis, I made a preliminary collection of insects, and I conducted a survey of Oge Bage Mee taxonomy.

I interrupted this field trip in order to return to Jayapura to obtain a visa extension and a host of research permits. As mentioned above, the practice of “research” has subversive implications in Indonesia. In the context of the historically exploitative practices of European explorers and researchers, this attitude toward foreign investigators may be justified. The tight regulations on research presumably have roots in anti-imperialistic sentiments. They are currently being employed to support nationalistic objectives through the restriction of research by both foreigners and nationals. It is general knowledge that the *Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia (LIPI* or the Indonesian National Academy of Science) has prohibited all research in Irian Jaya by foreigners at present. Since the status of Irian Jaya as an independent nation is currently in dispute, the policy of prohibiting research in this area is effectively preventing information about oppression (i.e. the eye witness accounts of state-sponsored violence that I presented in Chapter One) from reaching the rest of the world.

While I did not obtain a research permit from LIPI, which is based in Java, I secured a myriad of local permits and *Surat Keterangan* (letters of recommendation). I spent endless hours waiting in bureaucrats’ offices to convince them that I was a reputable person and that my topic was not controversial. During this process I used my alternate statuses as foreigner, tourist and student in order to identify with specific agencies. I obtained letters from the *Departemen Pariwisata* (Tourism Department); UNCEN; *Intel* (police intelligence division), *Departemen Kehutanan, Subseksi Konservasi Sumber Daya Alam Paniai* (The Forestry Department, Conservation Subsection for the Paniai District); *Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan* (Education and Cultural Department); and the *Kepala Suku Besar Rayon Siriwo* (Big Tribal Head of the Siriwo District). There were rarely officially sanctioned “fees” for these letters, but having a good letter arranged was often contingent on my willingness to provide *uang rokok* (Indonesian: smoking money).

While some of the agencies provided me with letters which explicitly permitted me to conduct *penelitian* (Indonesian: research), others played with semantics so that they could both permit me to conduct my research and avoid possible problems with people of higher authority in Java. My letter of sponsorship from the Head of the Social and Political Sciences Faculty at UNCEN is a *Pemohonan Ijin*

Mengumpulkan Data (Request to Begin Compiling Data) addressed to *Yang terhormat* (To whom it may concern). Participating in these bureaucratic rituals forced me think of my research in apolitical terms that were agreeable to the Indonesian authorities. It was acceptable for me to frame the Irianese as subjects for my study of food. However, since I returned to the US I have included many contextual topics that would be considered heretical by the bureaucrats.

After obtaining these permits I returned to Nabire in August prepared to conduct more in depth fieldwork. I spent a week arranging further permits in Nabire while living at Sid's house in the city. On this trip to Misty Ridge I traveled with Kansus Uweia, the *Kepala Suku Besar Rayon Siriwo*,¹⁶ by chartered motorcycle to the site of a fresh and totally impenetrable landslide. Kansus introduced me to John, a relative of his who is approximately my own age and who had been traveling from a gold mining site to his village, Misty Ridge. After spending a few days with Kansus while he inspected the new gold mining site, John and I left on foot for Misty Ridge. We spent several days on the road. I carried a huge backpack full of heavy books and equipment and he carried seven chickens that he had bought from an Indonesian man who lives at a homestead along the road.

Despite such efforts to achieve a good introduction to the community, my identity as a white, relatively well-funded American conducting research created distance between me and the people with whom I intended to study. Before I came to Irian I was afraid that I would be associated with Freeport McMoRan, a New Orleans-based mining corporation known in the United States for environmental and human rights abuses. To my surprise, many Oge Bage Mee regard this company in a generally positive light since it provides high paying jobs. Most complaints that I heard about Freeport were about not being able to share the wealth. I was, in fact, associated with these Americans, but in an unexpected way. On the day I was preparing to return to Jayapura after a month-long stay in the field, John, who had become one of my closest interlocutors, asked me if he could see my map of the local gold deposits. Other Oge Bage Mee whom I met asked me if I could bring them some "gold magnets," and shoes that they told me would light up when one walks near gold deposits. When I told one man that I did not know anything about the gold

¹⁶ This position did not exist before the Indonesian take over of Netherlands New Guinea, and was created in an attempt to facilitate administrative control over rural populations. There are four tribal heads for the "Mee" and Kansus is specific to the Siriwo river region.

equipment that he asked for, he told me that all I had to do was ask the “*bos besar*” (big boss). When I further questioned him about the identity of this boss he suggested that it might be Bill Clinton.

The Oge Bage Mee correctly recognize that Americans in Irian have much more money than most local inhabitants. The metaphors used to explain how this wealth is procured may be more insightful than most Americans are willing to admit. The current global economy is organized in such a way that industrialized countries extract resources from developing countries, resulting in further asymmetries in the distribution of capital. There are in fact many technological devices and industrial secrets that would allow the people of Irian Jaya to profit from their natural resources.

Academics have long tried to explain the unequal distribution of wealth in historical terms, often devising elaborate evolutionary “Just So” stories. This trend to explain present inequalities by the past continues today (i.e. Diamond 1998). An ecological model of these inequalities, which took current economic, social, and political contingencies into account, might shed light on how such relationships of domination are maintained and propagated over time. Nonetheless, a complete account of how I came to be wealthy [in economic terms] compared with the people of Irian Jaya is beyond the scope of this thesis. I do, however, feel compelled to describe my perceptions of how neo-colonial economic forces influenced my study. In academic discourse, funding sources are usually listed outside the body of the text as “Acknowledgements.” Here I will write against the grain of tradition in a brief digression about how my project was supported.

I applied to five separate sources in order to pay for this study: the New College Anthropology Fund, the New College Foundation, the United States-Indonesia Society, the Explorers Club, and the National Security Education Program (NSEP). Most of these grants were carefully designed to support people who have the perspective of elite academia and high society. Being an enrolled student at New College was a prerequisite for two of the grants. The other three granting agencies explicitly required me to be a US citizen and implicitly required that I be a successful member of an elite academic institution. These policies effectively edit out potentially innovative research from divergent perspectives.

The NSEP had rites of passage that were even more extensive and grueling than those of the Indonesian Immigration Officials. A description of these processes can serve as an example of how funding can control research. Initially when I was notified of my status of an NSEP award recipient, the

Defense Department had blocked all projects in Indonesia because of rioting in Java (read Indonesia), and had sent all Embassy Staff except for “essential personnel” out of the country. My project had been approved on the basis of the content of my proposal, but my research, along with countless other US-sponsored programs in Indonesia, was temporarily suspended to make a political statement to the international community.

Research funding agencies connected to the US military, such as RAND and ONR, have a tradition of earmarking funds for anthropological studies in countries of national security interest (Diesing 1991). NSEP highlighted Indonesia as one of several countries where their undergraduate scholarships were tenable. In my NSEP statement of purpose I further emphasized US interests in the region but the consequences of my adoption of this language in my proposals are not necessarily straightforward.

Even after my funding from the NSEP was eventually released, there were still numerous conditions to be met. I was required to submit an initial, mid-term, and final report while in the field. However, I will have to meet the most critical condition after my graduation from New College. The letter notifying me of my status as an **award recipient** reminded me that if I accepted the award I would “*enter into an agreement to work in a national security position or work in the field of higher education in the area of study for which the scholarship was awarded*” (emphasis theirs). I was obliged to sign a form stating that if I did not fulfill this obligation I would return to NSEP the full amount of my scholarship.

The conditions that were attached to this grant relate to the published goal of this scholarship program: “NSEP was designed to provide American undergraduates with the resources and encouragement they need to acquire skills and experience in countries and areas of the world critical to the future security of our nation” (NSEP 1999). Only those projects which were defined in terms of national security received funding and I had to tailor my proposal to be considered for support.

However, as an award recipient, I was not a passive subject and was capable of various forms of resistance. I changed the entire focus of my project once I arrived in Irian Jaya since I found that what I had originally proposed was not feasible. Once I had already received the award I was free to change the direction of my research. Nonetheless, the fact that such powerful economic incentives are being used to construct the framework of research has profound epistemological implications for late 20th century

academic enquiry. Primarily the studies which promise to support the ideals of those in power are being funded.

The rites of passage I endured in order to conduct this research project influenced the direction of my research and my own status as an observer. I composed many different identities for myself in order to fit into pre-existing categories and expectations. In various situations I became a student, a researcher, a tourist, a biologist, an anthropologist, an award recipient, and an American. Wearing each of these hats influenced my perspective. As I explained myself and my research to different groups of people, my project changed and took on new meanings.

A COUNTRY IN CRISIS

The volatile environment in which this study was conducted has given my project a sense of urgency. When I boarded a plane to Irian Jaya on June 8, 1998, I thought I was going into a region that was in the middle of an acute ecological, political, and economic crisis. According to news articles that were being sent to me by the West Papua Listserv and articles that I had been reading in the *Nation*, *Far East Economic Review*, and *Washington Post*, Irian Jaya and the rest of Indonesia had fallen into chaos. When I arrived in Irian on the morning of June 10, I was surprised to find that most people were going about ordinary, everyday activities and that they were largely unconcerned about the crises that were being reported abroad.

The original project that I outlined in my grant proposals was to study the effects of the “El Niño” drought that hit the region in 1997/1998. Reports about this event made it sound apocalyptic. A news broadcast reported: “A severe drought in Indonesia’s eastern province of Irian Jaya is threatening the lives of at least 110,000 people because of food shortages” (Food shortages worsen 1997, October 21 [Online]). A newspaper article reported that more than 250,000 people risked starvation because their crops had failed and they had not been able to plant new ones (Williams 1997, December 20 [Online]). Other natural disasters that the people of Irian Jaya reportedly were contending with at the time included a “poison fog blanket” (Vidal 1997, September 27, [Online]), erratic snowfall (Drought disaster 1997, October 23 [Online]), and outbreaks of diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, diarrhea, and cholera (Walters 1997, December 6-7 [Online]).

When I arrived in Jayapura, no one seemed concerned about the drought or other disasters. I learned that the crisis had been confined to a small area of the highlands and that other regions of Irian Jaya were relatively unaffected. An Indonesian anthropologist who was part of a government project to study the drought near Wamena (see Figure 1.2) joked that those who were affected by the drought were actually better off than before. He said that each head of household in the affected areas received 50 kg bags of rice each month. According to him most of the people who died were elderly, already sick, or young babies, and villagers exaggerated the number of deaths to receive more aid. It seems that the Indonesians were minimizing the extent of the crises to establish a degree of normalcy.

The drought, which began in September 1997, was widespread in South East Asia and led to a severe reduction in the yields of rice crops in places such as Java. The failure of the rice crop can be viewed as at least one major factor that precipitated an acute economic crisis in Indonesia beginning in January 1998. On January 8 the exchange rate of the Indonesian Rupiah was inflated to 6,900 per US dollar, from the rate of about 2,000 Rp. per dollar that had been the standard for many years. By August of 1998 the rate had skyrocketed to 15,000 Rp. per dollar. As prices for rice and other commodities began to rise, so did social unrest. The *Far Eastern Economic Review* reports that in the first three weeks of 1998 there were more than 30 outbreaks of violent social unrest in Indonesia, which is more than the whole previous year (Lioe 1998).

The United States government used these crises as justification for intervention and political manipulation of the government of Indonesia. The *Far Eastern Economic Review* (FEER) conducted an interview in February 1998 with then Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich about Congressional support of an International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout of Indonesia's failing economic institutions:

FEER: In Indonesia, it's complicated because of the political factors, the uncertainty of succession, like President Suharto (sic) stepping down.

Gingrich: Maybe that should be the goal.

FEER: But that cannot be an IMF demand.

Gingrich: In that case we cannot give them money (Chanda 1998).

While the final IMF bailout plan did not have a clause that asked President Soeharto to step down, it did state that the government had to lift subsidies on rice and fuel. This triggered further price hikes which led to increased unrest, and eventually to the resignation of Soeharto. So while the IMF did not force Soeharto out of office with explicit demands for resignation, they played with economic, political, and social

variables until his resignation became inevitable. This policy, which was backed by the United States and other western governments, resulted in the suffering and death of thousands of people in Indonesia. Coming to Irian Jaya on the heels of the IMF deal made me a representative of a country that was causing considerable suffering.

Time published an article called “Indonesia Burning” in mid May, one week before Soeharto stepped down. This article describes the response of the Indonesian populace after months of severe economic oppression: “... shopping malls were looted and torched, car dealerships were destroyed, the new toll road from the airport was commandeered by lawless mobs who threatened to set fire to cars that did not hand over cash on demand” (McCarthy 1998a: 44). The US Embassy in Jakarta began airlifting expatriates out of Indonesia and all non-essential US government representatives were ordered to leave the country (The United States Embassy in Jakarta 1998, June 3 [Online]). The death toll for this month was in the thousands for Java alone. On May 27, amid intense pressure from domestic and international groups, Soeharto quietly stepped down after more than 25 years of rule and handed the reins to his hand-picked successor, B. J. Habibie (McCarthy 1998b). These events in Java set the stage for renewed hopes for independence by the people of Irian Jaya and led to the demonstrations that I described in Chapter One.

CONCLUSION

Most of the events, places, and processes described in this chapter relate to the subject of this thesis only by chance or situation. Nonetheless, these contingent factors guided the course and suggested the direction of my research. The idea for my project was originally developed and refined according to the specifications of funding agencies. Further, in order to gain the approval of Indonesian officials, I was forced to define my research within specific guidelines of what they consider to be acceptable. The charged political atmosphere restricted my access to specific geographical territories. The selection of Misty Ridge for my field site was determined by these contingent factors.

CHAPTER THREE METHODS AND DISCIPLINES

My research was conducted with methods that draw from the disciplines of anthropology and biology. In Victorian times the distinctions between these young disciplines were vague (Stocking 1987), but as time progressed they became separated, both in terms of their physical locations in academic divisions and in their methods and theories. However, the categorization and departmentalization of academic disciplines is more an artifact of human history than a reflection of the nature of the world. There remains a considerable degree of overlap, since humans are living organisms that are part of ecosystems, and since human behavior can potentially alter living systems at multiple levels of organization.

Despite the overlap of the subjects of anthropology and biology, their practitioners have frequently stood on opposite sides of the fence in polemical debates about explaining human behavior. There have been major ideological confrontations between these two groups over the course of their histories. For example, in the nature vs. nurture debate scholars on each side argued that their particular explanatory principles were the most accurate, to the exclusion of competing theories. The dichotomous structure of this debate led to deterministic formulations of both positions. Most contemporary academics take a moderate stance in relation to these two explanatory camps. However, some individuals continue to make bold statements; for instance, some evolutionary biologists continue to assert that their research explains “why specific behavior patterns have evolved” in terms of “ultimate causes” (Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1989: 4).

Roger Masters critiques such approaches for confusing causal explanation and function explanation:

A causal process or causal mechanism explains the material factors which produce phenotypical structures or behaviors. For example, one can say that, under stated conditions, a chromosomal sequence of nucleotide bases causes the production of a protein in particular cells. In contrast, functions refer to the effects of a structure or behavior, including the presumed selective advantages (functional adaptations) which might explain why the observed traits have evolved (1979: 266)

Since an individual is made up of sub-systems and is a component of larger meta-systems, a given structure or behavior will simultaneously have different functions on different levels of organization.

Similarly, Masters states: “a given causal process may have originated for more than one functional ‘reason’” (1979: 267). Thus, while the incest taboo may function in evolutionary terms to prevent inbreeding depression, at the same time it functions to create social alliances between previously unconnected groups. In this thesis I do not lend ultimate explanatory power to any one set of theories.

More recently, a related debate has developed that pits many anthropologists and biologists against each other in “science wars” over scientific authority. For the past few decades anthropologists and other academics in the “humanities” have conducted critical studies of the institution of science. In 1994 the “scientists” mounted a counter attack, when Paul Gross and Norman Levitt published a book called *Higher Superstition*, which labeled social and cultural studies of science as heretical. Gross and Levitt argue that humanistic studies of science are antiscientific, antiobjectivist, and antirealist; the authors of these studies are nonscientists who do not understand science; and science is good, science is neutral, and science has the best available methods (in Fujimura 1988). My thesis attempts to straddle this debate. I employ methods and analytical tools that are drawn from each of these camps, since they are both useful for understanding the material at hand and furthering my arguments.

Unlike many academics I believe that it is possible to separate theoretical models from methodological approaches. Gregory Bateson (1958) attempted to do this in his innovative ethnography *Naven*. In the body of this text he classifies the five different methods that he used to approach the problems of culture and society: *Structural*, *Affective*, *Ethological*, *Eidological*, and *Sociological*. In the epilogue Bateson describes how he forced himself to see how each bit of culture fit into each of these categories. He found that: “every piece of behavior has its ethological, structural, and sociological significance” (1958: 262). Thus, different theoretical models can be applied to the data after it is collected, independent of the particular framework in which it was collected.

The primary goal of this chapter on methodology is to outline the procedures that were used to collect data in order to give the reader a means of evaluating my findings. I separate my descriptions of the biological and anthropological methodologies employed in this study in sections called “Natural History” and “Ethnography.” I conclude Chapter Three with a discussion of how the politics of representation interacted to influence the “Frames of Analysis” that guided my investigation of research subjects.

NATURAL HISTORY

In the late 20th Century biologists became specialized to conduct research on a single system or small set of model systems which are used as metaphors for understanding other systems. However, there is a long tradition of people who considered themselves naturalists or natural historians who have made major theoretical breakthroughs for the biological sciences. These notables include Linnaeus, Darwin, Wallace, Fabre, von Frisch, Tinbergen, Lorenz, and Mayr. In this thesis I attempt to go beyond current trends of specialization by borrowing research methods from the sub-disciplines of Entomology, Ethology, and Ethnobiology in order to develop multiple perspectives on the factors which influence edibility for the “Mee.”

While I was in Misty Ridge I preserved over 600 insects, about 30 crustaceans, several plant species, and one bat. The majority of these specimens were collected by the residents of Misty Ridge. Many of these people already had experience collecting insects from working with Dr. Philippe Hoyois, an entomologist from Belgium who had been conducting research in the region for nearly a decade. During my first week in Misty Ridge people swarmed to the house where I was staying, bringing me insects that they had collected. Apparently, Dr. Hoyois had come on collecting trips to this village where he had paid people to collect insects for him. The man with whom I was living told me that the people would stop bringing me the insects unless I paid them. Even though many of the insects that they brought were irrelevant to my study of food, I viewed this as an opportunity to get to know individual members of the community. Rather than pay for each individual insect they brought, I told anyone who wanted to collect insects that I would pay Rp. 2,000¹⁷ for each day that they wanted to collect insects for me. Additionally, I went on many such collecting trips where I counted the different types of *isu* that they had collected and kept representatives of the different types for preservation. In Chapter Five I will describe the collection of insects by the Oge Bage Mee as food.

The preservation of the insects that I collected was hampered by a lack of appropriate materials. Since I had not planned on studying any insects other than ants, while I was in Irian, I did not bring many necessary supplies. Since packages take over two months to reach Irian from the States I was limited to the materials that I could procure locally. I managed to secure some vials which allowed for the storage of

¹⁷ This was about 40 US cents according to the exchange rates at the time, but in local terms this was equivalent to the price of a meal in a restaurant in the city.

some specimens in 70% ethanol, but I did not have enough vials to accommodate all of my specimens. One middle-aged man from Misty Ridge criticized this method of insect preservation, since it led to the discoloration of some of the beetles and grasshoppers. He taught me a technique for making small storage devices for insects that he had learned from Dr. Hoyois, and he showed me the stores in Nabire that carried the necessary cardboard, cotton, and clear plastic materials. I also managed to buy some small plastic bags in Jayapura that could be used to store dried insects. The only method of drying that was available was to place the dead insects on sheets of corrugated roofing in the hot sun.

I recorded the Oge Bage Mee names for each specimen that I collected in a pocket-sized notebook. When possible I recorded the name that interlocutors gave the specimen in the field. After the organisms were preserved I cross-checked the names with at least one interlocutor. In addition to this cross-checking of my entire inventory of insects, I developed two test collections of 61 insects that represented the range of different types. All of the insects in both of these collections were given names by three different interlocutors. Several of these sessions were recorded on audio tape. The dynamics of these sessions are detailed in the conclusion of Chapter Six.

Once I returned to the United States I prepared all of my insect specimens for identification by mounting them with insect pins. I moistened each insect for approximately 24 hours before pinning it in order to prevent the appendages from breaking off during the mounting process. Those insects that were infected with fungus were bathed in an ascorbic acid (vitamin C) or phenol solution. In order to prevent infestation of mites and other arthropods the specimens were stored in containers that had moth balls or pest strip.

The majority of the mounted orthopteroids (grasshoppers, cockroaches, crickets, and katydids) were identified by myself, under the guidance of Dr. Jacqueline Miller of the Allyn Museum of Entomology, to the taxonomic category that was as specific as possible with the keys in Rentz (1998). The phasmids (stick insects) that I collected were identified by Dr. Henk van Herwaarden in the Netherlands. Dr. Hans Duffels of the Institute for Taxonomic Zoology at Plantage Middenlaan in Amsterdam identified the cicadas that I collected. My collection of Coleoptera was given to Michael Balke, the Korrespondent des Naturhistorischen at the Wien Museum in Austria, who has identified the edible species which are relevant to this study.

In addition to the ethnographic methods of data collection which I will describe below, I also used a methodology that is not usually employed by ethnographers to observe Oge Bage Mee behavior.

Ethology can be defined as the study of behavior in its natural context. Human ethology is the same type of research program, except that it is focused on human subjects. Traditionally ethology has been closely associated with application of biological explanatory principles to the domain of behavior. Behaviors are explained as innate phylogenetic programs that are triggered by specific environmental stimuli. While I do not subscribe to these theoretical assumptions, I have borrowed some of the methodological tools of human ethology for this thesis.

Ethological observers are trained to use etic terms to record behavior as units of physical movement. In animals, ethological research begins with the composition of an ethogram, which is a list and description of the basic behavioral units for that particular species. After the ethogram is complete, a focused research project can begin. Observation techniques depend on the research question, and focal subject or group observation can be used. Frequently, recording devices such as photographs, motion pictures, or audio recording are utilized. I have participated in a tutorial on Ethology, an independent reading project on Human Ethology, and I have utilized these observational techniques in a series of projects on animal behavior both at New College and in the field in Central America.

Since extensive ethological research has been conducted on humans, an ethogram is not necessary (Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1989). I adapted ethological methods to record behavioral sequences of individuals in the presence of *kagabo* (stick insects). Interlocutors repeatedly told me that they were afraid of these insects because they cause itchy rashes to form, but I wanted to get beyond these repetitive explanations by characterizing the range of responses to *kagabo*. I recorded 20 independent behavioral sequences involving a *kagabo* or a representation of a *kagabo*. I recorded facial expressions, body movements, and linguistic statements as they occurred in the behavioral sequences. Similar to visual anthropologists, ethologists focus on observable physical behavior. However, ethology has the advantage of utilizing recording techniques that do not rely on the availability of video or photographic technology.

ETHNOGRAPHY

While the particular combination of methods that I have used to conduct my research are novel, there is a long tradition of eclecticism in anthropology. In the words of James Clifford, “ethnography is hybrid textual activity: it traverses genres and disciplines” (1986: 26). Ethnography is primarily the domain of social/cultural anthropology, but it is common for ethnographers to borrow concepts and methods from disciplines such as literary criticism, psychology, and sociology. The variety of approaches used in this thesis are consistent with this tradition of appropriation.

Participant observation, which is the basic method used in most contemporary ethnographies, was independently discovered by both Margaret Mead and Bronislaw Malinowski in the 1920s (Sanjek 1990). Participant observation marked a break from Boasian textual analysis and began to provide a living cultural context for ethnographic materials. Mead described the novel means that she used to gather information: “I learned to eat and enjoy Samoan food...I could wander freely about the village or go on fishing trips or stop at a house where a woman was weaving” (in Sanjek 1990: 216). Participant observers ideally meet the people on their own terms in order to partake in a wide range of experiences. This style of interaction promotes a higher degree of rapport when compared to methods that distance the investigator from his or her subjects.

The anthropological *ideal* for participant observation is for the fieldworker to fit in the local economic system with the labor that he or she contributes to the community. However, the *real* field work situation is now being accepted more openly: anthropologists frequently pay their interlocutors cash money in exchange for food, a place to sleep, and help with research (Howell 1990). Anthropologists are awarded large amounts of money in the form of grants. The people they study tend to have access to much lower levels of resources. Therefore, independent of practical considerations, I think that it is justifiable for the subjects of the study to share part of the wealth. I paid rent to the families I lived with and, as mentioned above, I paid a daily wage to anyone who was interested in collecting insects. Additionally, I brought the residents of Misty Ridge gifts of t-shirts, hats, rice, salt, cookies, ramen noodles, and tobacco from the city.

While many anthropologists have liked to believe that their presence does not alter the power dynamics of the societies that they study, I do recognize that my distribution of gifts and money had effects on the residents of Misty Ridge. I did not pay any rent to the *Kepala Desa* (Indonesian: Village Head),

who is the formal authority in the village. Instead I supported other ordinary families. Additionally, I paid women and children to collect insects even though they do not usually have access to cash incomes. However, I attempted to restrict the amount of my payments so that they were not radical departures from local norms.

My presence in Misty Ridge also resulted in changes in the beliefs of the residents. My status as a white foreigner cast me as an authority on topics that ranged from illnesses to geography and people would frequently approach me with questions about the nature of the world. For example, when I was asked to describe my trip from America to Irian Jaya the conversation frequently digressed into a discussion about whether the earth was flat or round. This also presented a methodological problem. Some of the questions I asked interlocutors fell into the areas where my interlocutors already considered me an authority. Since some of my interlocutors assumed that I already knew the answers, they treated my questions as rhetorical, or tried to give me the answers they thought I wanted to hear.

While in Misty Ridge I made great efforts to live according to local norms, despite my comparative wealth and my cultural differences. I lived as a guest in houses with ordinary village members, and I usually ate along with the other members of the household and slept next to them on the floor at night. I participated in gardening, food collecting, hunting, a funeral, a marriage, church meetings, and holiday celebrations. I enjoyed the freedom of roaming throughout the village and the surrounding environs, and I was warmly received into every household that I visited. Even though some male ethnographers in New Guinea complain about not having access to women as informants (i.e. Pospisil or Heider), I spent a large proportion of my time in Misty Ridge with women and children.

One of the primary barriers to my research was linguistic in nature. The linguistic situation in Irian Jaya is complex: there are more than 250 distinct languages in addition to the lingua franca of Indonesian. The Oge Bage Mee language has an extremely complex system of verbs and a difficult tonal system. While I was in Jayapura I arranged for Niko Kobepa, a “Mee” linguist who had studied in Canada, to teach me a total of approximately 10 hours of training in the phonology and grammar of “Mee.” In addition to this training I compiled extensive word lists while in the field. However, I was never able to fluently converse in Oge Bage Mee nor follow conversations. While almost everyone in the village, from young children to old grandparents, was able to speak Indonesian, most of the daily conversations took

place in Oge Bage Mee. Therefore, I missed much of the daily gossip. In order for me to learn about a given subject I would have to specifically ask about it or someone would have to volunteer the information to me. In my conversations and interviews I would usually phrase my questions in Indonesian and insert important Oge Bage Mee words in relevant places.

Before I began planning my trip to Irian Jaya I had already received six months of intensive training in the Indonesian language as a high school exchange student in the city of Bandung, on the island of Java. For the current study my Indonesian language abilities were tested by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages to determine my proficiency before and after my NSEP program. I was rated as having an Advanced speaking level just before my first trip to Misty Ridge in August, and as having an Advanced-High level when I returned to the United States in January.¹⁸

While on my first field trip in August much of my time was consumed by the collection and preservation of insects, and participant observation in gardens and forests. At this time interviews were not a primary focus of my research and those interviews that did take place were in the form of informal conversations. These conversations occurred in a variety of contexts: while collecting food in gardens or the forest, during meals, while walking along the road, or while hanging out in people's houses. Mead suggests that one advantage of informal interviews is that the interlocutors do not know that information is being collected about them. She writes that little of the material for her study of the Mountain Arapesh was gathered in formal interviews, "but was rather deviously extracted from the directed conversations of social groups, or at formal receptions which the chiefs of a village accorded me on account of my rank in the native social organization" (in Sanjek 1990: 216). On the contrary, I have discovered some of my greatest insights when I have been able to communicate my working theories to my interlocutors. I have not used informal interviews in order to deceive my interlocutors, but rather to allow them to feel relaxed in familiar conditions.

¹⁸ The rating system has nine levels, and Advanced-High is the second highest rating. Speakers at this level are "able to satisfy the requirements of a broad variety of everyday, school, and work situations. Can discuss concrete topics relating to particular interests and special fields of competence. There is emerging evidence of ability to support opinions, explain in detail, and hypothesize... The Advanced-High speaker often shows remarkable fluency and ease of speech but under the demands of Superior-level, complex tasks, language may break down or prove inadequate" (NSEP memorandum, February 8, 1999).

My second trip to Misty Ridge in December came directly after a debilitating attack of the *Plasmodium vivax* strain of malaria. Since I did not feel healthy enough to make many trips to gardens or the forest, my research was confined primarily to the village itself. In retrospect, this turn of events may have actually improved my research since it gave me time to conduct more interviews. On this field trip I focused my interviews by controlling the direction of conversation with questions that I had formulated in advance. This format allowed me to collect detailed information on a set of interrelated subjects. Yet, the less focused nature of the interviews in my first field trip allowed me the luxury of exploring topics that I would have otherwise missed.

During my December/January field trip I conducted 31 formal interviews. Many interviews were conducted as we sat on the floor of the house where Sam was letting me stay, while others took place as I visited people in their own homes. Most of the interviews involved more than one person at a time and there were usually other people watching who did not directly participate in the conversation. I indexed the notes from each of the interviews according to the names of the participants, the place where the interview took place, and the subjects that were covered. The structure of these interviews was influenced by the use of two pocket-sized notebooks that I carried around with me. My interview notebook was divided into topical sections that included genealogy, clan names, the raw and the cooked, sickness and curing, and a section of general running questions. My scratch book was used for notes on any subject that came up, and was filled in a linear chronological manner from front to back. During interviews I would frequently switch back and forth between these notebooks in order to cross check information that I had already recorded, to search for new questions, and to find empty space to jot down notes. My indexing system allows me to track down the original notes from each conversation even if they were scattered through the notebooks.

Much of my time in Misty Ridge was spent in relative isolation: several hours each day were spent translating the notes that I had made during the day into narrative passages in my journal. This task probably was, second to my inability to speak “Mee,” the major factor which prevented my full involvement in the community. However, this journal has been an integral part of my research project. The journal passages allowed me to synthesize the dizzying barrage of sensory input into bounded

descriptions that were internally coherent. Additionally, the journal gave me space for preliminary analysis of the data and speculation on the implications of what I was finding.

FRAMES OF ANALYSIS

Above I have presented a fairly standard account of the methodologies that were employed in this thesis. In this section I will briefly digress in order to discuss other factors that influence representation. While the theories and methods of academia may have provided an overarching frame for this project, there were innumerable local circumstances and agendas that shifted the edges of the picture that I present. To illustrate these processes I will employ a series of photographs that I took while in Misty Ridge.

The picture in Figure 3.1 depicts a fairly common scene in Misty Ridge. A young woman is seated by a hearth. She is in the process of placing a raw banana to cook in the coals of the fire. In her right hand she holds a pair of bamboo tongs and in her left hand she holds the peeled banana. A journal entry that was made the day that this photograph was taken reveals that there were complex processes taking place behind the scenes:

Just now I brought out my camera in hopes of getting some domestic snap shots. The woman who was originally cooking at the hearth told me “*saya tidak mau*” (Indonesian: I don’t want to) when I took the case off of my camera. She eventually left the kitchen. Shortly after she left another woman came quickly into the kitchen *acting* naturally. She began cooking as if I were not there. A boy who tried to pose for the camera and get in the frame of my pictures entered the kitchen at the same time as the second woman. Not long thereafter the woman’s father came into the kitchen and squatted in between me and his daughter. He asked me to take his picture. I told the girl’s father that I would take his picture later and I took the boy’s picture full on, so each of them eventually left. I was finally able to take what will appear to viewers of the photograph as a “natural” picture of a woman roasting bananas.

This example illustrates how competing agendas can operate to influence what is represented in a picture. One of the women did not want to be represented at all and successfully removed herself from the frame. The father and the boy actively attempted to change the focus of the picture from cooking to individual portraits. While I did take each of their pictures I have edited them out here, since they were posing for a camera and I was trying to take shots of routine activities. I did take other pictures of men and boys while they were in the kitchen or while they were cooking.

The woman in Figure 3.1 perceived the idea that I was trying to represent and composed herself according to this frame. It is likely that this same process also influenced other aspects of my study. As I

asked questions, my interlocutors were able to perceive my frame of reference, and like the woman in this picture, they gave me information that fit within that frame. For example, by asking many questions about unusual foods during my interviews I made it clear that I wanted to hear about as many of these foods as possible. It is highly possible that some interlocutors fabricated information that they thought I wanted to hear. Likewise, in assembling my collection of insects I placed emphasis on certain groups. This resulted in a collection that is biased towards these groups.

Figure 3.2 and Figure 3.3 differ from Figure 3.1 since they show people who are actively



representing their own ideals, rather than playing a role in a frame which I composed. The subjects of both of these two photographs dressed up and asked me to take their pictures as they posed for the camera. Figure 3.2 represents a “traditional” ideal. The two women and the girl are wearing *moge*, or bark skirts, which is what all females wore less than two decades ago, prior to contact with the industrial world. Around the women’s necks are bead necklaces, which were used as currency with Dutch colonizers earlier in this century. The man wears a *koteka*, a penis sheath manufactured from an elongated gourd. In his right hand he displays a decorated bamboo segment that is used to store tobacco. While this type of dress

continues to be the norm in many “Mee” villages, most people in Misty Ridge wear factory-made shirts, pants, and skirts in the course of everyday life. Figure 3.3 shows people who are also dressed outside of the norm. Here a mother and her adopted daughter pose in their church clothes in front of the village office. The woman wears a sarong made out of batik cloth that has a generalized Irian motif. All of the clothes have been carefully washed in the stream, and the mother’s hair has been neatly tied back.

Unlike the other three pictures the photograph in Figure 3.4 was quickly snapped during a period of intense activity when few people were paying attention to what I was framing with my camera. A pig had just been killed for a Christmas feast and there was high excitement as the butchering began. In the

Figure 3.2 *Traditional* re-representation.



Figure 3.3 Presentation of a modern ideal.



Figure 3.4 Framing the natural world.



center of the picture a young man is slicing up a piece of meat with a sliver of bamboo while two boys compete to help him. In the background another boy stands distracted by some activity outside of the frame while he idly holds the bladder of the pig that has been inflated like a balloon. In this picture I simply framed part of the world around me in my view finder and took the shot. Even so, the girl in the bottom right hand corner who is beaming in the direction of the camera is a reminder of the observer's subjective place in the scene.

The methods that I used to collect data for this thesis were influenced by processes similar to those that operate in the framing of each of these pictures. The residents of Misty Ridge presented themselves in conversations as having unique traditional identities, as in Figure 3.2. Independent of this, my interlocutors presented themselves in the manner illustrated by Figure 3.3., as people who are aware of and interested in the modern world. Only rarely was I able to simply record my observations as a participant observer, like the photo in Figure 3.4, relatively free from other processes trying to influence the frame of representation.

CONCLUSION OF SECTION ONE

The visualizing technologies are without apparent limit; the eye of any ordinary primate like us can be endlessly enhanced by ... cameras for every purpose from filming the mucous membrane lining the gut cavity of a marine worm living in the vent gasses on a fault between continental plates to mapping a planetary hemisphere elsewhere in the solar system. Vision in this technological feast becomes unregulated gluttony; all perspective gives way to infinitely mobile vision, which no longer seems just mythically about the god-trick of seeing everything from nowhere, but to have put the myth into ordinary practice. And like the god-trick, this eye fucks the world to make techno-monsters (Haraway 1991: 189).

Vision has been a powerful metaphor in scholarly discourse. In traditional academic texts the observer has been constructed as a transparent lens that is capable of objectively representing and reproducing the world. However, it is now apparent that an observer can be more appropriately characterized as a filter and gatekeeper of information. The presuppositions of a witness largely determine the content of any reports that are produced.

Thomas Nagel writes that the practice of objectivity is not tenable since it claims that “we must get outside of ourselves, and view the world from nowhere within it” (Nagel 1986: 67). However, the opposing epistemological extreme seems to have similar problems: “[r]elativism is a way of being nowhere while claiming to be everywhere equally” (Haraway 1991: 191). Instead of striving for either of these dialectically untenable positions, I have sought to characterize my own frame of analysis and to use this as a point of entry into emic systems. In Section One I have attempted to give the reader a behind-the-scenes picture of the ethnographic process. I have done this to demonstrate the subjective nature of anthropological knowledge, and to lead the reader to the point where s/he may accept the emic beliefs of the Oge Bage Mee as an equally valid epistemology.

**SECTION TWO:
RATS, GRASSHOPPERS, & ROTTEN MEAT**

INTRODUCTION: EATING EXOTIC

When talking with other North Americans about my thesis topic, both in informal conversations and formal academic contexts, the first question that I am asked is whether or not I have eaten the exotic foods that I describe. Indeed, since this thesis is about edibility one of the most important aspects of my participant observation related to my diet. I subsisted primarily on locally grown foods: tubers, bananas, greens, and pig. Like most of the residents of Misty Ridge I drank untreated river water. I went on gathering expeditions and I snacked on grasshoppers, beetles, true bugs, beetle grubs, ant larvae and other collected edibles. Contrary to ethnocentric North American assumptions I did not suffer from any intestinal problems as a result of this diet, and I have not been diagnosed with any unusual parasitic infections (other than malaria, which is transmitted by mosquito bites) since my return to the United States.

Dietary participation helped me identify with the Oge Bage Mee and develop rapport with my interlocutors. Several different interlocutors remarked that I ate the same food as other “Mee.” This is in contrast to most whites and Indonesians who emphasized their distinctive identities by avoiding local food and importing their own ethnic foods.

I am not the first American to eat insects and other “exotic” fare. In fact, there are some people who have become obsessed with the idea. There has been a string of recent

books, articles, and web sites in which enthusiastic practitioners promote a practice called *entomophagy*. A husband and wife team (Menzel & D’Aluisio 1998), for example, published a slick, popularly-oriented book which describes an around-the-world tour that they took to document the eating of insects among a

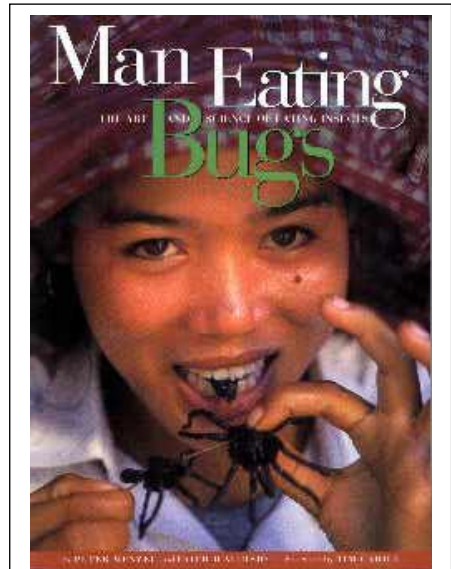


Figure 4.1 Man Eating Bugs. The cover this book by Menzel & D’Aluisio (1998) shows an exotic, erotic image of *the other*.

wide variety of groups in Australia, Indonesia, Japan, China, Thailand, Cambodia, South Africa, Mexico, and Venezuela. This book aims to shock the reader with vivid images of the exotic other (Figure 4.1).

In the introduction to the book Menzel defines his identity in relation to all of the unusual things he has eaten:

I'm not a finicky eater—far from it. As a photographer, I travel a lot, but I never carry an emergency food stash. Wherever I'm working, I eat what everyone else eats: camel in Somalia, monkey in Mexico, dog in Indonesia, live squid in Japan, and blood-filled sheep's bladder in Mongolia... I enjoyed these dishes not so much because of the taste, but because of the surroundings and the people I was eating with. If you find yourself in the bar scene in *Star Wars*, why order a hamburger? (Menzel in Menzel & D'Aluisio 1998).

The tales of this intrepid couple are in a similar vein as the claims of participating in a cannibal feast by Charles “Cannibal” Miller and his wife Leona that I discuss in Chapter One. These texts are examples of what Uma Narayan terms “culinary imperialism” (1995). Many North Americans and Europeans display a shallow interest in exotic ethnic foods, exploit the food of Others to enhance their own prestige and sophistication, and “eat ethnic” without real interest in, or concern for, the cultural contexts of the foods eaten.

There have been several attempts to capitalize on American consumers' fascination with entomophagy. A company called HotLix, which is based in Pismo Beach, California, began producing candy-coated insects in the early 1990s. This company has been fairly successful at marketing its novelty products through stores such as the Smithsonian Museum Gift Shop and the Discovery Channel Store. However, the posh Insect Club in Washington D.C. has not fared as well. This restaurant, which catered to upper-class restaurant goers, was forced to close from lack of business a few years after it opened in 1992.

Many proponents of entomophagy play the Nacirema¹⁹ trope by characterizing North American prohibitions against eating insects as “taboos” that are connected to irrational ideas about supernatural sanctions. In the *Golden Bough*, first published in 1890, Sir James Frazer writes: “...the superstitions of the savage cluster thick about the subject of food; and he abstains from eating many animals and plants, wholesome enough in themselves, which for one reason or another he fancies would prove dangerous or

¹⁹ Miner (1975) published an article titled “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema,” where he described daily American (Nacirema spelled backwards) habits such as tooth brushing in “scientific,” pseudo-anthropological terms.

fatal to the eater” (1929: 238). Describing current North American eating restrictions in the language of 19th century anthropologists does not help us understand our culture. Rather than employ a study of foreign eating restrictions to critique my own culture, my primary task has been to describe Oge Bage Mee culture.

Jake, who provided me with the title of this thesis (“*Saya Makan Sembarang*”), perceptively recognizes that arbitrary cultural restrictions constrain eating. Like many entomophagy advocates, Jake violates traditional eating restrictions and claims to not suffer any natural or supernatural consequences. In Section Two I will explore the full range of Oge Bage Mee explanations of their eating habits. The influence of economic (Chapter 5), linguistic (Chapter 6), social (Chapter 7), and cosmological (Chapter 8) factors on Oge Bage Mee edibles will be discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR: “MEE” IDENTITY

Ethnic food is a cultural category, not a material thing. It can persist over fundamental material changes so long as the feeling of ethnic distinctiveness is valued. Food is a field of action. It is a medium in which other levels of categorization become manifest. It does not lead or follow, but it squarely belongs to whatever action there is. Food choices support political alignments and social opportunities (Douglas 1984: 30)

Before I enter into my discussion of what the Oge Bage Mee eat, I will present a clearer picture of their ethnic identity. The people of Misty Ridge use the name *Mee* to designate their own ethnic group.²⁰ The word *mee* literally means *people* or *human* when used in their language *Mee Mana* (“human words”). However, the use of the term “Mee” to denote this ethnic group creates a degree of ambiguity, since many phonologically distinct languages, spoken by societies that view themselves as culturally distinct, also use the word *mee* to mean human. In this chapter I will review the literature published about “Mee” identity while using patterns of food consumption as a marker for cultural differences.

The word “Mee” is used by people in Misty Ridge in a variety of contexts: it can be an inclusive term for all people indigenous to the western highlands or be used conversely to refer only to members of a restricted group living in the Siriwo Valley, in contrast to the “*Ekari*” who live in the highlands. “Mee” has ambiguous boundaries, but I have chosen it, rather than one of the other bewildering variety of names for this group in the published literature, to emphasize the fact that I am not studying a clearly definable cultural or political unit. It is the only term used in the published literature that the people themselves do not reject as derogatory. My quotation marks around the word “Mee” in the context of this thesis highlight the constructed nature of this category; I am playing an active role in the process of creating “Mee” identity through my use of this term. In this section I will analyze contrasting standards of edibility to demonstrate that the boundary of the “Mee” ethnic group is composed of a complex, overlapping network of concentric identities.

SEMANTICS

Victor Kudiai, an Irianese student who studied “Mee” religion for his undergraduate thesis at UNCEN, directly challenges the legitimacy of the name “Mee” for this ethnic group: “They cannot use the

²⁰ While the dictionary of this language uses the spelling *Me* (Doble 1960), I follow the spelling of Kansus Uwiea, *Kepala Suku Mee* (“Mee Tribal Head”).

name ‘Me’ (human) because other ethnic groups are also human” (1979: 12).²¹ Others have simply dismissed “Mee” constructions of their own identity as irrelevant, and instead employ the derogatory labels of Kapauku or Ekari that are applied by neighboring ethnic groups to these people. The introduction to Doble’s dictionary of the “Mee” language states: “The Kapauku dialects of this dictionary are spoken by approximately 35,000 people calling themselves *Me*, and their language *Me Mana*” (Doble 1960)²².

Kudiai states that he did not use the name Kapauku in his thesis on the grounds that it is insulting: “the word Kapauku means Mountain People or Backwards Mountain People. This name is not well received by this ethnic group because Kapauku connotes someone who is ignorant” (1979: 2). Some interlocutors told me that the name Kapauku means “cannibal.”

Currently, most outsiders refer to the “Mee” as *Ekagi* when speaking Indonesian, or *Ekari* when speaking English or other European languages.²³ According to Kudiai “they [the “Mee”] like the name Ekari rather than Kapauku. The name Ekari is used if they talk or live with other ethnic groups, such as the Moni” (1979: 11).²⁴ Kudiai cites a passage in less than fluent English by Bernard Alex van Nunen in the local *Irian Bulletin* to further support his use of this label:

I am convinced that the term Ekagi is the proper (sic) term to designate (sic) the group which is often spoken of as Kapauku. . . Confusion has perhaps been caused through (sic) ignorance as to the native rules of etiquette (sic) (in Kudiai 1979: 12).

Ironically, it is van Nunen who seems ignorant. All of the “Mee” whom I asked about the word Ekari told me that, like Kapauku, the term is *kasar*, or insulting and rude.²⁵

²¹ The original text reads: [M]ereka tidak bisa memakai nama “Me” (Manusia) karena suku lain juga manusia.

²² Scholars have worked with colonial governments to study and codify languages, so that administrators can use this linguistic knowledge to command the colonized (Cohen 1985). The first dictionary of the *Mee* language was published by Marion Doble in 1960 with the help of a grant from the Government of Netherlands New Guinea. A second “Mee” dictionary, published in 1969 by Steltenpool, is a more detailed work.

²³ Niko Kobepa, a “Mee” linguist who has conducted studies of his mother tongue, suggested to me that the word *Ekari* actually originates from the term that the Moni use for their neighbors. I happened on some archival information that seems to support this. In the back of an unpublished volume called “Ekagi Texts: Myths” that was compiled by a Dutch missionary (Hylkema 1988, Leiden) there is a hand drawn map that illustrates many of the larger “Mee” villages in the highlands. On this map there is an inconspicuous mountain that is labeled as “Ekaugi,” located approximately 20 km east of Lake Tage (Figure 6.1). This mountain is situated directly between Moni and “Mee” territory, so the Moni could have referred to their neighbors as the people who live behind this mountain.

²⁴ The original text reads: [M]ereka sendiri lebih suka memakai nama Ekagi dari pada Kapauku. Nama Ekagi ini dipakai bila mereka berbicara atau tinggal bersama dengan suku lain, misalnya suku Moni.

²⁵ During my first survey trip of potential field sites I was also unaware that this label was derogatory, but several of my Irianese friends at the UNCEN informed me that this name is insulting.

BOUNDARIES

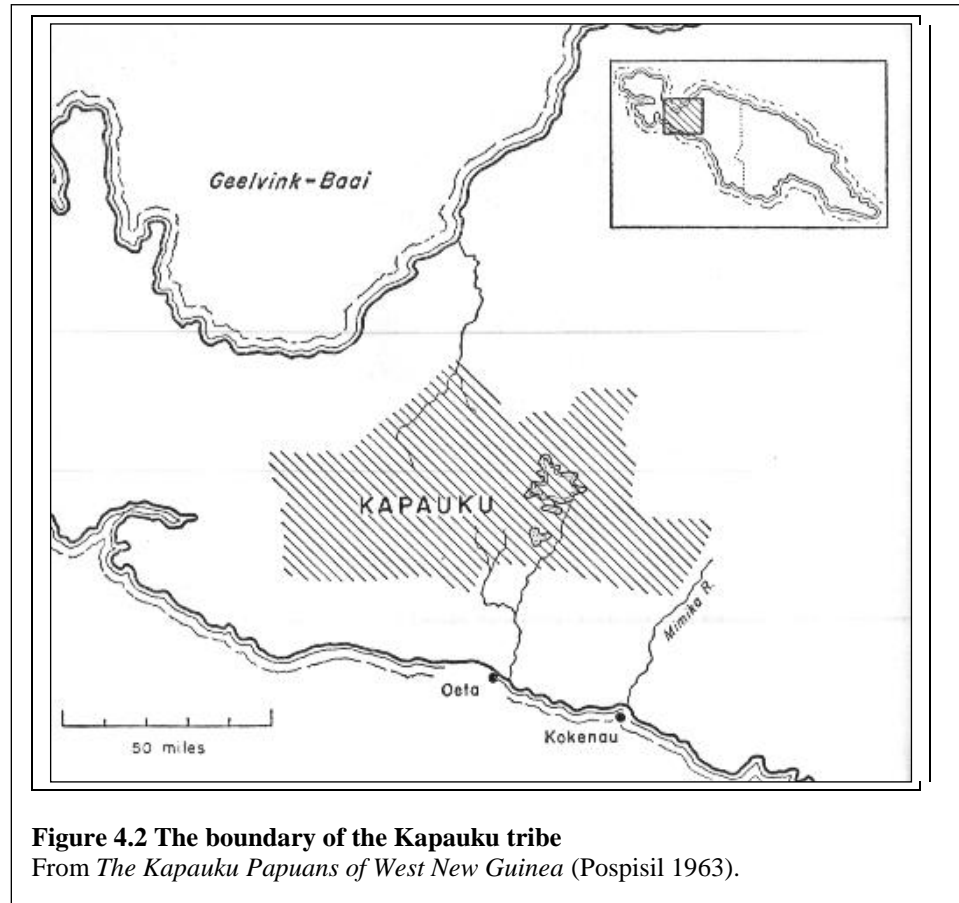
Leopold Pospisil, who arrived in the highlands of New Guinea in 1954, codified the original ethnic categories in this region. Like many other anthropologists of this time period he treated categories such as nation, tribe, and culture as “internally homogenous and externally distinctive and bounded objects” (Wolf in Stoler 1989: 135). Pospisil introduces his widely read monograph, which was published in the *Case Studies in Cultural Anthropology* series, with an ethnic definition that sounds precise and scientific:

The Kapauku²⁶ Papuans are mountain people who belong to one of several tribes whose members inhabit the Central Highlands of Western New Guinea. It is estimated that the number of the Kapauku population approaches 45,000 individuals. They live in a territory situated in the west-central part of the Highlands, located between 135°25' and 137° east longitude and 3°25' and 4°10' south latitude (1965: 1).

The map of the Kapauku that accompanies this definition in Pospisil's text further emphasizes the bounded nature of this group (Figure 4.2). This etic definition was, and still is, meaningless in the terms of the “Mee” themselves. While there has been a published debate about the proper name for the “Mee,” as discussed above, the boundaries of this group have gone unchallenged.

The “Mee” cannot be characterized as a discrete unit. I am not aware of any distinctive food eaten exclusively by the “Mee” who live within the geographical boundaries described by Pospisil, despite numerous foods which are restricted to specific “Mee” sub-groups (see Chapter Six). Other ethnic groups in the western highlands, such as the Auye and the Moni, also use the word *mee* to denote person or human.

²⁶ According to Pospisil, the word *Kapauku* has its origins with people on the south coast of Irian Jaya who were living near the Dutch outpost in Mimika and in the regions of Oeta and Kokenau (1965). The colonizers probably picked this term up from their porters during initial exploratory expeditions and from the approximately 30 people from the south coast who settled at Enarotali (Figure 6.2). Pospisil's most recent publication still employs the name “Kapauku” (Pospisil 1984) even though this word is infrequently heard in Irian Jaya today.



Interlocutors in Misty Ridge frequently say that all of the “Mee” who live in the western highlands share a general identity. This use of the term “Mee” erases the precise boundaries that Pospisil created with his category of Kapauku. Sam told me that all of the “Mee” eat *debe tai* (rotten meat). However, the generalized “Mee” identity, which extends beyond the boundaries created by the colonizers to include other ethnic groups, is more than a simple linguistic phenomenon relating to the distribution of the word *mee* (people). In the same conversation Sam told me that the Dani, who do not use the word *mee* to mean people, also eat *debe tai*. This implies that the Dani have affinities to the “Mee” group. Thus, the boundary delimiting the external edge of the “Mee” ethnicity is extremely fuzzy, in contrast to the geographically delineated unit that Pospisil describes.

While the external boundaries of the “Mee” are loose, there are a myriad of sub-groups within this group who view themselves as being distinct from their neighbors (Figure 4.3). In the Siriwo River Valley there are villages of Auye people and villages of [Ekari] “Mee.” Both groups view themselves as distinct

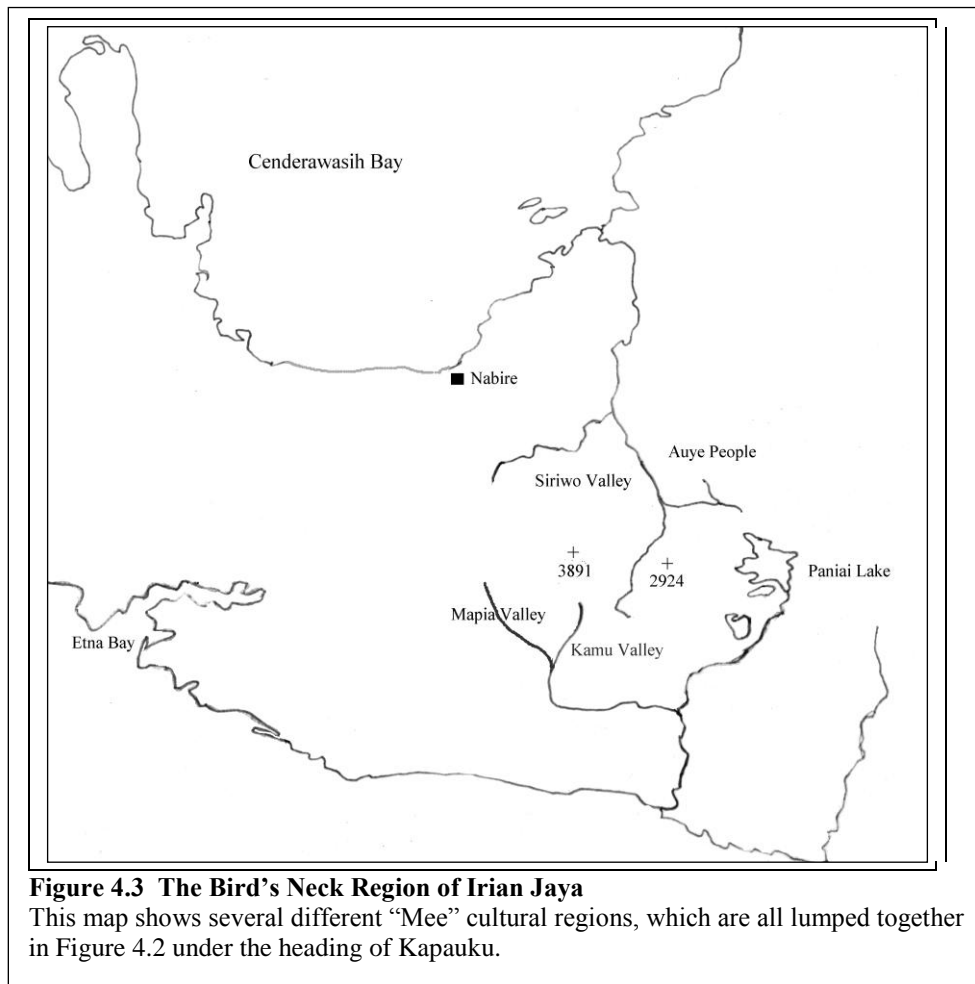
from the other. The Auye cannot marry members of what they call in Indonesian the *Suku Ekagi* (“Ekari Tribe”) due to a supernatural sanction of death that has been in place *dari dahulu* (Indonesian: from the first).²⁷ When one Auye man heard that I was studying food in Misty Ridge he told me that the “Ekari” will eat anything. However, there are several specific food taboos that the “Mee” of Misty Ridge use to talk about their distinctiveness from the Auye. For instance, people in Misty Ridge believe that they would die if they ate the *mino*, *ogapo*, *tebe*, *tede* varieties of snakes. An interlocutor told me that the Auye commonly eat these species. Conversely, *Kopuga* is a type of marsupial that is considered taboo for Auye women to eat, but it is eaten by the women of Misty Ridge.

When the “Mee” of Misty Ridge speak Indonesian they refer to themselves as *Orang Siriwo* (“Siriwo People”), to distinguish themselves from “Mee” who live in the highlands.²⁸ However, this distinction is problematic since the Auye also live in the Siriwo Valley and can also be considered *Orang Siriwo*.

In the context of this thesis the name **Oge Bage Mee** refers specifically to a collection of people living in some 20 villages sparsely scattered in the Siriwo River Valley, which is more than 100 km long. The name Oge Bage Mee distinguishes the people that I studied from the “Mee” who live in the highlands, and it separates them from the Auye, since in the Auye language *oge* means foreign (Mike Moxness, personal communication 1999). In the highland dialects of the “Mee” language, *oge* means hidden or obscured. Until the 1970s there was little contact between highland “Mee” and the Oge Bage Mee (Leopold Pospisil, personal communication 1999). The word *oge* generally refers to the lowlands in the “Mee” dialect spoken in Misty Ridge. The lowlands includes coastal towns as far away as Nabire and Jayapura, and also is used to distinguish among closely related animal species. For example, the northern cassowary (*Casuarius unappendiculatus*) which lives in the lowlands is called *oge bedo* (“bird from the hot lands”), in contrast to the dwarf cassowary (*Casuarius bennetti*), which is called *buda*.

²⁷ Some interlocutors said that if a marriage took place between an Auye individual and a “Mee” individual, members of both ethnic groups would begin dying in alarming numbers.

²⁸ Translating this term into *Mee Mana* is not as straightforward as one might think. The Siriwo River is referred to either as the *Bedu* or the *Degewo*. This is especially confusing to the outside observer since there is another river located more than 50 km to the east which is also known as the *Degewo*. Thus, the people can refer to themselves as *Degewo Bage* or *Bedu Bage* to designate that they are the ethnic group from the Siriwo River Valley.



The classification system of the edible world into *isu*, *woda*, *doge*, and *bedo* that I present in Chapter Five is unique to the Oge Bage Mee. However, this classification system can be understood in a regional context. The Jabi-Mee, who live near Etna Bay (Figure 4.3), use the word *ihu* for fish (Walker 1985, unpublished manuscript). This is phonologically similar to the Siriwo word *isu*, referring to the edible category of grasshoppers, katydids, and mantids.²⁹ Highland "Mee" in Mapia, Kamu, and Paniai do not consider most grasshoppers, katydids, and mantids to be edible, but it appears that the Oge Bage Mee have appropriated an edible category from the highlands and applied it to a new group of organisms.³⁰ The distinctive categorization of *isu* can in part be explained by biogeography. Grasshoppers are more

²⁹ Linguistic differences among the different "Mee" sub-groups are presented in Appendix B.

³⁰ As the reader will recall from Chapter Four, the Oge Bage Mee also eat fish, but they categorize them as *doge* along with tadpoles and frogs.

abundant in the lowlands than they are in the highlands. However, this abundance was probably a relatively minor trigger in a creative cultural process.

Pospisil's original category of Kapauku, which is cited above, includes the people of Paniai, Mapia, Kamu, and Siriwo (Figure 4.3). The people of Misty Ridge make many distinctions among each of these "Mee" subgroups. Indeed, it can be said that each group has a distinct language, clan names, political affiliations, and beliefs about the world.

There are a variety of foods that are consumed by the "Mee" in either Paniai, Kamu, or Mapia, but that are not eaten by the Oge Bage Mee: pandanus fruit, mole crickets, water striders, crickets, crayfish, and cicadas. Some of these prohibitions are explained simply by the fact that the *Orang Tua* (Indonesian: Old People) told them that these foods were prohibited. One example of this is the large red pandanus fruit, which is utilized as an important food resource by most "Mee" and other ethnic groups in Irian Jaya. The "Mee" of Misty Ridge say that they would become sick if they violated this prohibition of the *Orang Tua*.

Other regional foods which are not eaten in Misty Ridge have more elaborate emic explanations. "Mee" in the Kamu Valley regularly eat *koga*, or crickets (Pospisil 1972), but, as will be further discussed in Chapter Eight, Oge Bage Mee believe that *koga* are the agents of wicked *tene* (departed shadows of deceased humans or dogs). In Mapia Valley the "Mee" recognize five varieties of edible cicadas: *kagaitege* (*Cosmopsaltria aurata*), *pepatege* (*C. papuensis*), *uwaitege* (*C. signata*), *enijatege* (*C. gigantea occidentalis*), and *waine* (*C. waine*). Additionally, two types of cicada are recognized as inedible by the Mapia "Mee": *dipi* (a small variety of *C. papuensis*), and *ditege* (including *C. personata* and *Baeturia arabuensis*) (Duffels & Mastrigt 1991). Oge Bage Mee lump all cicadas into the category of *tege*, which they consider to be inedible. In Misty Ridge I collected two cicada species: *Cosmopsaltria doryca* Boisduval and *Baeturia bicolorata* Blote.³¹ It is unlikely that these species are toxic when eaten by humans since *Cosmopsaltria* species are eaten in the highlands (Duffels & Mastrigt 1991), and *B. bicolorata* is eaten by an ethnic group in Papua New Guinea (Arnold de Boer, personal communication 1999). The reason that cicadas are not eaten by the Oge Bage Mee is because of beliefs that are unique among the other "Mee" groups. As will be further discussed in Chapter Eight, the Oge Bage Mee believe that cicadas harbor *tene* (departed shadows) that are helpful to humans.

³¹ Hans Duffels and Arnold Boer identified these cicadas.

Inou (crayfish) are a major source of animal protein in Kamu (Pospisil 1972), but in Siriwo they are considered to be inedible. People of Misty Ridge sometimes sell crayfish to people from Kamu who pass along the road. Mary, who was from a village near Monamoni and had married someone from Siriwo, told me that she eats *inou* when she is in the highlands, but when she is in Siriwo she goes along with everyone else in avoiding them. In contrast, Julianus, who was also from near Monamoni and who is on assignment in Misty Ridge with the government health department, eats the crayfish in Siriwo. Julianus asserts his distinctiveness by continuing to eat an unusual food, while Mary emphasizes her identity as a resident in Misty Ridge by conforming to local standards of edibility.

CONCLUSION

Mary Steedly maintains that identity is “fabricated all the way down” and that there is no essential core to a person or to an ethnic group (personal communication, 1998). Indeed, I as have demonstrated above, the “Mee” are not a concrete ethnic unit. People in Misty Ridge identify with multiple groups on different scales of organization. Furthermore, the name of the ethnic group to which the people of Misty Ridge belong is context dependent. No single label can be unambiguously applied to these people. The consumption of different foods by competing “Mee” cultural groups demonstrates that there is regional variation among these people.

CHAPTER FIVE SUBSISTENCE AND ECOLOGY

Peoples who foraged for all or a substantial part of their livelihood were conceived to be the dregs of humankind in the Age of Expansion and its colonial consolidation. Subsequently, after a period of agreement with this assessment, anthropologists found them to be not the dregs but the distillation of human essence. In both metaphors, however, they are sediment—at the bottom of the barrel (Wilmsen 1989: vii).

In *Adaptive Strategies*, a widely read textbook on cultural ecology, Bates and Plog (1991) class living societies, both past and present, according to five different means for procuring food: hunting and gathering, horticulture, pastoralism, intensive agriculture, and industrial society. These labels also appear as sequential chapter headings in their book. The order of these chapters is no coincidence; as with Morgan's 19th Century models of evolution from savagery to barbarism to civilization, the sequential ordering of different subsistence strategies implies a linear evolution from simple to complex (1988).

While it seems that the same linear, anagenetic³² framework is used in every model of agricultural evolution, the names of each of the category are in continual dispute. For example, in the second edition of *Adaptive Strategies* (Bates 1998), societies are typed as: foraging, subsistence agriculture, pastoralism, intensive agriculture, and industrial agriculture. Thus, in just seven years the terms for these categories have changed in a major textbook. Netting presents a competing semantic system in *Cultural Ecology* (1986), which is divided into chapters about hunter gathers, fishermen, pastoralists, and cultivators. Independent of the particular labels that are used, it is important to note that the categorization of contemporary societies continues to be a widespread practice in theories of culture change.

In this chapter I aim to demonstrate that models of agricultural evolution do not help us understand how *contemporary* societies adapt to their environment. Instead, they are blinders to studying change in these societies, as with models of social evolution in insects (Wcislo 1997). I will show how the

³² A pattern of evolution that results in linear directed change from simpler forms to more complex in response to forces of natural selection.

Oge Bage Mee utilize a diverse array of strategies for procuring and processing their food and cannot be simply classified by a single type of subsistence strategy.

This chapter consists of five different sections which describe how the subsistence practices of the people of Misty Ridge fit into *each* of the following categories: animal husbandry, gardening, silviculture, hunting and gathering, and cash economy. Rather than organize these sections according to an etic classification system, such as the evolutionary models of agriculture described above, I attempt to order the sections in an emic sequence that would make sense to the Oge Bage Mee themselves. The sections of this chapter are presented in a concentric sequence, rather than a stratified hierarchy, according to their relationship to the domestic space of the village of Misty Ridge. The sections will proceed from animal husbandry, which takes place in the village itself, to interactions with the industrial cash economy that take place in the most distant and abstract spheres of interaction.

The order of the sections in this chapter is not related to the economic or nutritional importance of different subsistence strategies in Oge Bage Mee society, but to their spatial location in relation to the village of Misty Ridge. Indeed, it would be difficult to even measure the relative importance of different strategies. Should one measure the amount of time spent at a particular task, the area of land devoted to each crop, the number of calories of each type of food that is consumed, or the amount of protein supplied by each food source? Any one measure is insufficient in itself; each food item eaten by the Oge Bage Mee can be considered to have importance. My aim is to present a unified view of all of the strategies employed by the Oge Bage Mee to adapt to their environment. I conclude the chapter by integrating archaeological and ecological data to discuss how Oge Bage Mee subsistence strategies have changed over time, and how the present combination of strategies allows the Oge Bage Mee to be successful in a world with rapidly changing contingencies.

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

In Misty Ridge three animals are raised for food: pigs (*Sus scrofa*), ducks (Anatidae), and chickens (*Gallus domesticus*). The lives of these domesticated animals are largely confined to the village. Because of this physical proximity to the places where people carry out most of their daily activities, animal



Figure 5.1 A domesticated pig

This portrait was taken just before the pig was killed with an arrow through the heart in preparation for a Christmas feast. Note the wooden pen in the background.

husbandry can be considered to be a central subsistence activity in the daily experience of the Oge BageMee

Piglets have dark skin and thick black bristles and are carried around by the women in their *agaisa* (net bags). At this stage in their lives, pigs are treated like pets. An anthropologist working on the south coast of New Guinea writes that pigs are given far better care as compared to dogs (van Baal 1966). As pigs age, their snouts elongate, bristles grow stiff, bellies enlarge, and legs grow strong (Figure 5.1). They

turn from loved pets into powerful and dangerous creatures. In Misty Ridge, adult pigs are kept in fenced enclosures which are usually adjacent to people's homes.

Since the arrival of pigs in New Guinea approximately 10,000 years ago (Powell 1982), pig husbandry has become an economic mainstay for highland societies (Heider 1997; Cook 1995; Rappaport 1984; Brown 1978; Koch 1974). Pospisil states that "the importance of pigs in ["Mee"] culture can hardly be overemphasized" (1972: 203), and that a single individual may own upwards of 100 pigs. However, pigs are not an economic mainstay in Misty Ridge, which is located in the foothills at an elevation of about 500 feet. During my stay only one household raised pigs and only two pigs were present in the village at any one time.

In the highlands the human population density is high and gardens are small, intensively-cultivated plots that are fenced to keep foraging pigs from destroying crops. In contrast, gardens in Misty Ridge are extensive, since the population is low and there is no shortage of agricultural land. These gardens are not fenced in, and since their perimeters are so long it would involve a great amount of labor to protect them from pigs. Thus, people in Misty Ridge must generally keep their pigs in enclosures so that they do not destroy the unfenced gardens. This places the great burden of feeding the pigs solely on the

shoulders of the human caretakers. Each pig requires approximately 5 kg. a day of sweet potatoes or other tubers (Pospisil 1972); a considerable amount of labor is involved in the gathering, transport, and preparation of this food.

Despite the relative scarcity of pigs in Misty Ridge, pork was frequently eaten during the period of my fieldwork. Twelve of 72 meals that I recorded while in Misty Ridge included chunks of pig meat, fat, or internal organs.³³ Each time a pig was killed a glut of meat was available.

Butchering a pig is a lively affair involving most community members (Figure 3.4). Stones are heated on a large fire and then are used to cook the meat. A cooking mound is built by layering stones, banana leaves, pork, tubers, and tree fern fronds. After the mound is built the atmosphere in the village becomes calm again for over an hour as the pile slowly steams. When the mound is opened excitement again runs high. Pig meat is given to each member of the village during the feast that takes place after the cooking mound is opened; everyone has the opportunity to stuff themselves. The meat that remains after the initial feast is distributed to kin, to households that give money, or to creditors who expect payment from a longer term reciprocal obligation.

Meat that is not eaten within a day or two of the butchering is carefully prepared for long-term storage through an elaborate process.³⁴ First it is smoked on a rack over the hearth for many hours so that it is extremely dry. Next the meat is wrapped in leaves. If someone has hot hands the meat will quickly become *debetai* (wet), so ideally one should seek someone who has cold hands to wrap the meat.³⁵ The wrapped bundles are then stored either in a small hut that is built in the forest or in a pit that is dug in the ground. Up to several months later the meat is reclaimed and eaten. In Oge Bage Mee there is not a word that is equivalent to the English notion of *rotten* or the analogous Indonesian word *busuk*. Instead the meat is described as *debetai* (wet) or sometimes as *ipi* (pungent). When the meat bundles are first opened after several months of storage the meat is either covered with a white fuzz or it is gelatinous.

³³ I recorded the contents of each meal that I had during my second month-long trip to Misty Ridge. The composition of these meals may be different from the diet of other people who lived in Misty Ridge at the same time due to how my hosts perceived my own tastes for different foods.

³⁴ All types of wild meat (i.e. woda, bedo, and doge) can be stored this way but domesticated fowl cannot.

³⁵ As far as I am aware the designations of “hot” or “cold” hand are used literally to refer to their temperature.

When I asked interlocutors if the “rotten” meat makes them sick they consistently replied that, on the contrary, it is used as a medicine.³⁶ It does not cause them to vomit or to have diarrhea, but they say that it kills bad things that are living in the intestinal tract. The process of preparing the meat provides a selective filter for only specific types of microorganisms (Cassens 1994). Most organisms are killed outright during the initial process of cooking the meat. Smoking the meat dehydrates it and places a protective film of volatile chemicals around it from the smoke (Davies and Board 1988). The few microorganisms that make it through the selective filter of preparation then compete with one another over the meat resource. When the meat is recooked after being taken out of storage the microorganisms are again killed and most large molecules that would be potential toxins are denatured. However, many bacteria produce small, heat-stable molecules called bacterocins that have broad antibiotic properties that could survive the heating process (Davies and Board 1994). These molecules could be what is responsible for the antibiotic properties of *debetai* meat.

Chickens and ducks are the only other animals that are reared domestically in Misty Ridge. At night they are kept in cages and small coops located near people’s houses, and during the day they are set free to forage in the yard. Chickens were introduced to the highlands in the 1940s; when Pospisil began field work in the isolated Kamu valley in 1955 several people were already raising chickens and those who did not yet own chickens coveted them (1972). The household where I lived during most of my time in Misty Ridge had 13 chickens. I did not observe anyone eating chicken eggs, and chicken meat was eaten at only three out of the 72 meals. Ducks were recently brought to the Oge Bage Mee by an Indonesian government development agency. While ducks have also been readily incorporated into the Oge Bage Mee inventory of domesticated animals, they are not valued to the same extent as chickens. Several people commented that duck meat is dry and stringy compared with chicken. This could mean that the ducks are not properly fed (Anthony Andrews, personal communication).

GARDENING

While food plants are found scattered throughout the village of Misty Ridge, most cultivation takes place in gardens located five to twenty minutes walking time from the village. Gardens are removed

³⁶ Indeed I ate some and did not become sick.

| Oge Bage Mee | Latin | English | Indonesian |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|------------|
| <i>botisi</i> | Leguminosae | beans | buncis |
| <i>dita</i> | <i>Capsicum frutescens</i> | chili pepper | cabe |
| <i>eto</i> | <i>Saccharum officinarum</i> | sugar cane | tebu |
| <i>jagun</i> | <i>Zea maize</i> | corn | jagung |
| <i>magekokaga, kachan</i> | <i>Arachis hypogaea</i> | peanuts | kacang |
| <i>mote</i> | <i>Dioscorea alata</i> | greater yam | ubi kai |
| <i>nakakidu</i> | Cucurbitaceae | squashes | labu |
| <i>nomo</i> | <i>Colocasia esculenta</i> | taro | keladi |
| <i>nota, tidipo, noma</i> | <i>Ipomoea batatas</i> | sweet potato | ubi jalur |
| <i>tawa</i> | <i>Nicotiana spp.</i> | tobacco | tembakau |
| <i>timuge</i> | <i>Manihot esculenta</i> | cassava, manioc | sinkong |

Table 5.1 Names of garden crops in Misty Ridge

Note: As will be further discussed in Chapter Six, these names in different languages do not necessarily map on to the same categories of organisms.

from the cultured area of the village proper; beyond their boundaries lies natural old growth forest. The cultivation of a variety of tubers and vegetables (Table 5.1) in these gardens produces a large proportion of the food that is consumed in Misty Ridge.

“Mee” highlanders utilize three different types of gardens: lowland swidden³⁷ gardens, mountain swidden gardens, and intensive cultivation in valleys (Pospisil 1972). Both types of swidden gardens can be characterized as involving extensive cultivation with a minimal input of effort, while the intensive cultivation involves irrigation, composting, and crop rotation. The Oge Bage Mee of Misty Ridge only have a single type of extensive lowland swidden garden plots.

Gardens in Misty Ridge are complex and wild as compared to North American gardens, which are arranged with neat rows in geometrical patterns. For example, the picture of Sam’s garden in Figure 5.2 looks unkempt and full of weeds to a western eye. However, a closer look reveals that each plant in the foreground of this picture is edible. In this part of Sam’s garden there are bananas (*Musa spp.*), cacao (*Theobroma cacao*), cassava (*Manihot esculenta*), taro (*Colocasia esculenta*), sweet potatoes (*Ipomoea batatas*), and sugar cane (*Saccharum spp.*).

Most of the new garden plots that were cleared during my stay in Misty Ridge had previously been used for gardening, but had been allowed to turn fallow. Interlocutors were inconsistent in their responses to questions about the length of fallow cycles, but the trees on the new plots that were being cleared often

³⁷ Swidden agriculture, also known as slash and burn farming, involves clearing the trees and brush on a garden plot through controlled fires. The most sustainable forms of swidden agriculture involve a fallow cycle, which varies in length depending on the local micro-climate.



Figure 5.2 Sam's garden

This picture shows complex inter-cropping of bananas (*Musa* spp.), cacao (*Theobroma cacao*), cassava (*Manihot esculenta*), taro (*Colocasia esculenta*), sweet potatoes (*Ipomoea batatas*), and sugar cane (*Saccharum* spp.).

reached 20 to 30 feet in height, suggesting that the plots had been abandoned for at least 10 to 20 years. One of the primary motives for reusing fallow plots, rather than clearing entirely new ones, is that it is extremely difficult to clear primary rain forest. Alex is the only person in Misty Ridge who owns a chain saw, and this machine only rarely worked while I was there. The only other tools for clearing garden plots are metal axes and machetes.

The low population of Misty Ridge and the abundant land surrounding the village are also important factors which promote swidden agriculture.

Since clearing a plot of trees and shrubs is strenuous, tedious work, garden owners usually recruit a group of friends to lend a hand with the project. Traditionally, this is a predominantly male activity. The work is frequently done for little immediate payback, other than food and drink while it is being completed, but delayed reciprocity is expected. However, some residents of Misty Ridge arranged more explicit contracts. Mike, a middle-aged widower with a house in another village, helped Alex clear his garden in exchange for a place to live and cash wages. Pospisil (1972) reports that highland "Mee" also pay wages to laborers to clear gardens.

Once the non-fruit trees and brush have been cut down they are gathered into piles. The piles are lit on fire after they have been allowed to dry in the sun for a week or two (Figure 5.3). Much has been recently written by environmental activists about how "slash-and-burn" farming can destroy the rainforest (Bates 1998). This may indeed be the case in other areas of Irian Jaya where Javanese transmigrants have clear-cut huge swaths of old-growth rainforest which are frequently abandoned after a few growing seasons. However, Bates (1998) asserts that knowledge about certain features of the environment allows small societies to sustainably employ swidden farming. The Oge Bage Mee have this knowledge about different types of soils, about the demands of different plants, and about the microclimates of their habitat.

Furthermore, the fires that are used to help clear garden plots are contained to the piles of brush and trees and I did not once witness a fire that burned out of control into the surrounding forest.

After the garden plot has been cleared the new crops are usually planted quickly thereafter. Each of the crops in Table 5.1 has distinct microhabitat requirements, growing habits, and nutritional yields. These

characteristics of the plants profoundly influence the daily activities of the Oge Bage Mee.

Sweet potatoes (*Ipomoea batatas*) are crops in most areas of Melanesia (Scaglione & Soto 1994; Rappaport 1984), and have been referred to as “the most important food plant in Papua New Guinea” (French 1996: 3). This crop has long creeping vines and produces elongated tubers near the surface of the soil with red skin and white edible flesh. In Misty Ridge sweet potatoes are the most frequently consumed food. Sweet potatoes were served as a staple at the majority of the meals that I attended (40 out of 72 recorded meals). The tubers are boiled in pots of water or baked in the coals of the fire. In each 100 g of edible tuber there are 108-115 calories and 1-1.2 g of protein (French 1996: 2). As mentioned above, sweet potatoes are also an integral part of Oge Bage Mee animal husbandry since they are used as the primary fodder for pigs.

The planting, weeding, harvesting, cleaning, and cooking of sweet potatoes accounts for a large proportion of the daily activities of women and children (Figures 5.4 and 5.5). Sweet potatoes are planted in new plots with fresh cuttings which spread rapidly. While this work is tedious and often strenuous, it produces a large proportion of the food in the Oge Bage Mee diet.

The variety of names for sweet potatoes that are used by the Oge Bage Mee attest to knowledge about different strains. General names that can be applied to all varieties of *I. batatas* include *nota*, *nuta*, *noma*, and *tidipo*. There are also several distinct sweet potato cultivar varieties: *tewemo*, *dani nota*, *tide nota*, *tago mani*, *dade nota*, and *awi mato*. These different types of potatoes are based on observable



Figure 5.3 Preparing a garden plot
Cleared brush and trees are burned in small controlled fires. Note that the banana trees from a previous garden on this site are allowed to stand.

phenotypic characteristics such as skin color, flesh texture, taste, tuber shape, and crop productivity. This diverse set of names demonstrates that the Oge Bage Mee have an acute awareness of the properties of their food plants, and suggests that they may selectively plant the most desirable crops. Oge Bage Mee are able to choose vine cuttings from the preferred strain for planting in new garden plots.

Taro (*Colocasia esculenta*) is a staple root crop that has probably been in New Guinea for longer than sweet potatoes (Scaglione & Soto 1994; White & O'Connell 1982), but it is not eaten as frequently as sweet potatoes in Misty Ridge. Only two of the 72 meals that I recorded featured taro as a staple. Tubers are peeled and then baked in the coals of fires. Taro contains more protein but fewer calories than sweet potatoes. Each 100 g of edible tuber contains approximately 94 calories and 2.2 g of protein (French 1996: 3).

Taro is planted by making a hole with a digging stick in a freshly prepared garden plot and then transplanting a sucker into the hole. Pospisil (1962; 1972) reports that the planting of taro is exclusively done by women. While this was generally the case in Misty Ridge, I observed Alex plant a taro garden without any help from his wife.

Cassava was "introduced" to the New Guinea highlands in the mid 20th century by the Dutch Colonial Administration in an "endeavor to better the nutrition of the natives" (Pospisil 1972: 109). This plant was readily incorporated into the "Mee" inventory of cultigens and it was initially given the name of *pija nota* (tree sweet potato) because of the woody stem of the plant. Interestingly, the tubers are actually

less nutritious than sweet potatoes or taro, having only about 1 g of protein, while the leaves of cassava have an extremely high protein content of 7-10.5 g per 100 grams (French 1996: 16). The Dutch Administration promoted the consumption of the tuber, but the "Mee" have adapted this plant so that it is the most useful to them. In Misty Ridge cassava greens are eaten twice as frequently as the tubers.

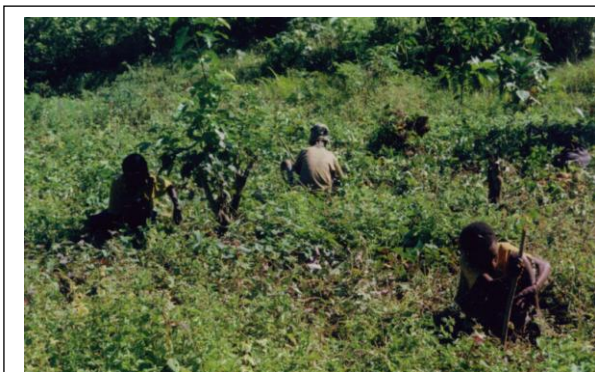


Figure 5.4 Digging for sweet potatoes
A group of children and a woman search for sweet potatoes with fire hardened digging sticks.

Pospisil reports that corn was introduced around the same time as cassava, but he does not report the presence of peanuts (1972). Both of these crops are currently grown in Misty Ridge in extensive patches, but they are eaten primarily as snacks and most of the harvest is exported to the city. Chili peppers were also adopted as food plants by the “Mee” relatively recently, and serve a minor role in the diet as condiments.

Like these recently introduced crops, sugar cane occupies a relatively minor role in the diet of the people of “Misty Ridge.” This



Figure 5.5 Washing sweet potatoes
A woman and her daughter wash dirt from freshly harvested tubers while squatting in a

crop, which has become an important commodity in global markets, is believed to be indigenous to New Guinea (Lapedes 1977). In Misty Ridge it is frequently eaten as a snack by people as they work in their gardens or gather edibles in the nearby streams, fallow fields, and forests. The stalk of the cane is cut with a machete and then the outer skin is peeled to reveal juicy, stringy pulp. A sweet refreshing drink is to be had by chewing and sucking on the pulp. Pospisil reports that the sugar cane crop is second only to single-crop sweet potato gardens in importance in the Kamu Valley economy (1972). While this may be true in terms of the amount of land that is devoted to the cultivation of this crop, sugar cane is not a major source of nutrients. There are only 67 calories and 0.2 g of protein per 100 g of edible cane (French 1996: 202).

SILVICULTURE

Trees³⁸ are an important source of food in Misty Ridge, despite the inattention that researchers in the highlands of New Guinea have given to silviculture. In addition to over 20 species of fruiting trees that grow wild in the forest, there are a variety of trees which are cultivated in Misty Ridge (Table 5.2).³⁹ The distribution of cultivated fruit trees blurs the boundary between nature and culture: they are found in areas

³⁸ “Mee” recognize the category of *pisa*, which is virtually identical to the category of tree in the English language. This functional category groups together a large number of plants that have disparate phylogenetic origins, but generally share the habits of being perennial, having a woody stem, and growing to a relatively tall height.

³⁹ There are few swamplands near Misty Ridge, which would support the cultivation of the important New Guinea lowland staple of sago palm (*Metroxylon sagu*).

| Oge Bage Mee | Latin | English | Indonesian |
|---------------|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| <i>bi</i> | <i>Pandanus conoideus</i> | pandanus fruit | buah merah |
| <i>mapi</i> | <i>Musa spp.</i> | banana, plantain | pisang |
| <i>nenas</i> | <i>Ananas comosus</i> | pineapple | nenas |
| <i>ogi</i> | <i>Artocarpus spp.</i> | breadfruit, jack fruit | nangka |
| <i>soklat</i> | <i>Theobroma cacao</i> | cacao | cacao, coklat |
| <i>tagipo</i> | ? | ? | matoa |
| <i>tene</i> | <i>Carica papaya</i> | papaya | pepaya |
| <i>тино</i> | <i>Citrus spp.</i> | lemon, limes | jeruk asam |
| <i>tuda</i> | <i>Averrhoa carambola</i> | star fruit, carambola | ketimon |

Table 5.2 Fruit trees in Misty Ridge

that range from the carefully tended space surrounding houses to wild garden plots that have been allowed to grow fallow.

Bananas⁴⁰ (*Musa paradisiaca*) could be considered second to sweet potatoes in terms of their importance in the diet of the people in Misty Ridge. They are frequently eaten as snacks and also formed a major component of cooked meals; bananas were served as staples in 29 of the 72 meals that I recorded. North Americans are resistant to the idea of bananas being a staple food. Yet there is evidence from societies around the world that bananas can be a primary staple food (French 1996; Chagnon 1983).

People of Misty Ridge eat bananas raw or they prepare bananas by baking them in the coals, boiling them in water, or frying them in cooking oil bought in the city. Each banana fruit contains about 112 calories, 0.9 g of protein, 18 mg of calcium, and 475 g of vitamin A per 100 g. The purplish-red male flowers of some strains are also eaten and they compliment the nutritional value of the fruits with 26 calories, 1.6 g of protein, 37 mg of calcium, and 170 g of vitamin A per 100 g (French 1996: 25).

Most North Americans are familiar with the fewer than five varieties of *Musa* that are available in mainstream supermarkets. However, there are at least 23 types of bananas cultivated in Misty Ridge.⁴¹ These different strains differ in terms of the size & length of the fruit, the size of the seeds, sweetness, and texture. As discussed above in relation to sweet potatoes, it is highly likely that the Oge Bage Mee selectively propagate banana varieties that are most valued. Since edible varieties of bananas are seedless and can only reproduce asexually through suckers (Lapedes 1977), the Oge Bage Mee have a high degree of genetic control over this plant. They can select for desired characteristics by transplanting suckers from

⁴⁰ Bananas are explicitly mentioned in the *Random House Dictionary* (1968) under the entry for "tree" as a non-woody, herbaceous plant that fits this definition. The "Mee" also consider bananas to be *pisa*.

⁴¹ These types are *sogoni, kaba, amaibo, pitoke, kuwaiso, ebena, awape, ibowge, kudo, nonisai, kugow, tope, sigikago, iboguwaiso, segeme, puu, tumi, gaisa, pode dege dogi, popo, kogudaki, and saminai*.

strains that have those characters into new gardens. The characteristics are not diluted through sexual recombination.

Papaya fruits, like sugar cane, are frequently eaten as snacks by people as they work in their gardens. In addition to the nutritive component of papaya fruits, the leaves of the papaya tree are used as a medicine for the prevention of malaria. This use of papaya is widespread throughout Irian Jaya and even in the cities people will eat papaya leaves as a weekly malaria prophylactic. The leaves are prepared by cutting them up into fine pieces and then boiling them in water. After the leaves have been boiling for about five minutes they are drained and fresh water is added. The water is drained to remove toxins from the leaves. When the leaves have boiled a second time they are drained again and served as part of a meal.

The fruit of trees other than bananas and papaya serve only as infrequent snacks, or in the case of cacao, as products which are exported. Nuts of the pandanus tree, which are eaten throughout the highlands of New Guinea, are considered to be inedible by the people of Misty Ridge. Interlocutors spoke of supernatural sanctions of death if they violated this eating restriction.

In addition to directly supplying humans with food, fruit trees have the added asset of attracting game animals. It is common practice to stay awake on full moons to shoot large fruit bats as they come to feed on the fruits of banana and papaya trees.

HUNTING AND GATHERING

The Oge Bage Mee utilize a bewildering variety of hunting and gathering methods. I have grouped these practices together under a single heading since they all involve techniques for the direct exploitation of food resources from *alam* (Indonesian: the natural world). Unlike each of the Oge Bage Mee subsistence strategies that I have described thus far in this chapter, hunting and gathering does not involve the manipulation of the environment to produce more food. Hunting and gathering takes place in wild, uncultured areas surrounding Misty Ridge. Thus, it is located further from the central cultural life of the Oge Bage Mee than gardening, silviculture, and animal husbandry. However, the raucous din of katydids and grasshoppers at night and the occasional unlucky rat that wanders into someone's house are reminders of the prominence of the natural world in the lives of the Oge Bage Mee.

While the natural world is the source of a plethora of food resources, it is also a place of danger populated by poisonous snakes, malevolent spirits, and wild animals. Many people in Misty Ridge were frightened to venture directly into the old growth rainforest surrounding the village and would do most of their hunting and gathering on the periphery of their safe cultured world, along the government road or at the edges of their gardens. To say that hunting and gathering takes place at a distance from cultural life does not mean that these foods are unimportant in the Oge Bage Mee diet. Nineteen items served during the 72 recorded meals were procured by hunting and gathering. A much greater proportion of the Oge Bage Mee diet might be derived from hunting and gathering, but this may have escaped my records because these food items are highly valued and could have been eaten on the sly as quick snacks. Thus, the information presented in this section is a minimum baseline for the amount of hunted and gathered food in Misty Ridge.

Hunting and gathering provides resources for making material goods, in addition to directly supplying people with food. The string for weaving *agaisa* (net bags) comes from the bark of a tree that grows wild in the forest. Bamboo, which is gathered from stands more than 10 km from Misty Ridge, is used to make tools that range from arrow tips to cooking tongs. Traditionally, almost all important resources were harvested directly from the forest. However, since the construction of the road many of these items have been replaced by imports.

There is a division of hunting and gathering labor along gender lines. Men hunt and trap *bedo* (birds and bats), *woda* (marsupials and rats), and other large vertebrates, while women primarily collect *isu* (grasshoppers, preying mantids and katydids) and plant foods.⁴² In Chapter Seven I will discuss gender specific eating restrictions that are connected to these means of production, as well as techniques of fishing for *doge* (fish and frogs), which are used by both sexes.

Pospisil (1972) has already described the traditional hunting and gathering practices by the highlands, “Mee” in careful detail. Since I observed very similar practices among the Oge Bage Mee I will only present a simplified overview of these practices.

Much hunting is done spontaneously as men encounter animals while going about their daily routine. Men carry bows and arrows with them nearly every time they leave the village and quickly begin

⁴² The taxonomy of these categories will be discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

pursuit if they happen to spot an animal. A single hunter will pursue small animals such as rats, lizards, snakes, cuscuses, bandicoots, tree kangaroos, wallabies, possums, and forest chickens.⁴³ If a larger, more dangerous, animal such as a cassowary or a wild boar is encountered, however, a hunter will usually try to enlist others to help with the pursuit. Dogs are used to help detect and chase game animals. Hunters will frequently let the dogs engage the prey in a fight before moving in for the kill. Dogs are frequently injured either by the prey animal or by a stray arrow from the hunter. The Oge Bage Mee view dogs as expendable and they are only rarely given even gristly remains from animals that they helped catch.

A variety of arrow types are manufactured for hunting different kinds of animals. The arrow shaft is made out of a hollow reed which can be fit with a variety of tips. For hunting boars and cassowaries, bamboo-tipped arrows with a single point and a wide blade are generally used. A popular tip for smaller animals is made out of a hard type of wood and has three prongs that are pointed. Animals are rarely killed outright after being hit with a single arrow. Once the animal is wounded the hunter must track it until he can finish it off.

Recently the *Kepala Desa* (Indonesian: Village Head) of Misty Ridge bought an air rifle in the city.⁴⁴ This new technology has greatly increased the amount of birds and small game that can be procured by hunters. While the men of Misty Ridge are highly skilled at shooting bows and arrows, the technology is of limited accuracy at longer distances.

Setting spring traps in the forest allows hunters to catch game ranging from small rats and birds to wild boars and cassowaries. Once fresh trails or feces of an animal are located in the forest a hunter will set up a series of traps. A noose is attached to a long flexible pole which is firmly planted in the earth. The pole is bent toward the ground and secured in a complex platform of sticks that serve as a trigger for the trap. The noose is laid across the platform of sticks, so that when the trap is triggered the pole will spring up, jerking the noose around the animal's leg and dragging it up into the air.

As will be discussed further in Chapter Seven, hunting and trapping are frequently pursued as a form of recreation rather than as a steady source of calories. Only six of 72 recorded meals that were

⁴³

Cuscuses and bandicoots are two marsupial tribes that are not familiar to North American readers. Cuscuses are fuzzy arboreal insectivores that are primarily nocturnal. Bandicoots are small rat-like animals that are primarily ground dwelling.

⁴⁴ It is prohibited for civilians in Indonesia to possess any weapons that use bullets propelled by gunpowder. Since this "rifle" is powered by air pressure it is permitted.

spread out over 15 days contained meat which had been procured through hunting, trapping, or fishing. However, when a large animal is successfully killed it is an exciting time since everyone gets to share in the wealth. When a single pig was trapped during my first trip to Misty Ridge, it provided enough meat for a village-wide feast in addition to meat to last each individual household for several days.

Both men and women collect a variety of insects, and other terrestrial arthropods, which are eaten raw as snacks. The varieties of edible true bugs (Hemiptera), ants and wasps (Hymenoptera), beetles (Coleoptera), butterfly caterpillars and pupa (Lepidoptera), spiders (Araneae), and dragonfly larvae (Odonata) will be described in detail in Chapter Six. Most of these insects are eaten as they are encountered individually, and require no special techniques for collection or preparation.

In contrast to the types of insects that are eaten raw, which are gathered both by men and women, *isu* (grasshoppers, katydids and preying mantids; see Table 6.2) are collected almost exclusively by women and children. *Isu* must be cooked before they are eaten. In contrast to insects that are eaten raw *isu* are frequently collected during trips made specifically for this purpose.

In Misty Ridge most gathering trips that were made with the express purpose of collecting *isu* took place on the road. Women would also frequently collect *isu* as they went about their routine work in the gardens. They would snatch the insects from grass, shrubs, and trees; crush the insects' heads between their forefingers. The half dead insects would be deposited in bamboo tubes carried on their backs in net bags. When the bamboo tubes are filled with *isu* they are plugged with a leaf stopper and when the collector returns home the tube is placed directly in the ashes of the fire to steam the insects. Insects are also collected at night by using torches to attract them to the edge of the forest.

Gathering *isu* is viewed by women as a welcome break from strenuous, tedious labor in the garden. Yet, gathering is usually a steadier source of food than the men's pastime of hunting. I participated in six trips focused on gathering *isu*, in addition to several dozen smaller trips where I collected *isu* and other insects. During these six main trips a grand total of 1,010 insects were collected. There were 51 different varieties of insects collected, but 14 types of *isu* were collected most frequently: *amatape* (leaf mimicking katydids), *bitu* (katydids), *didimigo* (pyrgomorph grasshoppers), *egokago* (preying mantids), *g(l)isu* (katydid nymphs), *isokougu* (katydids), *kadamo* (spine-headed forest katydids), *kaiso*

(grasshoppers), *kekegelke* (giant katydids), *madiga* (fierce predatory katydids), *mamokai* (bush katydids), *migai kamu* (moisture loving grasshoppers), *utisapode* (grasshoppers).⁴⁵

There was an average of 168.33 insects (mean 147) collected during each of the six primary gathering trips, and there was an average of 25.63 insects (mean 27.25) collected by each participant in the trip. Insects consumed in these amounts represent a significant contribution to the diets of the Oge Bage Mee. Dried grasshoppers⁴⁶ are made up of 49.7-75% protein, 10.1-18.4% fat, 6.4-16.1% carbohydrate, 5% water, and 3.7-18.9% ash (Taylor 1975: 13). Another study shows that the concentration of each of the essential amino acids in 100 g of grasshoppers⁴⁷ is higher than the World Health Organization Recommended Daily Allowances for both pre-school children and adults (Ramos-Elorduy 1998).

The average dry weight of the frequently collected *isu* in this study is approximately 0.46 g. Thus, the average participant in a collecting trip obtained approximately 11.79 g of insects for their labor. If the nutritional composition of these insects is similar to that of dried grasshopper (Taylor 1975: 13), then participants in the collecting trips had at least 5.9 g of protein, 1.2 g of fats, and 0.7 g of carbohydrates. The WHO Recommended Daily Allowances for protein is 12.7 g (Lapedes 1977: 24), so insects potentially represents a significant source of protein in the diet of the Oge Bage Mee.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ The taxonomy of these different Oge Bage Mee names will be discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

⁴⁶ In this study the following species were analyzed: *Nomadacris septemfasciata*, *Schistocerca gregaria*, *S. paramensis*, *Locusta migratoroides*, *Melanoplus* spp., *Oxya* spp., and *Sphenarium* spp.

⁴⁷ Ramos-Elorduy cites a study that analyzes the composition of *S. histrio* and *S. purpurascens*.

⁴⁸ The WHO RDA for protein is based on values for each of eight essential amino acids. Thus, these data can be viewed only as a general measure for the amount of insect protein available to Oge Bage Mee on collecting trips.

In addition to insects and other small animals such as frogs, women collect a variety of plants, tadpoles, and other foods. There are twelve varieties of *ata* (ferns) that produce edible fronds.⁴⁹ Tree ferns are the most frequently collected type of fern. The top of the trees, where the youngest fronds are emerging, are hooked with a stick or an umbrella and pulled down within reach. The fronds are broken off at the base and they are wrapped tightly around one another to form a small bundle. While the *dege mee*, *pado*, and *sok(l)e* varieties of fern can be eaten raw, most ferns must be cooked before they are eaten. Each time fresh meat is prepared ferns are usually cooked as an accompanying dish. Five varieties⁵⁰ of mushrooms are also occasionally gathered from the forest (Figure 5.6).



Figure 5.6 Collecting mushrooms

CASH ECONOMY

The principal exports from Misty Ridge to the market in Nabire are cacao and peanuts. While I did not collect quantitative data about the sale and production figures, I did collect general accounts about the steps involved in selling these crops. People have the option of setting up their own informal stalls in the market to sell the peanuts, or selling them to an established vendor. The cacao is sold to agents who then export it out of Irian Jaya. When the road is in good repair these products can be transported relatively easily via bus or truck. However, if the road is in a state of disrepair, as it was during the eight-month period I was in Irian, transportation is far more difficult. One option is to carry the produce to Nabire by foot, which takes many days at a comfortable pace. If one can afford a plane ticket, another option is to carry the produce to a distant village where the Missionary Aviation Fellowship operates sporadic flights

⁴⁹ These varieties are *dege mee*, *pisata meg(l)e*, *suguedai*, *makabu*, *tikidi*, *pado*, *putodigi*, *kogobey*, *sok(l)e*, *tepe*, and *sinu*. These ferns are in a variety of families, but the most commonly eaten type is the tree fern (*Cyathea spp.*).

⁵⁰ The mushroom varieties are called *bai tai*, *kigi*, *gedesa*, *kegi*, and *bogiwo*.

from a small landing strip. However, transportation costs by any of these means are too high for people to derive a significant income from the sale of their products.

| Drinks | Basic Ingredients | Foodstuffs | Special Items |
|---------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------|
| canned milk | cooking oil | canned fish | candy |
| coffee | salt | crackers | cigarettes |
| powdered milk | sugar | ramen noodles | cookies |
| soda | | rice | rolling papers |
| tea | | | tobacco |

Table 5.3 Imported Industrial Food Items

Regional trade in the Siriwo accounts for the remainder of the exports from Misty Ridge. Pigs were sold to two neighboring “Mee” villages during my time in the village. A gold mining camp, located several days walk from the village and composed of *pendatang* (Indonesian: newcomers) from other parts of Irian Jaya and Indonesia, also serves as a market for exports from Misty Ridge. One pig was sold to people living at this camp while I was in Misty Ridge. John cleared a new garden near this gold mining camp in hopes of growing vegetables to sell to the people living there.

| Preparation/Storage | Production |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| bags, plastic | air rifle |
| biscuit tins | axe blades |
| buckets, plastic | butterfly net |
| containers, misc. plastic | chain saw |
| cooking oil containers | fencing |
| drinking water bottles | fishhooks |
| jars, plastic | fishing line |
| mugs, plastic and glass | machete blade |
| plates, plastic and ceramic | manufactured bags |
| pots, metal | rope |
| silverware, metal | scythe blade |
| tea kettle | seine net |
| vats, plastic | trowel |
| wok, metal | twine |

Table 5.4 Industrial Products for Food Preparation, Storage, and Production

The gold rush to the Siriwo area presents a challenge to the land rights of the “Mee.” Migrants are rapidly flocking to areas that they, and the Indonesian government, perceive as uninhabited old growth rainforest. There are no villages in most of these areas; nonetheless, the Oge Bage Mee maintain that they are traditional hunting, fishing, and gathering grounds. The Oge Bage Mee have had little choice but to settle for piecemeal compensation in cash for large tracts of

land that have extremely valuable natural resources. Some young men have set up toll booths along the road to charge individual miners fees to gain access to traditional land. The miners consider the toll booths to be of questionable legitimacy. People who have newly arrived to the Siriwo region are unable to distinguish the toll booths set up by Oge Bage Mee who have traditionally lived in the area from toll booths set up by opportunists trying to make quick money.

| household items | bedding | misc. personal items | clothing |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| cardboard boxes | blankets | batteries | bead necklaces |
| metal door latch | foam mattress | bible | hats |
| metal grate | mosquito coils | magnifying glass | plastic sandals |
| metal hinges | mosquito nets | medications | rubber boots |
| metal rods | pillows | playing cards | shoes |
| metal roofing | plastic sleeping mats | school books | skirts |
| metal wire | illumination devices | sewing machine | socks |
| nails | candles | short wave radio | t-shirts |
| oil drums | flashlight | soap | umbrella |
| padlocks | kerosene | syringes | |
| plastic rain gutters | kerosene lantern | tape player | |
| plastic tarps | lighters | thread | |
| | matches | towels | |
| | soda cans (made into kerosene lamps) | writing paper | |

Table 5.5 Industrial goods found in Misty Ridge that are unrelated to food

While I was living in Misty Ridge an old man, who was recognized in the village as owning the land surrounding a small outpost built by the road construction company, sold this property to an Indonesian man who had set up a homestead there. While the sale of this property may have resulted in what appeared to be a windfall of cash in the immediate context, it is likely that small steps such as this will lead to major problems in the future.

Gold mining camps are already beginning to present a serious threat to Oge Bage Mee lands. I went on a visit to one of the nearest gold mining camps with Kansus Uweia, who is the *Kepala Suku Mee, Rayon Siriwo* (Indonesian: Mee Tribal Head, Siriwo Region), where several hundred Papuan men and women had set up ramshackle houses with tarps and poles from the forest. Kansus attempted to register each of the miners and charge them a fee of 5g of unprocessed gold ore per miner in exchange for a permit. However, the miners said that they could not afford to pay the fees that Kansus requested. A self-appointed representative of the miners collected what he claimed to be 35g of gold from all of the miners. He presented this to Kansus in hopes of covering the permit fees for each of the miners currently at the camp. The actual amount of the gold ore was less than 15g, and Kansus refused to accept it since he felt cheated. Upon returning to Nabire, Kansus attempted to get higher government authorities to back him on evicting the gold miners from Oge Bage Mee traditional lands, but when I left Irian Jaya in January 1998, these efforts remained unsuccessful.

Not all Oge Bage Mee encounters with the economic forces of the industrial world have been wrought with conflict. Several older individuals in Misty Ridge had been successful at wage-paying jobs in

their youth. One man had worked as a deck hand on an ocean-going ship that transported goods between the towns of Irian Jaya. Another man had started as a cook for a logging company and had gone on to become a member of the survey team that explored potential logging sites. These men were able to save their wages and retired to the village where they live a comfortable lifestyle with many luxury goods from the city.

I recorded an exhaustive list of industrial goods that have been imported into Misty Ridge. A relatively small number of these goods were consumable food items (Table 5.3). The expense and difficulties of transporting these items prevents them from becoming a major component of the Oge Bage Mee diet. Only 16 of the 72 recorded meals included industrially-produced food. Several interlocutors spoke of factory-produced foods with disdain. They said that they only feel full and satisfied after eating a meal of sweet potatoes. Industrial products that facilitate the procurement, storage, and preparation of locally produced food are more important in Misty Ridge (Table 5.4). A variety of other industrially produced items that range from clothing to electronic devices have been imported to Misty Ridge (Table 5.5).

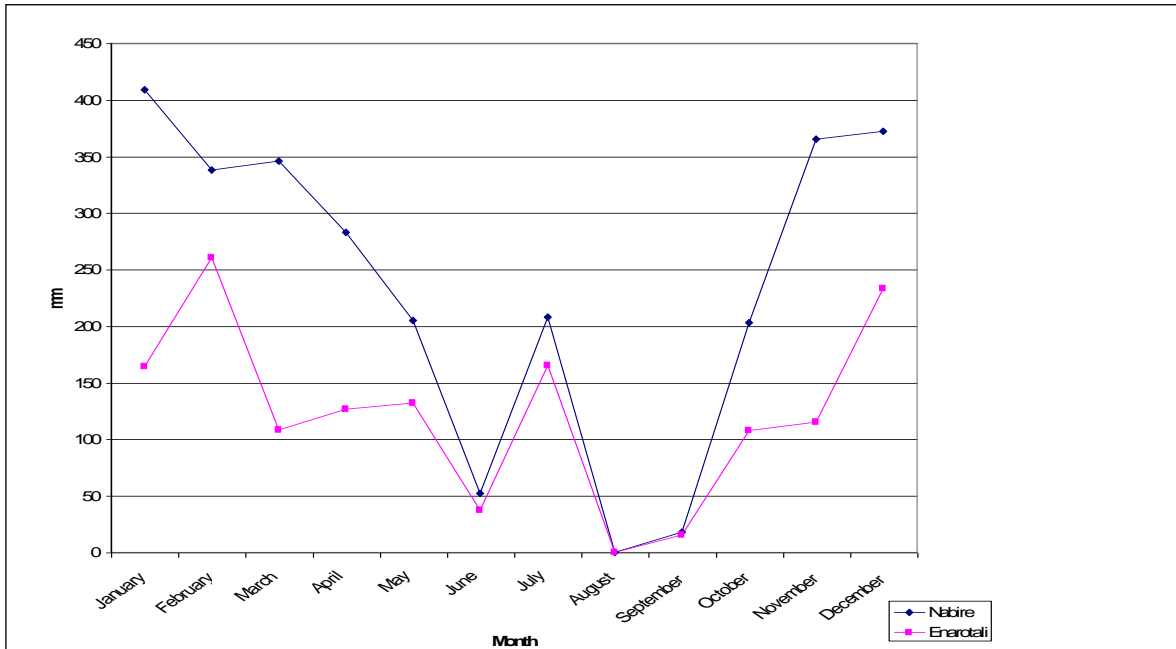


Figure 5.7 Total rainfall for 1997 (mm)

Correlation coefficient = 0.800659

This figure contains data from meteorological stations in the coastal town of Nabire and the highlands outpost in Enarotali near Lake Paniai. Contrary to most published literature from Irian Jaya these data suggest that there is a correlation between rainfall patterns in the highlands and the lowlands.

Data source: Departemen Perhubungan, Badan Meterologi dan Geofisika, Balai Wilayah V, Nabire, Irian Jaya

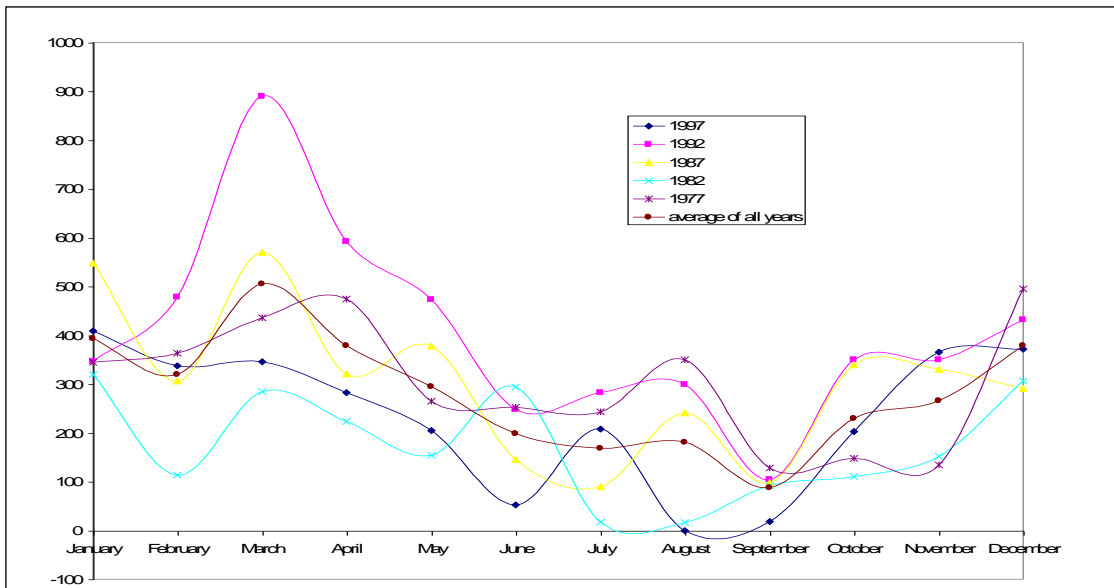


Figure 5.8 Average monthly rainfall in Nabire (mm)

This graph shows a distinct seasonal fluctuation of rainfall. A one-way ANOVA of this data set shows that rainfall variation among months is extremely significant ($p=0.0003$). September, which is on average the driest month, has significantly different rainfall from December, January, March, and April. The average amount of rain in March, the month of highest rainfall, is also significantly different from the amount of rain in June, July, and August.

Data source: Departemen Perhubungan, Badan Meterologi dan Geofisika, Balai Wilayah V, Nabire, Irian Jaya

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have demonstrated that the people of Misty Ridge employ a variety of subsistence strategies; the Oge Bage Mee do not have a single economic system of food procurement that forms the base of their society. Rather than following a clearly defined linear evolution from a simple to more complex subsistence strategies, the Oge Bage Mee have incorporated new technologies and methods while retaining traditional systems that have proved successful. By retaining a diverse array of options for procuring food, the Oge Bage Mee are able to contend with a variety of social, political, and ecological contingencies.

As described in Chapter Two, Irian Jaya and the rest of Indonesia was in the midst of an economic and political crisis during the period of my field work. This crisis significantly impaired the ability of the Oge Bage Mee to participate in the industrial economy. The road was in disrepair, the price of goods skyrocketed, and the cities and roads were unsafe. Since people living in Misty Ridge could depend on a variety of food resources outside of the industrial sphere, these crises did not have a major impact on their daily lives.

Figures 5.7 and 5.8 illustrate that there are a distinct rainy and dry seasons in the Bird's Neck Region of Irian Jaya.⁵¹ The peak of the dry season hits in September, frequently causing severe droughts. The complementary subsistence strategies of the Oge Bage Mee may be important in helping them survive periodic scarcities caused by these droughts. Most garden crops, except for cassava, do not grow well with reduced rainfall. Yet wild game, industrially-produced foods, and domesticated pig herds work together to provide a safety net during times of drought. Having a diverse set of food resources has also helped the Oge Bage Mee survive major ecological crises.

⁵¹ My two fieldwork periods in August and December/January allowed me to observe Oge Bage Mee subsistence strategies in both seasons.

In 1997 an El Niño/ENSO event triggered a major drought in Irian Jaya (Figure 5.7).⁵² During the month of August there was no rainfall in the Siriwo region, and this triggered major crop failure and subsequent starvation throughout the highlands. At that point in time the road between Misty Ridge and Nabire was in good repair, which allowed for easy access to stockpiles of industrially-produced food. Locally produced drought-resistant foods such as cassava, pigs, and fowl provided additional avenues for coping with crop failures.

The Oge Bage Mee continue to employ swidden agriculture and hunting/gathering as important subsistence strategies. However, this does not mean that they have a primitive economy that is in the process of evolving to become assimilated into industrial society. Rather, the Oge Bage Mee are utilizing a diverse array of strategies to subsist in a dynamic world. Indeed, they have a more stable adaptation than those of us who are completely dependent on the industrial economy. If industrial production of goods were to be drastically reduced, the Oge Bage Mee would be well equipped to handle the crisis.

⁵² No climate data have been recorded at Misty Ridge, but I was able to obtain meteorological data from two nearby government field stations: Nabire and Enarotali. Nabire is a coastal sub-urban center and Enarotali is in a highland valley near a large lake (see Figure 1.2). Misty Ridge is located in between these two sites in a river valley but is closer both in elevation (at ca. 500 feet) and geographical distance to Nabire. Several scientists have informally told me that climate variations occur independently in different locales of Irian Jaya. The limited data that I analyzed suggest that while temperature and wind speed are not correlated between the two meteorological stations, the total rainfall does appear to be correlated between the two sites. Thus, it could be argued that patterns of variations in rainfall data from either of these sites could be extrapolated to the areas lying between, which include Misty Ridge.

CHAPTER SIX: “ANIMAL” CATEGORIES

Daughter: Daddy, why do things have outlines?

Father: Do they? I don't know. What sort of things do you mean?

D: I mean when I draw things, why do they have outlines?

F: Well, what about other sorts of things—a flock of sheep? or a conversation? Do they have outlines?

*D: Don't be silly. I can't draw a conversation. I mean **things**.*

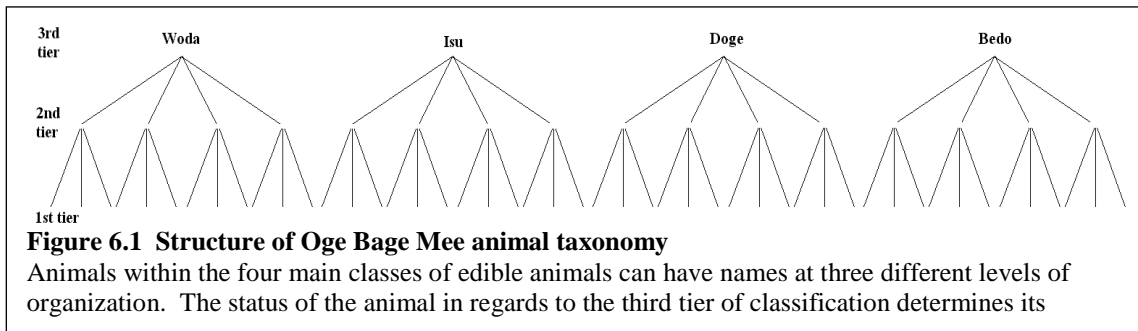
*F: Yes—I was trying to find out just what you meant. Do you mean “Why do we give things outlines when we draw them?” or do you mean that the things **have** outlines whether we draw them or not?*

(Bateson 1972:27)

Mary Douglas (1966) suggests that the sole reason the pig is considered unfit for consumption by Jewish people is its failure to fit in any definable class of animals in the Old Testament's chapter of Leviticus. Since her seminal work on liminality and classification, scholars have applied Douglas's model to other cultural systems (i.e. Bulmer 1967). In Chapter Six I explore the boundaries of this model in explaining how Oge Bage Mee distinguish among edible and inedible animals. Not all animals that lie outside of clearly defined Oge Bage Mee edible classes are considered to be inedible. However, animals that fall near the boundaries of edible classes are marked with general restrictions for all Oge Bage Mee or by restrictions for specific groups.

The Oge Bage Mee make no categorical separation of living creatures and inanimate objects. There are no general classes that differentiate rocks, earth, water and stars from plants, animals, and spirits. When I persistently asked interlocutors about names for these general classes of phenomena they became confused. Similarly, there is no Oge Bage Mee word to translate the Indonesian word *binatang* (animal). Other “Mee” groups similarly do not recognize this taxon. Under the listing for “animal” in Doble's dictionary of the “Mee” language there are a variety of words for specific types of animals. However, there are no “Mee” words listed that correspond to the generalized English concept of animal (Doble 1960: 123).

Berlin et al (1968) propose that “covert categories” exist in taxonomic systems where there are no terms for “beginning” broad categories such as plant, animal, or living creature. However, as Brown (1972) demonstrates, this suggestion presumes that there is a universal recognition of the ‘plant-animal’



dichotomy. Biologically speaking, a distinction does not clearly exist between animals and plants.

Microbiologists have long known of single-celled eukaryotes that have both chloroplasts and flagella (i.e. Cano 1986), and Lynn Margulis (1998) recently reviewed one microbial genus that has organisms both with and without chloroplasts.

Oge Bage Mee use of the Indonesian language points to a way that they distinguish between humans and animals. The word *ekor* (literally “tail”) is used as a classifier for all animals. For example, it is grammatically correct to say *tiga ekor anging* (three individual dogs) rather than *tiga anging* (three dogs). *Orang*, the Indonesian classifier for people, is used in the same manner to refer to a certain number of humans. On several independent occasions Oge Bage Mee interlocutors used the word *ekor* to refer to dead people, when the word *orang* would have been correct according to standard Indonesian usage. The group of people who were classified as “animals” sometimes included close relatives and friends of the speaker, so it is unlikely this was being done in a derogatory manner. Rather it suggests that some key component of person hood is lost after death. This fits in with the discussion of *tene* (departed shadows) in Chapter Eight.

BOUNDED CREATURES

While the taxon of “animal” does not exist in the “Mee” language, an astounding diversity of names for other levels of categorization exist. The system for classifying animals has as many as three tiers of organization (Figure 6.1), depending on the group in question. These classifications include a broad category on the third tier, an intermediate name on the second tier that is unrelated phonetically to the first tier, and a specific name on the first tier that is frequently a modification of the second-tier name. The status of an animal in the top tier of classification determines its edibility. The Oge Bage Mee recognize

Table 6.1 Edible “animal” categories of the Oge Bage Mee

| | |
|-------------|--|
| Woda | <i>Meat animals.</i> This category consists of the native marsupial fauna of New Guinea, as well as the rodent family Muridae. Kangaroos, wallabies, bandicoots, echidnas, possums, cuscuses, and placental rats are all included in this category. Notable mammals which are not considered to be <i>woda</i> include pigs, bats, dogs, and humans. |
| Isu | <i>Hoppers.</i> This group primarily consists of grasshoppers (Acrididae), katydids (Tettigonioidea), and preying mantids (Mantodea). These groups are all contained in the Order Orthoptera, but other groups of this order such as cockroaches (Blattoidea), stick insects (Phantismidea), and crickets (Grylloidea) are excluded. |
| Bedo | <i>Birds.</i> This category most closely resembles a category of our own folk classification system. Some, but not all, people included bats as part of this group. Other people were not sure if the cassowary belongs in this category. |
| Doge | <i>Fish.</i> Tadpoles and frogs are also considered to be <i>doge</i> and some interlocutors classed turtles in this category. |

four major classes of edible animals: *woda*, *isu*, *bedo*, and *doge* (Table 6.1). As a general rule all members of these categories are edible, and those animals located near the borders are of questionable edibility. However, there are some specific exceptions to this rule which will be discussed in relation to each .

The category of *woda* is composed of two species-rich groups of mammals that are indigenous to New Guinea: the Subclass Marsupialia and the rodent family Muridae, which is a member of the Subclass Eutheria. Many members of the marsupial and eutherian subclasses are extremely similar in their overall body plans but they are distinguished by several obscure taxonomic features: marsupials lack a corpus callosum, have a choriovitelline placenta and a cloaca, while the eutherians have a corpus callosum and a chorioallantoic placenta, but lack a cloaca. Except for the family Muridae, which includes rats and mice, the eutherian species found in New Guinea also look unlike their marsupial cousins in terms of general characteristics.⁵³ Aside from species that are prohibited for certain clan members to eat (as will be discussed further in Chapter Seven) all members of the class *woda* are eaten. This stands in contrast to the other three animal categories, which have at least one member with special attributes that all Oge Bage Mee do not eat.

The biogeographical isolation of New Guinea has promoted the evolution of a distinctive mammalian fauna. There are approximately 109 described species of mammals currently found in Irian Jaya. Ten of these species were recently introduced to the area following European colonization, 16

⁵³ There are also two echidna (aka. spiny anteater) species indigenous to New Guinea that are members of the extremely small Subclass Prototheria. These unusual creatures have claws, a slender snout, and are covered with spines. The Oge Bage Mee were unsure of the taxonomic status of these creatures and as far as I am aware do not eat them.

species are indigenous to the Melanesian region, and a staggering 83 are endemic solely to the province of Irian Jaya (Petocz 1994).⁵⁴

The representatives of major marsupial groups in Irian Jaya include: the small carnivorous and insectivorous dasyure (Dasyuridae); the bandicoots, which are rodent-like with long, pointed snouts (Peroryctidae & Peramelidae); the cuscuses, which are primarily arboreal herbivores (Phalangeridae); kangaroos and wallabies (Macropodidae); long-tailed pygmy-possums (Burramyidae); the small arboreal gliders and striped possums (Acrobatidae & Petauridae); and ringtail possums, which are arboreal leaf-eaters (Pseudocheiridae) (Petocz 1994; Flannery 1995). All members of these groups are considered to be *woda*, and all locally occurring species are eaten by the Oge Bage Mee.

The members of the family Muridae in New Guinea are *Melomys*, rats, and mice. There are 43 species of indigenous Muridae (subclass Eutheria) found in Irian Jaya. The Muridae genera found in Irian Jaya include: *Mus* (mice), *Rattus* (rats), *Melomys*, *Pogonomelomys*, *Pogonomys*, and *Hydromys*. Additionally, there are five recently introduced *Rattus* species, and one introduced species of *Mus* (Petocz 1994). All local rodents are eaten by the Oge Bage Mee and because of their similarities to bandicoots and dasyure, they are considered to be *woda*.

The eutherian mammals currently found in New Guinea, other than some rodents in Muridae and bats, have all been introduced to Irian Jaya via human activity over the past approximately 10,000 years of occupation. These animals are: the dog (*Canis familiaris*), the cat (*Felis catus*), the pig (*Sus scrofa*), the cow (*Bos taurus*), and the rusa deer (*Cervus timorensis*). Each of these animals is aberrant in the Oge Bage Mee taxonomic system and each is domesticated to a certain degree.

The pig is the only one of the introduced eutherians that is generally considered edible by the Oge Bage Mee. However, there are some restrictions on the consumption of this animal, which is also recognized as aberrant by the Karam of eastern New Guinea (Bulmer 1967). In Chapter Seven I will describe how gender power relations are also involved in restricting the consumption of pig brains by women, and how the recently introduced cow and the deer are simply not eaten by traditional Oge Bage Mee. As will be discussed in Chapter Eight, Oge Bage Mee are afraid to eat dogs because it is believed that when they die a *tene* (spirit) is born that can cause harm to living humans.

⁵⁴ These numbers are undergoing continual revision due to ongoing taxonomic research in the region (Flannery 1995).

Bats are species-rich in New Guinea and are represented by the Families Pteropodidae, Emballonuridae, Hipposideridae, Rhinolophidae, and Vespertilionidae (Flannery 1995). In Oge Bage Mee taxonomy bats fall in-between the categories of *woda* and *bedo*. They have fur, teeth, and internal organs that are like *woda*, but they have wings and the habits of *bedo*. In fact, some of my interlocutors expressed confusion about the taxonomic status of this group. Some classed bats as *bedo*, while others placed them in a separate category of their own. In general bats are considered to be edible. However, if a bat flies into someone's house at night it is believed to be an agent of the wicked spirit Simiso, and is killed but not eaten. This association may be tied to the liminal status of this taxon.

Most interlocutors in Misty Ridge use the word *bedo* to refer to the same group of organisms that are designated in English by the word "bird" (Class Aves). There are approximately 708 species of birds from some 79 families known from New Guinea (Beehler et al 1986). Birds found in the Siriwo Region include: cassowaries (Casuariidae); hawks, kites, and eagles (Accipitridae); falcons (Falconidae); quails and pheasants (Megapodiidae); pigeons and doves (Columbidae); parrots, lorries, and cockatoos (Psittacidae); owls (Podargidae); frogmouths (Podargidae); owlet-nightjars (Aegothelidae); swifts and swiftlets (Apodidae); and hornbills (Bucerotidae). Since the boundaries of this group should be clear to most readers, I will not discuss them further. However, the taxonomic and edible status are unclear for two groups associated with the *bedo*: cassowaries and hornbills. The Oge Bage Mee lump many *bedo* into the category of *kogu*, which includes local birds of prey: falcons, hawks, kites, eagles, owls, and owlet-nightjars. As will be further discussed in Chapter Eight these birds are associated with *kego* (ghouls) and are thus not eaten.

Several interlocutors were unsure of the taxonomic status of the cassowary (genus *Cassuarius*), an ostrich-like, flightless bird with a bare face and neck pigmented blue, red, orange, and in some, yellow. The Oge Bage Mee recognize two kinds of cassowary: the *buda* species (*Casurius bennetti*) a small, mountain dwelling species, and the *oge bedo* or *nametaj* species (*C. unappendiculatus*), which is found in the northern lowlands. I was told that if a given individual eats one of these species, he or she should not eat the other species ever again.

The emic explanation for the eating restriction on cassowaries, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Eight, is that those who break it will develop sore knees and elbows later in life.

However, I suggest that this can also be explained by the ambiguous status of the cassowary in the *bedo* taxon. Cassowaries have few similarities to other birds that are found in New Guinea. The Karam of the eastern New Guinea highlands believe that this large, featherless biped is more like a human than a bird (Bulmer 1967). My interlocutors in Misty Ridge agreed that like humans, cassowaries stand in an odd place in relation to general categories of edible animals.

Blyth's Hornbill (*Rhyticeros plicatus*), which is called *pugisai* by the Oge Bage Mee, is the only member of the Old World family Bucerotidae that is found in New Guinea (Beehler, et al 1986). This large (80 cm) black and white bird has a huge conical bill with distinctive ridges on the dorsal side. Sam told me that this bird tastes both spicy and sour and that if you eat it your whole body swells and becomes puffy. This creature is unambiguously a member of the class *bedo*, but it is unlike any other bird species found in the region. While there may be a toxin secreted by this bird which causes the symptoms that Sam describes, it is interesting to note that this animal also has unusual taxonomic characteristics.

The category of *doge* is similar to our category "fish," but its more liberal boundaries also include other vertebrates that spend an important part of their lifecycle in the water: frogs and, according to some interlocutors, turtles. Terrestrial reptiles are not included in this group and either fall into the category of *sina* (snake, worm, or caterpillar) or like alligators and lizards, are not grouped into a higher level category at all. One group of interlocutors recalled some 28 types of *doge* that are found in small ponds, streams, and rivers in the Siriwo Region.

The prohibition for females to eat *pakowki* (turtle), which will be described in the context of gender specific eating restrictions in Chapter Seven, is linked to the ambiguous status of this animal in the class *doge*. Other members of the class *doge* of questionable edibility are *agai* (eels). This group is similar in gross morphological appearance to the *sina*, but since it lives in an aquatic environment it is classed as *doge*. As will be discussed further in Chapter Eight, the *agai kamai* (Freshwater Moray Eel, *Gymnothorax polyuranodon*) is believed to be extremely dangerous: it is believed that simply looking at this animal can kill you. The danger of the *agai kamai* has made other types of *agai* dangerous by association. This has resulted in a special food prohibition for members of the clan Magai.

| Order | Suborder | Family | English | Isu | Oge Bage Mee |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-----|------------------------|
| Blattodea | | | cockroaches | | various |
| Mantodea | | Mantidae | preying mantids | * | <i>egokago</i> |
| | | Hymenopodidae | preying mantids | * | <i>egokago</i> |
| Orthoptera | Caelifera | Acrididae | grasshoppers | * | various |
| | | Pyrgomorphidae | pyrgomorph grasshoppers | * | <i>didimigo</i> |
| | | Tetrigidae | pygmy grasshoppers | | various |
| | Ensifera | Gryllidae | crickets | | ideysu, koga |
| | | Gryllotalpidae | mole crickets | | <i>bogai pai</i> |
| | | Tettigoniidae | katydids | * | various |
| Phasmatodea | | | stick insects | | <i>kagabo</i> |

Table 6.2 The category *isu*

The boundaries of this taxon cut across different levels of biological classification. Categories that are highlighted in bold are composed of members of the Oge Bage Mee category *isu*, and other than the exceptions noted in the text are considered to be edible. The remaining unhighlighted categories are inedible since they are not *isu*. Oge Bage Mee names are given for groups that have the same boundaries as the lowest level of taxonomic organization in a given row. In Table 6.3 a more detailed presentation of Oge Bage Mee names for lower levels of taxonomic organization will be presented. This classification scheme is based on Rentz (1996).

The category *isu* is a grouping of several orthopteroid⁵⁵ groups: the katydids, the grasshoppers, and the preying mantids (Table 6.2). But the class *isu* does not include the closely related cockroach, stick insect, and cricket families. In general all *isu* are largish insects that are green in color,⁵⁶ are found in grassy or disturbed areas, and move by hopping or, in the case of the mantids, by crawling. While this category does not neatly map onto any proposed monophyletic groupings of orthopteroids (reviewed in Kuperus and Chapco 1996), the central *isu* groups are clearly recognizable and can be defined according to western taxonomy.

I began my thesis research with a general background in entomology and as my studies progressed I gradually learned more about these organisms through both Oge Bage Mee folk knowledge and scientific texts. Early in my field work I thought that the class *isu* mapped on to the group of organisms called grasshoppers in English. I unexpectedly came upon the discovery that mantids are considered to be *isu* when I asked an interlocutor to make a pile of all of the *isu* that I had so far collected. When I was living in Jayapura after my first trip to Misty Ridge in August I ordered a book from Australia called *Grasshopper*

⁵⁵ The word orthopteroid refers to insects that belong to the following orders: Orthoptera (katydids, crickets, and grasshoppers), Blattodea (cockroaches), Mantodea (preying mantids), and Phasmatodea (stick insects). These groups were once united under the single order Orthoptera, but recent taxonomic revisions have divided these groups.

⁵⁶ While several *isu* species are colors other than green, most of the lower level *isu* taxa have some members that are green.

Country (Rentz 1996). This book contains over 400 large color plates with representatives of all major orthopteroid groups found in the Australiasian region. I asked interlocutors to name the different insects pictured in the book and I also used taxonomic keys to identify specimens that I brought back to the United States. I have devoted a greater proportion of my time to identifying edible orthopteroids than to identifying *woda*, *bedo*, or *doge*, since this group has received little attention in the literature.

Two types of *isu* are of questionable edibility: *mee mito* (literally, human bones) and *didimigo* (literally, hurting head). *Mee mito*, or spiny predatory katydids, consist of the tribe Phisidini in the katydid family Tettigoniidae. Some interlocutors classify *mee mito* as *isu*, while others say that they do not belong to this category due to their unusual characteristics. These tiny, nocturnal katydids are cryptic, or difficult to see. They rest during the day in an outstretched position on the underside of green leaves. When they are disturbed they rapidly scamper or fly away, looking for a new hiding place. Each time I encountered a *mee mito* in the wild, my interlocutors were startled by the katydid as it quickly escaped. As will be discussed in Chapter Eight this startling behavior may be a primary feature that determines the edible status of this organism.

Didimigo (hurting head) are solid members of the class *isu* (Table 6.2), and are even gathered during the women's collecting trips. However, as their name implies, Oge Bage Mee say that if you eat too many *didimigo* your head hurts. A North American pyrgomorph species that feeds on milkweed plants secretes a froth consisting of 1% histamine and other compounds that produce paralysis and respiratory failure when injected into mice (Blum 1981). It is possible that members of this grasshopper family in the Siriwo area have similarly acquired neurologically active compounds from the environment or synthesized them endogenously. Other orthopteroid groups (including those eaten by the Oge Bage Mee) also synthesize potent toxins (Blum 1981). However, the boundaries of the class *isu* may exclude all locally occurring forms that are seriously poisonous.

Insects that are similar to *isu*, but are not members of this class, are considered to be inedible. Interlocutors distinguished among true preying mantids (Mantodea) and the mantispid family (Neuroptera: Mantispidae), which is a group that has undergone evolutionary convergence to be almost identical in appearance to mantids. Interlocutors said that the mantispids were not *isu* and therefore inedible. Other groups that are closely related phylogenetically to *isu* are considered to be dangerous. Crickets (*koga*) are

thought to harbor malevolent spirits that enter peoples' houses at night. A story about a man-eating stick insect (*kagabo*), which will be described in detail in Chapter Eight, instills fear in both children and adults.

In my article in the *Phasmid Study Group Newsletter* (Kirksey 1999) I describe the defensive secretions of stick insects (*kagabo*) and how they relate to their inedibility among the Oge Bage Mee. A variety of different stick insect species (e.g. *Oreophites peruana*, *Megacarania alpheus*, *Megacarania tsudai*, *Sipylus sipyloidea*, *Graeffea crouani*, and *Anisomorpha buprestoides*) produce defensive secretions via glands in the prothorax (Clark, personal communication 1999; Eisner et. al. 1997). For example, the Peruvian Fire Stick (*Oreophoetes peruana*) is able to synthesize the volatile chemical quinoline, even though the fern species that is its food source does not contain this compound (Eisner et. al. 1997). When it is disturbed *Oreophoetes peruana* oozes out a milky white secretion containing quinoline that is capable of repelling ants, cockroaches, spiders, and frogs.

Other stick insect species may either slowly secrete or violently spray a variety of other volatile chemicals: actinidine, cyclopentanoid terpene, anisomorphal, iridodials, nepetalactone (Eisner, et. al. 1997; Eisner 1965; Eisner 1964). The stick insect species that produce the volatile chemicals are found throughout the world and it is highly possible that locally occurring stick insects in Irian Jaya also have some type of chemical defense mechanism.

Some phasmid species are considered to be edible in other Melanesian societies. In Papua New Guinea some lowland ethnic groups eat *Extatosoma popa* that lives on sago palm leaves which are collected by these groups as roof thatch (Brock in press). A document that was published in 1855 reports that the genera of *Carabidion* and *Eurycantha* are eaten by the people of New Caledonia and that they taste like crayfish.⁵⁷ Despite the palatability of many stick insects, the Oge Bage Mee have generalized their avoidance to this entire taxon.

While terrestrial cockroaches are categorically inedible since they are not considered to be *isu*,

| Mee | English | Family | Sub-Family | Tribe |
|-------------------|-------------------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| <i>amatape</i> | leaf mimicking katydids | Tettigoniidae | Pseudophyllinae | Phyllomimini |
| <i>bigai pugu</i> | grasshopper | Acrididae | Catantopinae | various |
| <i>bitu</i> | katydid | Tettigoniidae | Phaneropterinae | various |
| <i>didimigo</i> | pyrgomorph grasshoppers | Pyrgomorphidae | Pyrgomorphinae | various |

| Mee | Edible stages | English | Linnean |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| <i>danu</i> | aquatic nymphs | dragonflies | Odonata: Anisoptera |
| <i>inou</i> | adults | water cockroaches | Blattodea: Blattidae |
| <i>keke</i> | adults | beetles | Coleoptera |
| <i>kepi</i> | eggs, nests | wasps | Hymenoptera: |
| <i>koso</i> | adults and juveniles | lizards | Lacertilia |
| <i>kugapo</i> | adults | giant freshwater shrimp | Decapoda: Atyidae |
| <i>kume</i> | adults | bats | Mammalia: Petropodidae |
| <i>putey</i> | adults | true bugs | Hemiptera |
| <i>sina</i> | adults and larvae | snakes; caterpillars; and worms | Ophidia; Lepidoptera; Nematoda; and Annelida |
| <i>todi</i> | adults, eggs, larvae, and pupae | ants | Hymenoptera: Formicidae |
| <i>todu</i> | adults | freshwater shrimp | Decapoda: Atyidae |
| <i>uwa pune</i> | larval food (honey) | pollen bees | Hymenoptera: |
| <i>woga</i> | adults | spiders | Araneae |
| <i>wuwuga</i> | adults, larvae | butterfly, moth species | Lepidoptera |

Table 6.3 A-categorical edible animals

These animals are not classified as *woda*, *isu*, *bedo*, or *doge*, but some members of these groups are still eaten. Note: this list includes animals that were eaten while I was in Misty Ridge and other important gathered animal foods. It is likely that there are other animals eaten by the Oge Bage Mee that are not included in this list.

5 like or green-colored preying mantids.

there is one unusual cockroach species called *inow* that is eaten. It is an aquatic species living under small stones in fast-flowing, freshwater streams. Oge Bage Mee women collect *inow* by hand during gathering trips in the streams where they also collect shrimp and dragonfly nymphs. While the morphological features of this creature ally it with terrestrial cockroaches, known as *pepeda* in Oge Bage Mee taxonomy, the unusual habits of this animal place it a category of its own. This species is in the Blattidae family and it is likely that it is undescribed since no aquatic cockroaches are reported in the literature reviews of the orthopteroids in the region (Rentz 1996).

As I have demonstrated in this section, creatures that fall at the edge of the boundaries of each of the Oge Bage Mee classes of edible animals have questionable edibility. This is not always manifested in a prohibition against consumption for all Oge Bage Mee, but may be associated with gender specific or clan prohibitions. As will be further discussed in Chapter Eight, unusual characteristics in an animal are frequently associated with perceptions about danger.

A-CATEGORICAL CRITTERS

The edibility of creatures that are not classified as *woda*, *bedo*, *doge*, or *isu* is independent of their status in Oge Bage Mee taxonomy. One interlocutor described plants and animals that fall outside of the four groups of edible creatures: “*ada yang makan, ada yang tidak*” (Indonesian: there are those that are eaten, there are those that are not). Indeed, there are examples from each level of Oge Bage Mee taxonomic organization where some members of a class are edible and other members of the class are not eaten.

Table 6.3 presents a variety of animal groups that have edible members. The names in this table vary in relation to their degree of taxonomic specificity. *Sina* is the broadest of these categories, having three levels of organization in a pattern that is similar to the four groups of edible animals (Figure 6.1). *Sina* cuts across western taxonomic boundaries to include elongate or vermiform animals with no legs such as caterpillars, snakes, and worms. The Oge Bage Mee are able to differentiate among the different types of *sina* with the Indonesian words *ular* (snake), *cacing* (tape, annelid, or nematode worms), and *ulat* (caterpillar, grub, or larvae). Many *sina* are considered to be dangerous. A variety of snakes in the cobra family are found in the forest surrounding Misty Ridge and each year many people die from snake bites.

As will be discussed in Chapter Eight, *ugi kuney* snakes are considered to be extremely dangerous by the Oge Bage Mee. They believe that if they simply catch sight of this snake that they will die. In Chapter Seven I will discuss clan-specific taboos such as the one on the *ote* variety of snake. There are some snakes, such as the *sepu* variety, that are eaten by all Oge Bage Mee.

Many caterpillars (i.e. *pukamo*), which are a type of *sina* that can metamorphose into *wuguwa* (butterflies), have poisonous spines covering their bodies that can cause intense pain if they come into contact with human skin. Exposure to large amounts of caterpillar toxins can cause a life-threatening situation which requires treatment with antihistamines (Scott Smith 1999, personal communication). Nonetheless, many non-toxic caterpillar species are highly prized food items and are preferred to other types of insect food.

Nematode worms are viewed with disgust and fear. Mantids and other *isu* that had nematodes were thrown to the ground and discarded as unfit for consumption. Worms are not considered to be human food, although people believe that they form a large part of the diet of foraging pigs.

Other groups of animals such as *putey* (true bugs), *keke* (beetles), and *todi* (ants) are organized according to a two-tiered system of classification, rather than the three-tiered system presented in Figure 6.1.⁵⁸ Other than species specific names, there are no categories that separate edible animals from inedible animals. Nearly all of the approximately 150 ant (Hymenoptera: Formicidae) species found in the Siriwo River Valley are inedible (S. E. Kirksey, unpublished data), but four species in the Formicinae sub-family (a stingless group of ants) are regularly eaten: *bug(w)o* (genus *Oecophylla*), *etotage* (genus unknown), *pukow* (genus unknown), and *etodi sey* (genus *Prenolepis*).⁵⁹ Due to the formic acid produced in the poison gland in the Formicinae, and the toxic secretions in the pygidial gland of the Dolichoderinae (Hölldobler and Wilson 1990), the ants have a sour taste. Each of these species nest arboreally, forming compartments with leaves that they cement together. When a nest is discovered the larvae and eggs are either eaten raw on the spot or the whole nest is wrapped in a bundle of leaves to be steamed upon returning home. The large, red *bug(w)o* adults are also eaten directly off of the ground. While these four ant species share both

⁵⁸ Jackie Miller (personal communication, 2000) suggested that these differences in the classification systems may be due to an association with ground burrowing for the two tiered animals (ants, worms, snakes, and beetles) vs. the largely arboreal species that are classified in a three-tiered system (katydids, grasshoppers, birds, and climbing marsupials).

⁵⁹ Personal identifications according to Hölldobler & Wilson (1990), and Bolton (1994).

morphological characteristics and behavioral habits, their differences are not made explicit in any intermediate category that distinguishes them from other ants (*todi*).

Like the ants, nearly all local beetles (*keke*) are considered to be inedible by the Oge Bage Mee. However, there are some isolated species that are eaten (Table 6.4). The checklist of beetles for the Siriwo Valley includes many species that are closely related to the types that are eaten, but are themselves inedible. The edible status of these beetles is due to unique characteristics that each of them have individually, and is not due to shared attributes that are distributed across a large taxon.

Beetle larvae (*bobi*, or *ulat kayu* in Indonesian) are a special treat among gathered edibles. These white grubs are up to three inches in length and have large heads covered with a red exoskeleton. *Bobi* are found in dead trees and often occur in dense concentrations of more than fifty individuals per tree. These highly prized food items can be eaten raw as they are dug out of the tree. But if the discoverer feels compelled to share them with friends and family, they are wrapped in leaf bundles and brought home. Grubs can either be steamed in leaf bundles in the coals of the fire or fried in a pan.

The absence of taxonomic distinction between edible and inedible animals is found at the most specific levels of Oge Bage Mee classification. For example, many edible true bugs are simply called *putey*, with no further linguistic designation to separate them from hundreds of other bugs (or beetles) found in the region. *Iba putey*, which is a name that is specific as possible within Oge Bage Mee taxonomy, can refer either to a large edible bug species or a smaller inedible species.

The boundaries of the two-tiered classes that include both edible and inedible animals (i.e. *keke*, *putey*, and *todi*) are less precise than the boundaries of the four classes of edible animals. *Keke* and *putey* are junk categories used by interlocutors for any small insect of dubious taxonomic status. However, some

| Oge Bage Mee | English | Genus | Species |
|---------------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------|
| <i>ato kai</i> | longhorn beetle | Sphignotus | mirabilis |
| <i>kobai kagu</i> | weevil | Rhinoscapha | ? |
| <i>kobai kagu</i> | weevil | Eupholus | schoenherri |
| <i>pasa ka keke</i> | longhorn beetle | Parepepeotes | togatus |

Table 6.4 Edible *keke* (beetle) species

Four described beetle species that are eaten by the Oge Bage Mee. I collected one other unidentified edible beetle in the Brenthididae family and there were several other species that did not survive the trip to the United States. Identifications courtesy of Michael Balke, Korrespondent des Naturhistorischen Museums Wien.

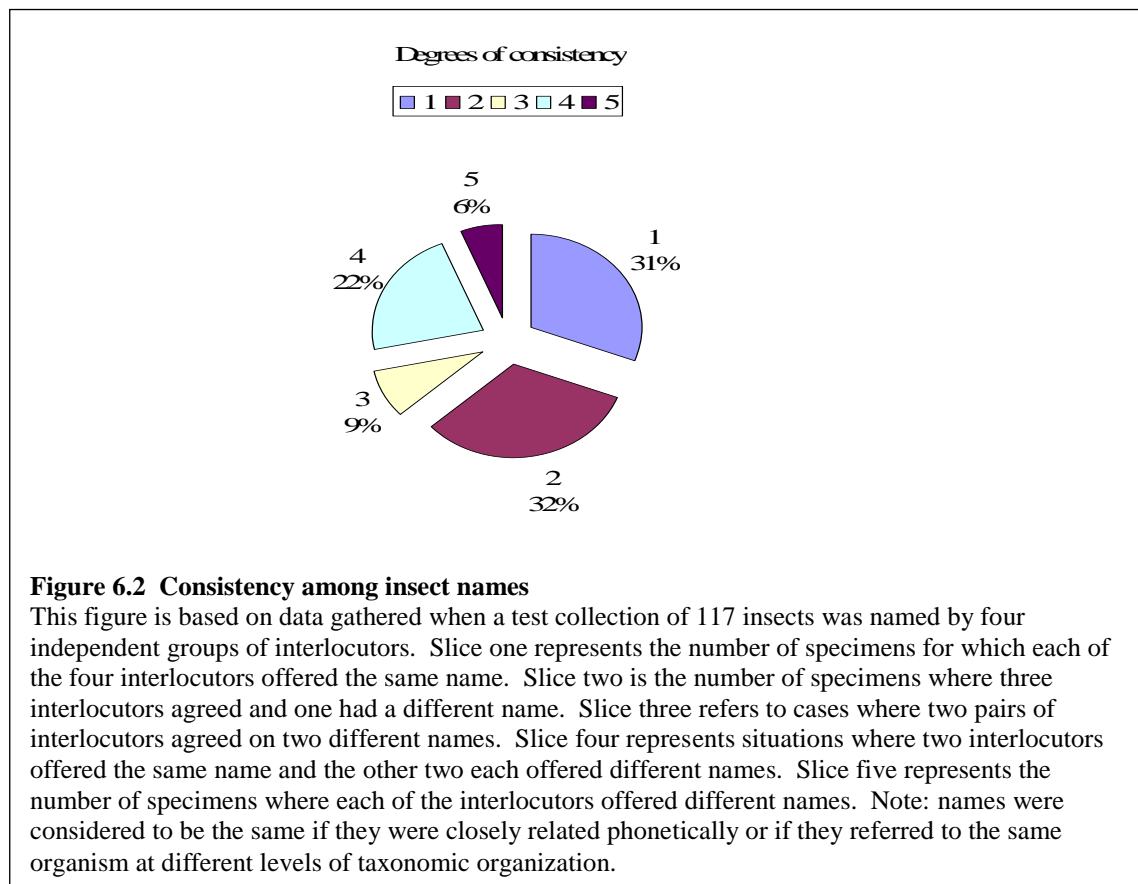
interlocutors preferred one of these categories over another. For example, Marten, a boy of about twelve, called one tiny insect a *putey*. Later a group of older men came to a consensus that the same specimen was a *keke*. Some interlocutors consistently made a clear distinction between true bugs (*putey*) and beetles (*keke*), while others were inconsistent in making this distinction.

CONCLUSION: IDIOLECTS AND COMPETING AUTHORITIES

If we no longer think of the relationship between cultures and their adherents as perfectly contiguous, totally synchronous, wholly correspondent, and if we think of cultures as permeable, and on the whole, defensive boundaries between polities, a more promising situation appears (Said 1989: 225).

In Chapter Six I have demonstrated that Douglas's (1966) model of animal classification is useful in understanding how the status of animals in the four Oge Bage Mee categories *woda*, *bedo*, *isu*, and *doge* determines their edibility. However, I have also presented data that do not fit this model. Many animals are eaten by the Oge Bage Mee irrespective of linguistic discriminations. Contrary to the work of Sapir (1931) and Whorf (1940), who suggested that if a linguistic category does not exist people do not recognize the difference between two phenomena, these data suggest that Oge Bage Mee identify many edible animals independent of their categorical status.

My investigations into the connections between taxonomy and edibility brought some unanticipated discoveries about the Oge Bage Mee lexicon itself. Rather than being a coherent system



where each interlocutor agreed about the name of a given animal, there were frequently uncertainties about an animal's name. In many ethnographies the principle of parsimony is used to discard messy field data that do not fit in with models that an investigator develops to understand emic cultural concepts. As Marshall and Borthwick write: "Frequently, disagreement among informants has been played down or ignored" (1974: 252). However, I think that this disagreement is an interesting phenomenon in itself that deserves description and analysis.

The dynamics of the sessions where my collected insects were named were complex. In Misty Ridge people rarely interact in private, one-on-one conversation and thus most of the naming sessions were conducted with more than one person at a time. Sometimes participants would wander off during the middle of one of these sessions and at other times new people would join in halfway through the conversation. I tried to record the comings and goings of people during the course of an interview. Nonetheless, separating the individual voices out of these conversations has been difficult.

Despite the large number of people at each session, there was usually one key participant who dominated the interview. However, the level of knowledge was not the primary factor that determined who controlled the conversation. Older men with high status tended to dominate the naming sessions, even though women generally seemed to have a more diverse and specific vocabulary. There was frequent uncertainty and disagreement in the naming of the insects. Indeed, when the same set of insects were named by different groups of interlocutors there was a surprisingly low percentage of cases where they agreed on a name (Figure 6.2).

Linguists use the term *idiolect* to refer to an individual's speech pattern. While idiolect usually refers to a person's idiosyncratic phonological⁶⁰ system, I propose that this concept is also useful in understanding individual variations in semantics. Individual differences in the conceptualization of shared cultural symbols (i.e. linguistic categories) have led to the inconsistencies of animal names among different Oge Bage Mee interlocutors. Within Oge Bage Mee society cultural knowledge is not homogenous. Rather, each person forms an idiolect by borrowing from the established cultural authorities.

My synchronic study has implications for diachronic processes of semantic change. Arlotto uses a whimsical example to demonstrate the role that cultural authorities may play in this process:

⁶⁰ Phonology refers to the study of speech sounds and their production, transmission, and reception (Urdang 1968).

It should be fairly obvious that a semantic shift cannot take place abruptly throughout a speech community, but must take place gradually through various associations of meanings and the phenomena of polysemia.⁶¹ This statement, of course, ignores the possible, if unlikely situation where some absolute ruler might simply decree: “Tomorrow, the leather thing worn on the feet shall be known as a cabbage.” In such a case, the semantic shift has been ordered for whatever reason, and all loyal subjects will be bound to follow it (Arlotto 1981: 170).

However, within Oge Bage Mee society there is not a single cultural dictator. When there were disagreements among the people present at a naming session, the group would generally reach a consensus about which name was “correct.” Only rarely did a group explain disagreements as regional, gender specific, or generational linguistic variation. Rather, the “correct” name came from whoever was able to convince the other people present of his [though rarely her] cultural authority. This pattern fits in with the political structure of the highland “Mee” society described by Pospisil (1965), where *tonowi* (rich men) earn their status as leaders through the accumulation of economic and symbolic capital. Pospisil writes: “a decision of a [Mee] leader...is made in the form of an opinion or suggestion and the followers are persuaded into an acceptance of it” (1965: 48). As with “Mee” politics, where there are usually several competing *tonowi* within a single village, there were several competing authorities on culture in Misty Ridge.

Thus, cultural knowledge in Oge Bage Mee society is structured both by the processes of consensus and contestation. Competing authorities attempt to persuade other members of their village that their own cultural idiolects are the most accurate and authentic versions of reality. In the other chapters of this thesis I have described processes of change that are a result of encounters with external factors. While the Oge Bage Mee are clearly not isolated from the forces of globalization, the process of semantic change of individual emic concepts can occur independently of these etic influences.

⁶¹ Polysemia means that a word can have multiple meanings at a given point in time.

CHAPTER SEVEN: QUESTIONING AUTHORITY

Food is a field of action. It is a medium in which other levels of categorization become manifest. It does not lead or follow, but it squarely belongs to whatever action there is. Food choices support political alignments and social opportunities (Douglas 1984: 30)

Eating restrictions, or “taboos,” have been treated as fixed, clearly bounded categories in anthropological literature about non-European societies. Since well before the publication of Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* in 1918, social scientists have been interested in the role that totemism⁶² plays in determining the eating habits of people around the world. Many scholars quickly rejected Freud’s elaborate story about the origin of socio-religious civilization from an Oedipal ritual involving the slaughter and consumption of a totemic animal (i.e. Kroeber 1920). But recent studies (i.e. Mintz 1996; Bourdieu 1984) focusing on European and American countries have devised models that show how patterns of food consumption are closely tied to group membership. Oge Bage Mee employ the consumption of food to assert their allegiance to ethnic, nationalist, gender, and generational groups.

In this chapter I intend to demonstrate that food restrictions are contested. Eating habits are not prescribed by a straightforward ideology accepted by all “Mee.” Rather, competing social groups attempt to enforce norms onto the eating behavior of individuals. Power relations are in a state of dynamic transition in Mist Ridge, and as a consequence many eating restrictions are being violated by individuals who challenge sources of cultural authority.

EATING GENDER

Gender specific eating restrictions have been reported in a wide variety of New Guinea societies (Serpenti 1965; van Baal 1966; Oosterwal 1962; Pospisil 1963). However, these categories of inedibility were taken to be rigid and the emic [male] explanation of the rules was taken to be self evident. The contesting perspective of female interlocutors on these restrictions has rarely been published.

⁶² Totemism refers to the practice of having totemic creatures that are emblematic of a clan.

In a section of his monograph titled “Arbitrary Restrictions on Eating,” Pospisil lists the “taboos” imposed on women of child-bearing age in the Kamu Valley: “[A] woman is prohibited supernaturally as well as legally from consuming the following items: *teto*, the red variety of sugar cane; *apuu*, a variety of yam bearing potato-like tubers; the *kugou* and *jigikago* varieties of plantains; pig’s heart and brain; the *wijaaj*, *pugaago*, and *ibobija* species of parrots; and *agou*, a marsupial” (1972: 365).⁶³ Vera, a woman in her 30s who has several children, told me that this list is only partially accurate for women in Misty Ridge. While she does not eat *teto*, *kugou*, and the pig organs, it is common for Oge Bage Mee women to eat *apuu* and *agou*.

Vera said that the rest of the prohibitions were not relevant for Oge Bage Mee women. *Jigikago* bananas are not found in the lowlands, and she was not sure which animals are referred to by the words *pugaago*, *wijaaj*, and *ibobija* since they are in *bahasa atas* (Indonesian: the high[land] language). Additional restrictions on women that are specific to Siriwo include a species of cuscus (Mamalia: Phalangeridae) called *yamenai* (literally “men eat”), a marsupial called *kopuga*, a type of banana called *nonai*, *pakowki* (turtle), and a type of cassava called *momai*.⁶⁴ These regional differences in gender specific foods further support the thesis presented earlier in this chapter arguing for the conceptualization of “Mee” sub-groups as distinct entities.

Pospisil writes “Should she violate these prohibitions her husband would die of supernatural causes; if she should thus cause the death of her spouse, she herself would be executed with bow and arrow” (1972: 365). When I asked Vera what happens when these restrictions are violated, a man in the room interrupted and said that the woman would die.⁶⁵ Vera called him a liar, and he laughed. She says that these restrictions have been passed down from the *Orang Tua* (Indonesian: Ancestors), and she follows them just to be consistent with this tradition.

In Misty Ridge gender specific eating restrictions are general rules and not strict prohibitions. Vera says that she eats *nonai* bananas even though many other women do not. Two young girls whom I surveyed reported eating habits similar to Vera’s, except that they do eat *teto* sugarcane. One of these girls

⁶³ I have kept Pospisil’s original transcription. His *j* equals my *y* or the glide in diphthongs.

⁶⁴ It is possible that these forbidden plants contain phytoestrogens which would prevent pregnancies (Sandra Gilchrist, personal communication 2000).

⁶⁵ Other men told me that the woman’s husband would die, or if it was a young girl, that she would not develop breasts.

also regularly ate *momai* cassava and turtle. The other girl had eaten a pig brain. Looking at these restrictions more closely reveals that contemporary power dynamics influence their maintenance.

Pig's brains are considered a highly prized part of a pig; literally, consumers are eating high on the hog. During one feast I watched as the brain of the slaughtered pig was presented to Andy, the oldest member of the community. Of the 11 males whom I formally surveyed about their eating habits, only six of them had ever eaten a pig's brain. Each of these lucky individuals were approximately 30 years old or older, and had prominent status in the community. None of the young boys surveyed reported eating a pig's brain. Thus, the prohibition against females eating pig brains can be viewed as a male strategy to secure more of the valued food for themselves. The one young girl who has eaten a pig brain is the daughter of the man who currently owns the only pigs in Misty Ridge. She may have been afforded access to this traditionally high-status male food through the privileged position of her father.

According to Vera, the men in Misty Ridge will eat *anything*. My male interlocutors agreed that there are no foods which are specially prohibited for males to eat. In contrast, Pospisil (1963) reports that the "Mee" of the Kamu Valley are prohibited to eat a lizard called *kojo*. My interlocutors were not familiar with this animal, saying that it is unknown in the Siriwo region.

As I describe in Chapter Five *isu* (grasshoppers, katydids, and preying mantids) are collected and eaten by women but generally not eaten by men.⁶⁶ Pospisil reports that most of the insects that are considered to be edible in the Kamu Valley are not eaten by men: "Most insect gathering activity is women's activity. Men almost never participate in the communal collections during floods. Occasionally young boys and adolescents catch a few edible insects when the opportunity presents itself; they definitely prefer those species that are edible raw (stink bugs, wasps, spiders, etc.), or those regarded as great delicacies (e.g. grubs)" (1963: 245). Indeed, I rarely observed adult men in Misty Ridge collect and eat *isu*

⁶⁶ While I was in Misty Ridge I collected and ate *isu*, since I felt it would be inappropriate to intently ask questions about something which I refused to eat. People were often surprised that I would eat insects. This surprise might be explained as a breach of expected gender behavioral norms, but I would argue that it can be attributed to my ethnic identity and my status as a white foreigner. It is possible that the people of Misty Ridge did not feel comfortable giving me information that indicated I was behaving in a way that was inappropriate to my gender role. However, I explicitly asked some of my interlocutors about it and they said that this was not the case.

on their own accord, although most men said that they had eaten *isu* when they were boys. However, most men would eat *isu* that other people had collected and cooked.⁶⁷

Alex, who is in his 30s, told me that he likes to eat *isu* and that men who do not are just too *malas* (Indonesian: lazy) to go out and collect them. Pospisil explains the motivations behind the eating behavior of the Kamu men in a generalized manner: “It is only the custom and a feeling of shame, ‘to act like a female,’ that prevents them from violating these restrictions” (1963: 365). Building on this I suggest that Oge Bage Mee men rarely eat *isu* because they seek the prestige that comes from hunting larger animals. A man coming home with a bamboo tube of *isu* would signify that he is a poor hunter.

In Chapter Six I describe the variety of insects that are eaten by both men and women in Misty Ridge. The key difference between most of these insects and *isu* is that they can be eaten raw and do not need to be brought back to the house to be cooked. A man is able to eat a variety of insects on the sly without having to admit to others that he wasted his time looking for them.

In order to better understand why men do not collect *isu* I will describe the different strategies employed by men and women to procure *doge* (fish) and shrimp. In Chapter One I describe a collecting trip that I participated in with a woman named Mary and several children. Their basic method for catching shrimp and fish employed a huge net, which was made out of wire mesh bought in the city. The net was positioned in the stream and Mary flushed the shrimp and fish out of hiding places upstream (Figure 7.1). In contrast, the men attempt to spear the shrimp and fish while pursuing them underwater. They don home-made goggles made of carved wooden eye pieces, glass scraps, and a piece of rubber (Figure 7.2). Their spears are long metal rods that are sharpened at one end, with a piece of rubber attached to the other end. To shoot the spear, the free end of the piece of rubber is held in the left hand and the rod is drawn back like a slingshot. The men swim around the stream attempting to get close to the shrimp or fish, and then release the cocked rod, impaling their prey.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ One man named Peter Magai said that he is afraid to eat *egokago* (mantids) since they are similar to *kagabo* (walking sticks). His fear is idiosyncratic and is probably related to the fact that he grew up in the city. Peter’s eating habits will be discussed later in this chapter since he has broken many of the traditional taboos

⁶⁸ Freud (or for that matter Geertz) might point out the sexual imagery associated with these two food procurement techniques. The spear can be compared to the phallus, and the net to the vagina. The women collected the shrimp while the men hunted. However, none of my interlocutors made a reference to these sexual images.



Figure 7.1. Gathering freshwater shrimp and fish



Figure 7.2. A fearless shrimp hunter



Figure 7.3. Men striking a fierce pose while hunting shrimp

The objectives of the two trips were different. John referred to a shrimp hunting trip as “*mandi-mandi di kali*,” an Indonesian expression that implies leisurely “bathing in the river” (Figure 7.3) Mary and the children were focused on gathering food. On the trip that I describe in Chapter One they collected five large *ugapo* shrimp, 18 smaller *todu* shrimp, 11 *da beu* fish (gudgeons and gobies), 30 *kewage* fish (rainbowfish, genus *Melanotaena*), in addition to over thirty *isu*. On their way back from the river the women filled several bags full of sweet potatoes that they dug out of a garden and cut down some bananas to carry back to the village. In contrast, an all-male hunting trip, which actually involved more people and a comparable amount of time, procured only nine small *todu* shrimp, three *kewage* fish, and one small *kumo* fish (a Gudgeon possibly of the genus *Oxyeleotris*), and a single bunch of bananas.

The glorious shrimp hunters managed to shoot a tiny fraction of the food that the women gathered. Traditionally, male anthropologists have been seduced by images of hunters in “primitive” societies. This has resulted in a focus on the importance of the *Man the Hunter* (Lee and DeVore 1968)⁶⁹ with little mention of *Woman the Gatherer* (Dahlberg 1981). My findings from Oge Bage Mee society, described in more detail in Chapter Five, support the assertions by feminist anthropologists that female food procurement serves as the subsistence base for many so-called hunter/gather societies (Dahlberg 1981; Ember 1978; Linton 1971).

The consumption of the food that was collected on these two trips further illustrates the connections between prestige and food consumption for the men. Nearly everything collected on the men’s trip was conspicuously consumed in a public place by people of high status. The food was brought back to Sam’s house, where he cooked it while a crowd of people looked on. Then it was placed on a plate and offered to me. I tried to offer some to other people who had participated in the trip, but they all refused. Sam, who had stayed home, ate most of this food after I offered it to him. In contrast, all of the animal food collected on the trip with Mary and the children was consumed by people who had participated. Mary brought several of us back to her house, where she fried up the shrimp, fish, and insects and shared them

⁶⁹ This volume was given an ironic title by Lee and DeVore to highlight the obsession of occidental anthropologists with hunting. This was the first volume to report the importance of gathering as a subsistence strategy.

with us. However, she did this behind a closed door so that her husband or other males would not ask her to share the catch.

If males with high status consume most of the highly valued foods, then it is important for the other people in Misty Ridge to utilize foods that may be equally nutritious, but that are less valued. I suggest that the reason Oge Bage Mee women and children collect so many *isu* is because their husbands and fathers do not value this as food. The men have distaste for this food, because if they ate *isu* it would imply that they did not have the hunting skills or the reciprocal networks to procure more highly valued pork or *woda* (marsupials or rats). Using the concepts of tradition or supernatural sanction alone to explain gender specific food restrictions misses the power dynamics that allow such restrictions to persist.

DEFYING THE *ORANG TUA*

The construction of tradition in Misty Ridge is tied to recent, radical changes in people's world view. A single generation ago, most Oge Bage Mee had never encountered a sign of the industrial world. One man told me about how frightened his father was when the first airplane cruised over the Siriwo Valley. Oge Bage Mee talk about a radical change in their beliefs that took place with the coming of *agama* (Indonesian: religion) and the *pemerintah* (Indonesian: government).

The phrase *Orang Tua* (Indonesian: Old People) is used both to refer to ancient ancestors who lived long ago, and to the current elderly generation living in isolated villages up in the hills. People in Misty Ridge frequently refer to the *Orang Tua*, the older generation who believed [or still believes] in Oge Bage Mee *adat* (Indonesian), customary beliefs from the time before strong outside influences. There are uncertain feelings about cultural heritage in Misty Ridge. On one hand, the *Orang Tua* are respected as authorities on topics that range from origin myths to kinship. However, they are also feared to a certain degree. *Adat*, which can be used synonymously for the word sorcery, is a tabooed topic of conversation since interlocutors in Misty Ridge say that it is considered sinful by the church and it is discouraged by the government.

Stories about *Kugi Pasai* illustrate that food creates conflict in relation to Oge Bage Mee tradition. *Kugi Pasai* is the creator of material wealth. When his father was killed in the highlands, he fled south to the Siriwo Valley, becoming the first person to ever live there. After living in this area for some time, *Kugi*

Pasai began creating all of the things that are useful in the world: sago, sweet potatoes, taro, pigs, deer, and kangaroos. However, the *Orang Tua* became angry with him and he fled to *Amerika*.⁷⁰ In *Amerika*, *Kugi Pasai* created factories, clothing, cars, and planes. According to Sam, there is a man from Mandowen, who went abroad for Bible school, who met with *Kugi Pasai* in his house in *Amerika*. *Kugi Pasai*'s house is along the beach in a big city and it is surrounded by birds, huge trees with hanging ratan vines, and all kind of creatures.⁷¹ *Kugi Pasai* eats whatever he pleases: sago, bread, rice, or cake.

When I was in Misty Ridge in 1998 there were plans to hold a huge festival at the Beach Park in Nabire to draw *Kugi Pasai* back to Irian.⁷² People planned to kill many pigs, to feast and dance for days. Ritual slaughtering of dozens, sometimes even hundreds, of pigs are a widespread phenomenon throughout New Guinea. Pig feasts can be considered a ritual that emphasizes a generalized *traditional* Papuan identity.

However, these “traditional” events are being reinterpreted according to a modern desire to have the freedom to eat whatever they choose. None of the pig feasts I that attended in Misty Ridge involved the slaughter of more than one pig. Instead, industrially produced rice and *Super Mi* (ramen noodles) were prominently featured food items in these feasts. These imported items emphasize the feast sponsor's success within industrial society, since the purchase of rice requires wealth in the form of Indonesian rupiah, in contrast to traditional wealth measured in pigs and reciprocal obligations.

Seven of the 40 non-pig-feast meals that I recorded on my second trip to Misty Ridge also included rice. Each of these meals, except for one, was a special occasion, since they also featured meat of some kind. *Super Mi* was consumed during only two of the non-pig-feast meals, and both of these meals marked a special event. Thus, these industrially produced foods—which are cheap commodities for Indonesians in urban centers—are viewed as specialty foods by the Oge Bage Mee. The distinguished

⁷⁰ One day, out of the blue, Sam asked me where *Kugi Pasai* lived in *Amerika*. When I showed confusion and that I did not know who this person might be, there was a heated discussion between Sam and Marten, who happened to also be in the room. They concluded that the *Orang Tua* in *Amerika* must know *Kugi Pasai* and that I did not know because I was too young.

⁷¹ All of the major towns in Irian Jaya are along the coast and the center of town is usually on the beach.

⁷² However, some people said that *Kugi Pasai* would not return to Irian until the Siriwo Valley had been turned into a large city.

status of these foods may be compared to the attitude towards sugar in 19th Century England. The ability to consume a product from an exotic land made the English working class feel empowered (Mintz 1996).⁷³

However, imported rice and *Super Mi* are not likely to replace sweet potatoes, bananas, taro, and cassava as the staple foods in Misty Ridge. Imports are specialty items, but they are considered unfit for everyday consumption. Several interlocutors explained that rice leaves your stomach feeling empty, and that the only food that makes you full is sweet potatoes.

New foods have not all been readily accepted by the “Mee.” For example, *rusa* (Indonesian: deer) which were recently introduced by Indonesian development agencies, are considered to be strange creatures. Only six of the 14 people I surveyed had ever eaten deer meat. This can be explained by the anomalous status of deer in the Oge Bage Mee taxonomic system. As described in detail in Chapter Six, the Oge Bage Mee category of the edible *woda* includes marsupials and small eutherian mammals. While deer also have fur, they are radically different from any other animals found in New Guinea. In contrast, ducks, also recently introduced by development agencies, have been quickly integrated into the repertoire of animals raised by the “Mee.” Ducks unambiguously fit within the preexisting category of *bedo*, which includes birds and bats.

People who do eat deer call it *babi-rusa* (Indonesian: pig-deer), comparing it to a pig, which is also an edible, taxonomically aberrant animal. However, this linguistic trick does not completely placate the *Orang Tua*. Individuals who eat deer are considered to be violating tradition. Vera admitted to me that she has eaten deer before. Seeming somewhat embarrassed, she said she eats “*sembarang saja*” (Indonesian: just anything).

Similarly Jake, a young man who has spent much of his life in the city of Nabire, told me “*Saya makan sembarang...apa saja di depan saya makan*” (I eat anything...what ever is in front [of me] I eat). Indeed, he has eaten many animals that are traditionally prohibited for the Oge Bage Mee: both *buda* and *name tai* cassowary, deer, cats, and dogs. He claims that he has suffered no supernatural consequences for his eating behavior. Specifically, his knees have not started to hurt from eating cassowary, and he has not

⁷³ An added positive aspect about eating rice at feasts is that it liberates the women from daily backbreaking work of digging up and washing tubers from their gardens.

come down with any itching wounds from eating cats and dogs.⁷⁴ Talking with members of other cultural groups when he lived in the city helped him develop a self-reflexive perspective on Oge Bage Mee beliefs and eating practices. By eating foods of other eastern Indonesian ethnic groups, Jake identifies himself with these social groups. However, there have been many social sanctions on this behavior from other “Mee.” Jake says that the *Orang Tua* get mad at him, saying that he is doing something that is *daa*, forbidden.

Interestingly, it is children under the age of fifteen, rather than the oldest people [*Orang Tua*] in Misty Ridge, who seemed to be the strongest opponents of the breaking of eating restrictions. Mark, a boy of about twelve, told me that “Jake *tidak tahu keturunan*” (Indonesian: Jake doesn’t know his heritage). His father Sam, who is one of the oldest men in the village, told me that it was fine for people to eat forbidden things, as long as they did not become sick. However, in relation to specific people it was clear that Sam also shared a negative attitude toward taboo breakers. He told me that when he had lived in the city with Mike one of his pet cats came missing. Sam referred to Mike as a “*tukang makan barang itu*” (Indonesian: a professional eater of those things).

While Jake rebelled against generalized Oge Bage Mee norms, he nonetheless continues to maintain eating restrictions placed on his patrilineal group, Tagi. He has never eaten *koney*, a type of cuscus that is prohibited for the members of his patriline to eat. Jake told me that he was afraid of violating this restriction for fear of going blind. This suggests that patrilineal clans are more important social groups than the “Mee” ethnic group. Even though he says that he will eat anything, Jake maintains some eating restrictions that other Oge Bage Mee do not. He appeared unable to differentiate between *kagabo* (stick insects) and *isu* (grasshoppers, katydids, and mantids) and consequently he categorically avoids both groups of animals as food.

Many Oge Bage Mee have become successful at wage-paying jobs in the city while maintaining a strong commitment to their identity as members of a patrilineal clan. Alex Magai worked for several years in a lumber camp under a Chinese boss. Since he belongs to the Magai patriline it is prohibited for him to eat the totemic animal *agai* (eel). Whenever any eel entered the camp kitchen, his boss made sure that none

⁷⁴ The *Orang Tua* might argue that these sanctions will happen later in Jake’s life. Indeed, most Oge Bage Mee say that your knees start hurting from eating the cassowary only later in life.

ended up on Alex's plate. Alex had a personal spoon, plate, and mug so that he could make sure that they did not come into contact with the eel.

An individual's affinities to a particular clan can change over time. When Jane's mother, who was a member of the Magai patriline, was alive Jane did not eat eel. However, when her father, Sam, remarried a member of a different clan, she began eating eel again. Sam told me that he has also changed his eating restrictions over the course of his life. When he was a young boy he ate *ote* snakes. Later, when he found out that there is an eating restriction on *ote* snakes for members of his clan, Uweia, he stopped eating these snakes.

The restriction against eating *ote* snakes is found both in the Uweia and the Dege groups. This suggests some historic relationship between them. However, since these two clans can intermarry, it seems that any connections have been minimized by the Oge Bage Mee themselves. Pospisil (1964) describes the revolutionary creation of a new patriline among the "Mee" of Kamu, when a respected leader has a marriage that was considered to be incestuous by the conventional rules. Since the Uweia and Dege clans have similar eating restrictions, it is possible that these two groups split relatively recently, but after the split they both retained the same eating restrictions.

Mike Dege was an orphan who was raised by a member of the Tagi family. He said that, like Sam, he grew up unaware of the prohibition against eating *ote*. One day when he was little he became deathly ill, vomiting to the point of almost dying. When someone from his clan discovered that he had been eating *ote*, the cause of the illness was known. Mike considers himself lucky to have survived the supernatural sanction for his eating transgressions.

CONCLUSION

Those who break eating restrictions in Misty Ridge can be viewed as asserting their independence from the social group that maintains the restriction. Women who break gender taboos affirm their own rights to equal access to all food. Those who break generalized Oge Bage Mee restrictions challenge the validity of *adat* with their claims to a generalized Papuan identity.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ In Irian Jaya's capital of Jayapura people often refer to generalized Papuan foods such as *ubi jalur* (sweet potatoes), *papeda* (a sticky sago paste), *pinang* (betel nut), *daging babi* (pig meat), and *bobi* (beetle larvae). Some members of non-Papuan ethnicities who live in Jayapura, such as Javanese and European-

It is interesting to note that each of these violations of eating restrictions take place at a point of confrontation between competing social groups. However, by breaking these eating restrictions individuals are not challenging the fundamental base of the Oge Bage Mee edible world. For example, no one in Misty Ridge breaks the general prohibition against eating pygmy grasshoppers (Orthoptera: Tetrigidae), since there have been no encounters with groups of people who may eat these animals. There is no reason for the Oge Bage Mee to question the inedible status of pygmy grasshoppers. In the language of Bourdieu (1994), Oge Bage Mee taboo breakers are challenging orthodoxy with heterodoxy. Oge Bage Mee are not venturing into the wider universe of the undiscussed.

Americans, refuse to eat many of these Papuan foods due to culturally specific notions of disgust. Javanese claim that *papeda* has the consistency of glue and many are prohibited to eat pork by their Islamic religion. European-Americans in Jayapura have remarked that chewing betel nut destroys the teeth and most are disgusted by the practice of eating beetle larvae.

CHAPTER EIGHT: *ADAT* RECONFIGURING ETIC KNOWLEDGE

In 1954 Kenneth Pike first created the concepts emic and etic from the linguistic terms phonetic and phonemic. Phonetics is the study and transcription of speech sounds of all languages and phonemics is the description and classification of a specific language. Pike characterizes emic and etic approaches:

In the... **etic** approach to the data, an author is primarily concerned with generalized statements about the data, such that he (a) classifies systematically all comparable data, of all cultures in the world, into a single system; (b) provides a set of criteria to classify any bit of such data; (c) organizes into types the elements so classified; (d) studies, identifies, and describes any newly found data in reference to this system which has been *created* by the analyst before studying the particular culture within which the new data have been found. In contrast to the etic approach an **emic** one is in essence valid for only one language (or one culture) at a time—or, more specifically, for only one minimum dialect at a time or for the relatively homogenous and integrated behavior of people of one culture area or culturally defined class of people; it is an attempt to *discover* and to describe the pattern of that particular language or culture in reference to the way in which the various elements of that culture are related to each other in the functioning of a particular pattern...(1954: 8, emphasis his).

Etic perspectives have frequently dominated emic perspectives in the anthropological literature. However, each of these approaches to knowledge, which are constructed on different precepts and assumptions, has epistemological validity.

I have described in Chapter One how the concept of *adat* (customary knowledge, etiquette, and rules) has been employed by the Indonesian government to place variations in culture in different regions of the archipelago within a framework of nationalistic unity. *Adat* can be viewed as analogous to emic knowledge. By playing this trope Indonesian nationalists allow local knowledges to persist, but only in a relationship of subservience to etic Indonesian ideology. Since the coming of *Agama* (Indonesian: Religion), *adat* has been viewed as a force which runs against the tenets of Christianity. Among the Oge Bage Mee “*adat*” has become a forbidden topic of conversation. The phrase “*bikin adat*” (Indonesian: to make *adat*) has come to mean sorcery, which is strictly forbidden by the Church and frowned on by

Indonesian authorities. According to my interlocutors, no one in Misty Ridge continues to *bikin adat*, but they also said that other “Mee” groups living upstream have been slowly killing members of the village through sorcery.

In Chapter Six I examined the correspondences between an emic and etic system of taxonomy. However, these correspondences have little meaning for the Oge Bage Mee. The primary aim of Chapter Eight will be to present a thick description of Oge Bage Mee *adat* about dangerous phenomena. A theme that I will weave into this narrative is how etic knowledges (i.e. Christian parables, scientific models, and Indonesian concepts) have been appropriated, incorporated, and reworked in emic terms. I will also continue along the theme of Section Two about the construction of the edible world, since beliefs about danger are important factors that determine which animals are avoided as food.

When nightfall hits Misty Ridge people quickly board up their windows and shut their doors. An eerie chorus of shrieking cicadas, katydids, crickets, and birds rises from the surrounding forest. Bats begin to cruise low overhead and unseen creatures begin to stir. Night is a dangerous time when *suangi*⁷⁶ (Indonesian: [wicked] spirits) abound. There are *tene* from dead humans and dogs, cannibalistic ghouls called *kego*, and animal servants of a wicked demon named Simiso. Animals such as *kagabo* (stick insects), *sina* (snakes, worms, and caterpillars), and *agai* (eels) may have *enisa* (a type of spirit) associated with them that can bring harm to humans.

Many spirits also *jalan-jalan* (Indonesian: travel around) during the day. There are natural *tanda* (Indonesian, signs) and *ciri-ciri* (Indonesian: characteristics) that can be observed to know if there is an active spirit nearby. The sun becomes dark, the mountains become cloudy, and all of the animals sound their voices. The Sekeretaris Desa (Indonesian: Village Secretary) told me to run quickly home if I see these signs and shut all of the doors and windows until they pass.

⁷⁶ The Indonesian word *suangi* unites a variety of phenomena that are not necessarily linked in the “Mee” language (i.e. *tene*, *eneisa*, and *kego*) Nonetheless, interlocutors used this Indonesian concept to help explain these diverse phenomena.

GHOSTS (TENE)

Traditional “Mee” believe that when a person’s body dies a *tene* (departed shadow) is born. In the Kamu Valley people imagine it to look like the black outline of a dead man (Pospisil 1965). *Tene* continue to have relationships with living people even after the body that they were once associated with has decayed. They may help or harm living humans. Sam told me that if you are on good terms with a *tene* it may “*kasih tahu informasi*” (Indonesian: tell you information). In contrast, a *tene* that is out to get you may “*bikin sakit*” (Indonesian: make sickness).

As discussed in Chapter Four, people in Misty Ridge do not eat *tege* (cicadas) because they have a belief that is unique among the Oge Bage Mee that cicadas harbor *tene*.⁷⁷ Alex told me that his father, who had been a prominent shaman when he was living, turned into a cicada when he died. When dangerous spirits were afoot Alex said that his father would warn him with loud cries.

Other animals, such as *koga* (crickets) and *bogai pai* (mole crickets) serve as familiars for mischievous *tene* that are trying to harm living people. These creatures are nocturnal and people quickly board up their windows and shut their doors to try to prevent these animals from entering their houses. When *koga* or *bogai pai* enter people’s homes they bring the *tene* with them. After the physical crickets leave, the *tene* often stay behind. These *tene* can induce headaches, vomiting, fever, and swollen stomachs. One interlocutor told me that if he were to eat *koga*, which are eaten by “Mee” in Kamu (Pospisil 1972), he would vomit intensely.

Dogs are unique among animals since it is believed that they also have *tene* that are liberated during the process of death. As described in Chapter Five, dogs are employed to hunt small game but are considered to be expendable. Occasionally dogs are tolerated inside of houses, but if they make nuisances of themselves they are beaten and hurled yelping out into the yard by the scruff of their necks. However, people sometimes feel regretful when they beat their dogs. They fear retribution when their dogs die. In the Oge Bage Mee world view it would be as dangerous to eat a dog as it would be to eat a human due to the powers of *tene*. Despite the lack of respect that is given to dogs when they are alive, they are given proper funerals when they die.

⁷⁷ Among the Kamu “Mee” *Tege* refers to one of the most feared and lethal beings who himself is an *enisa* (Pospisil 1964).

The funerary rites conducted for dogs are similar to those for humans. The status and political influence of whoever dies determines the elaborateness of the burial ritual. The followers of the most prestigious men craft an elaborate tree house for the dead body so as to gain the favor of the newly liberated *tene*. The bodies of small children and dogs, however, are prepared in a much simpler fashion since their *tene* are not as powerful.⁷⁸

Beliefs about *tene* and death have been contested since the entrance of *Agama* (Indonesian: Religion). Sam told me that those who believe in *tene* will not go to heaven. I witnessed one funeral, for a man approximately my own age, while I was in Misty Ridge. It was quite different from those that have been described for the traditional “Mee” (Pospisil 1972). The day after the man’s death, a coffin was built out of wooden planks. The body was loaded into the coffin and, in a spirited mood, a group of men carried it out to a nearby patch of secondary forest. A shovel and a piece of rebar were used to dig a deep hole and after a lengthy Christian prayer in Oge Bage Mee the coffin and everything that touched the coffin was lowered into the hole and covered with dirt. After the funeral everyone who had participated went directly to the stream where we vigorously washed ourselves. One interlocutor said that if the dirt over the grave had cracks in it a few days later the soul had entered heaven.

In Misty Ridge people continue to have funerary rites for dogs in the same manner as for humans, and they have switched to Christian graves rather than traditional structures. One way of interpreting the continuity of the practice of burying dogs is that they are continuing to placate the *tene*, so that it does not bring harm to the [abusive] human caretakers of the dog. No interlocutors explicitly commented about this since it is a sensitive subject—everyone in Misty Ridge identifies themselves as Christian and belief in *tene* has been identified as inconsistent with church ideology. The fact that Sam’s daughter Jane, who is in her early teens, told me that she was *weyda* (scared) to eat dogs supports this hypothesis. In contrast, Oge Bage Mee who eat dogs, as discussed in Chapter Seven, have rejected beliefs in *tene* as superstitious.

⁷⁸ Pospisil (1972: 264) describes highland “Mee” funerary structures in great detail. The Oge Bage Mee traditionally built similar structures in addition to a type of small hut on the ground in the front yard of the deceased family’s home.

ANIMAL SPIRITS

Pospisil introduces a section on “Kapauku World View” in his 1965 monograph with the following passage: “the systematic and logically consistent philosophy that is described next is by no means the property of the [“Mee”] tribe as a whole; it belongs to a few very intelligent individuals from the southern part of the Kamu Valley who have elaborated their views of the universe into a logical, systematic whole” (1965: 83). This quote suggests that my conclusion of Chapter Six about how idiolects have made for a heterogeneous and not entirely coherent lexicon, may be extended to the most abstract spheres of “Mee” belief. In this section I will explore different emic explanations of why certain animals are dangerous.

Kagabo (stick insects) are among the animals that the Oge Bage Mee fear the most. In Chapter Six I discuss the role that toxic secretions may play in determining the inedible status of *kagabo*. While Oge Bage Mee explanations of the dangerous properties of *kagabo* are consistent with this etic explanation, they are much richer and more complex. Marten told me that *kagabo* can quickly fly through the air and grab on to unwary humans with their long legs and sharp claws. If the *kencing* (Indonesian: urine) of *kagabo* comes into contact with the skin it can cause an itchy rash all over the body that is like scabies.

While many people were enthusiastic about helping me collect *isu*, everyone in Misty Ridge was skeptical when I began to capture and collect *kagabo*. I decided to keep one particularly large specimen alive in an old water bottle in order to observe if the secretions did indeed cause a rash. During an interview in a group setting a few days later I asked John if some itchy bumps on my wrist could be from the *kagabo*. There was stifled laughter at first, but people broke into hysterics when Marten said “*kagabo kencing kou*” (the stick insect pissed on ya’). The laughing went on for a few minutes and when someone new ventured into the room drawn by the racket the story would be told again. This brought renewed laughter until peoples eyes were watering with tears and their sides started getting cramps. I had doubted a very basic Oge Bage Mee belief and suffered the natural [and then social] sanctions.

Explanations about being afraid of *kagabo* because of their caustic urine seemed self evident until I started to hear about a particularly dangerous type of *kagabo* called *utu wawa* a few weeks before I was scheduled to end my research. I first heard about *utu wawa* from Mike Dege, while we were discussing *ugi kuney* snakes (see below). *Utu wawa* are an extremely large type of *kagabo* that have a plump red

abdomen. The stick insects that I collected were as large as a foot long, but interlocutors said that the *utu wawa* is much larger. Like the *ugi kuney*, Mike said that the *utu wawa* can kill you simply by looking at you. He told me a story about a man who came across an *utu wawa* in the forest. The man was extremely frightened but did not die instantly. He returned to his village and within a few weeks he, and all of his family, had died. Since there was a delay between the man's encounter with the *utu wawa* and his death, Mike suspects that it was either an *enisa* itself, or that it harbored an *enisa*. On the first encounter *enisa* sees or smells the victim but it does not enter his or her body. Later it can seek out the victim and eat him or her from the inside out.⁷⁹

Soon after learning about *utu wawa* from Mike I asked about it in a conversation with Sam and Marten. Marten claimed that he did not know anything about it and demanded to know who told me about it. Later in the same day John told me that *utu wawa* were things that should not be named.

A few days later, during the village meeting that I describe in the conclusion to this chapter, the *Kepala Desa* (Indonesian: Village Head) briefly told me a story about a woman who had been killed by an *utu wawa*. Sam later fleshed out this story:

A man and a woman went hunting in the woods. The man shot a pig with his bow and arrow. The woman went to look for tree fern fronds to steam as greens with the pork. While the woman was picking some fronds she spied a large red pandanus fruit⁸⁰ in a nearby tree. She stopped picking the leaves and went about getting the fruit down from the tree. She found a stick and used it to hook the branch that had the fruit on it. As she reached up and grabbed a hold of the leaves on the branch, suddenly part of the branch came alive. It was a huge *kagabo* with a red abdomen that she had mistaken for the pandanus fruit. The *kagabo* flew at her and bit her head off at the neck. It left her body lying on the ground but it brought her head back up on to the branch to eat. When the man finished butchering the pig he grew impatient for his wife to return so he went to look for her. He followed her footprints to the site of an apparent struggle and then he followed his wife's blood till he found her body. He searched around for the creature that had taken her head. When he spied the *kagabo* up in the tree he quickly shot it dead with an arrow. He buried the *kagabo* and his wife together in a pit.

While there are several overlapping emic explanations about why *kagabo* are dangerous, everybody in Misty Ridge was frightened of them. When I was keeping a *kagabo* that was approximately 10 inches long in a water bottle I was able to observe different reactions to the creature. One man screamed and ran to the other side of the room when it suddenly began moving around inside of its domicile. Alex once picked up the bottle calmly and moved it towards Mike's face. Mike jumped back with eyes wide,

⁷⁹ Mike said that the *Orang Tua* had medicine to treat these types of sickness, but now these are considered to be sinful. He says that the *Orang Tua* had to die so that the Mee could have Religion.

⁸⁰ These fruits are oblong in shape and can be up to three quarters of a meter long.

shouting “Hey!” Alex smiled and took the bottle away. Even the color plates of stick insects in *Grasshopper Country* inspired fear in my friends living in Misty Ridge. John sucked air through his teeth and shook his right hand flaccidly when he opened the book to an enlarged photograph of a stick insect. When another interlocutor felt something on his leg while looking at pictures of stick insects he shouted and jumped up, causing other people in the room to laugh nervously.

Two other animals in the Siriwo Valley are believed to be just as dangerous as *utu wawa*: the Fresh Water Moray Eel (*agai kamai*) and a type of snake called *ugi kuney*. Sam said that in the Oge Bage Mee language these animals are *enima meneta*, or forbidden to be seen. This prohibition was instated by the Creator. Sam said that if the prohibition is violated it is the act of seeing the animal itself that kills the person. However, Sam’s son John told me that he had once caught an *agai kamai*. When John saw the eel’s head he let go of the fishing line and ran away. John feels that he had a close encounter with death, and says that he was lucky to have escaped whatever type of *suangi* (Indonesian: spirit) that was associated with the *agai kamai*. Some people subscribe to the theory that Mike told me, that these animals are either *enisa* (a type of spirit) themselves, or host them. *Enisa* are able to follow people back to their village and then slowly kill them and others around them. However, most people I asked about the mechanism that spirits associated with these animals use to kill people were either unsure themselves or apprehensive about telling me. As will be further discussed in the next section, industrialized medicines are increasingly being used to treat attacks by spirits. Sam told me that if a spirit enters your body you must look for industrialized medicine.

Pospisil writes that “Mee” spirits “attack people, slipping into them, according to the less sophisticated informants, through the mouth, or according to more intelligent people, immaterially penetrating the body as two shadows might fuse together” (1964: 18). I agree that there are competing theories to explain the action of spirits within the collective “Mee” system of beliefs. However, I contend that it is not useful to classify these theories according to their degree of sophistication. As do people in our own society, the Oge Bage Mee have differing interpretations of reality. There is not single “true” or orthodox set of beliefs held by the Oge Bage Mee.

GHOULS (KEGO)

People in Misty Ridge believe that there are currently two *kego* (ghouls) living in the village.⁸¹ They are older women who are believed to have killed and eaten their children and their husbands. A woman becomes a ghoul when the spirit of a *kogou* (bird of prey)⁸² enters her body and becomes a puppeteer (Indonesian: *dalang*). The *kego* (ghoul) makes arrangements to kill other humans so that it can share the body with the *kogou* (bird of prey) after it has been prepared for a funeral. When bodies were prepared by putting them in platforms or in tree houses the *kogou* would have had ready access to the corpse and it seems reasonable that the corpse was frequently eaten by the bird. However, now that the dead are given Christian burials people know that a *kego* was involved if they see a *kogou* flying near a fresh grave.

Recent deaths in Misty Ridge have been attributed to the two *kego*. The man whose funeral is described above is among these victims. Sam told me that this man had been bathing in the stream late one afternoon when the two ghouls came and beat him: “*Dia bunuh, dapat sakit, lewat tiga hari sudah mati*” (Indonesian: she killed him, he got sick, after three days he was dead). Thus, the acting of killing is separate from, and actually precedes, the death itself. One man said that a *kogou* was spotted near the grave shortly after the funeral.

Another incident that was interpreted as an attack by one of the *kego* involved Nia, the five-year-old daughter of the *Kepala Desa* (Indonesian: Village Head). She had been visiting Sam’s house where I had been recording guitar songs with my tape recorder. It was well after dark by the time she was ready to walk up the road to her father’s house. A woman, whom I later recognized as one of the suspected *kego*, came to the door to escort Nia home. The next day Nia came down with a high fever. This sudden

⁸¹ The Kamu “Mee” also have ghouls, but they are called *meenoo* (Pospisil 1964). At the time of Pospisil’s fieldwork *kego tai* referred to sorcerers. It appears that the ghoul concept is largely the same for the Kamu “Mee” and the Oge Bage Mee. However, the name of the Oge Bage Mee ghoul is related to the Kamu name for sorcerer. The Dutch administration in the Paniai region interpreted reports about ghouls as evidence of cannibalism.

⁸² The term *kogou* can refer to falcons, hawks, kites, eagles, owls, and owlet-nightjars. When speaking Indonesian interlocutors referred to these birds as *burung hantu*, literally meaning ghost birds. See Chapter Six for the family names of these birds. Many species of these birds share habits of feeding on carrion and living vertebrates.

sickness was initially diagnosed as a result of something she had eaten.⁸³ However, when someone remembered that she had been alone with one of the *kego* the night before everybody realized that this could be the cause of the sickness. Nia was treated by her father with an injection of penicillin as well as with doses of primaquine and quinine. Additionally, a long prayer in Oge Bage Mee was given to Ugatame, the Creator.

Since a ghoulish spirit is immortal, Oge Bage Mee do not kill women who are known or suspected to harbor ghouls. The spirit may take revenge on the killer along with the woman's *tene*. Additionally, it is advantageous to know where the ghoulish resides, rather than be constantly wondering if another normal woman will be turned into a monster (Pospisil 1964).

CONCLUSION

On January 2nd, 1999, a few days before I was scheduled to leave Misty Ridge, there was a formal meeting in the Kantor Desa (Village Office) that drew 35 people, which is nearly everyone who was in the village at that time. The meeting began with a legal case involving a house that had been burnt down. The plaintiff was awarded Rp. 500,000 and the case was settled. After the case was settled the *Sekretaris Desa* (Indonesian: Village Secretary) formally asked me to sit at a table in front of the audience.

After I was seated the *Sekretaris* began a long speech in Indonesian recounting the history and founding of Misty Ridge. He told me that several hundred people became sick and died when they first moved to settle near the road. The village was moved a few kilometers up the road. This time 102 people died. When Misty Ridge was founded only seven people remained. He concluded his story by asking me what was causing all of this disease and death. I was dumbfounded so I asked about the symptoms of the people who had died. Niko unbuttoned his shirt and pressed on the right side of his belly indicating that his *limpah* (Indonesian: spleen) was large and hard. He said that during the next stage of the disease *bigi*

⁸³ It was explained to me by her father as a result of eating raw peanuts. The peanuts entered her stomach as seeds (Indonesian: *bigi*) and grew there causing it to swell and become hard, and causing her temperature to quickly rise. The condition of *bigi limpa* (Indonesian: spleen seeds) will be characterized in more detail in the conclusion to Chapter Eight.

(Indonesian: seeds) begin to travel from the spleen up to the heart.⁸⁴ The seeds then travel to the lungs where they cause difficulty in breathing. Niko told me that this sickness was the same as malaria. Everybody tells him that mosquitoes cause malaria, but he does not believe it since people continue to come down with malaria even though they sleep under mosquito nets.

Niko continued to explain his changing understanding of disease causation: Another route of disease causation comes from drinking *mentah* (Indonesian: raw or not boiled) water.⁸⁵ He said that he had been hearing about this for a long time but he only began to understand the process a few years ago. Gold *tahi* (Indonesian: tailings) form seeds in the body if they are ingested. Now that there has been a gold rush to the Siriwo Valley the gold tailings have started to contaminate the water.

When Niko and the *Sekretaris* finished describing their changing view of disease causation they asked me to bring “*obat limbah langsung dari Amerika*” (Indonesian: seed medicine directly from America). They also asked me for some *obat* (Indonesian: medicine) to spray in the forest that would kill all of the *suangi* (Indonesian: spirits).

Thus, beliefs are in a state of dynamic transition in Misty Ridge. Elements from Indonesian folk beliefs, Christianity, and western science are being incorporated into a distinctive local system. As a representative of industrialized society I myself was used as an informant about these foreign concepts. The Oge Bage Mee continue to be agents of their own cultural production. Rather than being drowned out by dominating etic beliefs, the Oge Bage Mee selectively incorporate concepts that are useful. These concepts are translated and transformed during a dialectical process of change.

⁸⁴ *Bigi limpa* (spleen seeds) is an eastern Indonesian folk conception of illness that is also found among educated people in the urban centers of Irian Jaya. It is linked to a phenomenon that is recognized by western medicine. When an individual is repeatedly infected with malaria, and other non-specific parasitic infections, the spleen swells and becomes hard.

⁸⁵ Nobody in Misty Ridge boils their water on a consistent basis. It is taken from a small stream that runs out of the forest. People bathe, defecate, and prepare animal carcasses downstream of where water is collected. I did not have any acute intestinal problems while living in Misty Ridge and since returning to the United States I have not been diagnosed with any water-borne parasites even though I also drank untreated water from the stream.

DISCUSSION: MODELING CULTURAL CHANGE

[T]here is no discipline, no structure of knowledge, no institution or epistemology that can or has ever stood free of the various sociocultural, historical, and political formations that give epochs their peculiar individuality (Said 1989: 211).

European ideology about Stone Age savages, which is outlined in Chapter One, is grounded in theories about cultural evolution which date back more than a century. In 1836 C. J. Thomsen produced *A Guide to Northern Antiquities* which arranged the ancient museum curiosities of the time according to the Three Age System. This framework divided world history into progressive stages of technological development: the Stone Age, the Bronze Age, and the Iron Age. Charles Darwin returned to England from his voyage with the *Beagle* in the same year that Thomsen published his guide. In the two decades that ensued between Darwin's return and the publication of *On the Origin of Species* (1859) there were a series of exhibitions in Britain that glorified the *progress* of industrial civilization: most notably the Crystal Palace (1850) and the Great Exhibition (1851) (Bennett 1994). The most obvious application of Darwin's theory of natural selection, which drew on ideas of anagenetic evolution already implicit in works by Thomsen and by paleontologists, is to explain the generation of biological diversity. However, Darwin's theory also served as the foundation of the colonial ideology that placed the United Kingdom at the pinnacle of industrial evolution over a world of backward peoples.

Building on Tomsen's and Darwin's work, Lewis Henry Morgan published *Ancient Society* in 1877. In this text Morgan described the stages of human progress from Savagery to Barbarism to Civilization (Morgan 1988). The key difference in this scheme from Tomsen's is that it employed a comparative approach. Morgan used tautological classes to group living and extinct cultures together independent of any historical connections. Societies were placed in a linear progression according to their degree of resemblance to Morgan's own society. He gave certain technological traits higher *a priori* value than other traits, and then used them to create tautological classes. For example: "the use of pottery is less significant than that of domestic animals, of iron, or of a phonetic alphabet" (Morgan 1988: 38).

While it is no longer polite to use the labels *barbarian* and *savage*, many late 20th century anthropologists have simply substituted more palatable terms within the same sort of classificatory framework. For example, current the models of agricultural evolution that I reviewed in Chapter Five describe how “hunter gatherers” developed into “horticulturists” who in turn became “agriculturists” (Bates 1998). These models all have foundations in anagenetic Darwinian evolutionary theory.

According to models of cultural evolution, “native” technologies are inherently inferior to that of Europeans. Therefore, some colonizers have felt an obligation to share their good fortune and help the colonized become civilized.⁸⁶ However, these good intentions frequently backfire and create instead of solving problems. A classic example of this is described by Lauriston Sharp in the article “Steel axes for stone-age Australians.” He relates how the social structure of the Yir Yoront was undermined by the indiscriminant distribution of large numbers of steel axes. Stone axes had been the exclusive property of older men and other members of the society had to borrow these axes along strictly defined kinship lines. The new axes brought about a social revolution since women and children could also own these important items, and also led to the destruction of regional trade routes (Sharp 1974).

Anthropologists have used the stages that originate with Thomsen and Morgan to type the people they study. Bulmer, a physical anthropologist who was one of the first explorers of the eastern highlands of New Guinea, writes: “The Timorini still live entirely in the Stone Age. [It is] superfluous to say that this is—or at least was—a peculiarity of all the Papuans. They do not know anything about pottery; clothing is scanty, as everywhere in New Guinea” (Blumer 1922: 5). But the variations of descriptions within this genre are little more than changes in word order and different names of cultural groups. More than forty years later Leopold Pospisil wrote *essentially* the same thing about a different group of people. He states that the [Mee] “live in a neolithic stage of development; their major tools are made of polished stones, wood, and bamboo. They know no metal, pottery, weaving, true basketry, sculpture, or painting. Their clothes are conspicuous for their scantiness” (Posposil 1965: 15).

Images of the Stone Age have been appropriated by popular culture and have been used to promote the idea of Irian Jaya as an exhibition. For example, a current travel guide about Irian Jaya is titled: *New Guinea: Journey into the Stone Age* (Muller 1993). The following description of a man from

⁸⁶ This trend continues today under the rubric of development.

the highlands of Irian Jaya by ethnographer/travel writer Peter Matthiessen illustrates how anachronistic notions can lead to the creation of a racial caricature:

The experience in his eye was not his own. It was thousands of years old, immutable, passed along as certainly and inevitably as his dark skin, the cast of his quick face. These characters were more variable than experience, for experience was static in the valley; it was older than time itself, for time was a thing of but two generations, dated by moons and ending with the day in which he found himself (1962: 4).

Such projections explicitly cast “primitives” as people who are static, and who are incapable of adapting. Despite these ethnocentric generalizations by the colonizers, there have been many individuals who were born in isolated villages in Irian who have achieved high status by the standards of industrial society. For example, Benny Giay, who is “Mee,” earned his Ph.D. in anthropology in the United States and currently occupies a prominent position at the Walter Post Seminary in Jayapura.

As described in Chapter One, “primitive” societies have been romanticized as paradises and any changes threaten to destroy this ideal state. Anthropologists were motivated by these theoretical frameworks to save “primitive” cultures before they were totally destroyed by the encroaching forces of global capitalism. For example, the collection and exhibition of artifacts for the *Margaret Mead Hall of Pacific Peoples* in the American Museum of Natural History preserved the material remains of the “last primitive peoples” in sterile containers. This exhibit displays headless mannequins made out of long acrylic rods and clear bands that represent waists that wear native costumes.

Colonized people are depicted [or decapitated ?] in these types of exhibits as passive non-persons who lack any agency. Industrialized society seems to be saying that it has the power to destroy these cultures while at the same time appropriating their material culture. Despite these delusions of grandeur on the part of those involved in imperialistic projects, colonized peoples continue to live and change:

In contrast to the Pacific Islanders, Mead, as a world figure and an anthropologist, is portrayed not with acrylic rods and bands, but with a life-size photo. The great irony, though, is that it was Margaret Mead, and not Pacific Island cultures, who died and was memorialized in a coffin-like exhibit case. The Pacific Islanders, the “last primitive peoples” who are “now gone forever,” survive. In fact, some of them now energetically debate the merits and problems of Mead’s scientific methods (Kahn 1995: 329).

Changes in “primitive” societies have been viewed by many 20th century anthropologists as pathological. For example, a broad class of phenomena have been grouped together, in a manner that is similar to the comparative approach of Morgan, as “cargo cult,” “millennarian,” or “messianic” movements. Benny Giay, the Irianese scholar mentioned above, recently published a review titled

“Cargoism in Irian Jaya Today” (Gaiy and Godschalk 1993). This article describes recent movements among the “Mee” which are focused on three different themes: *pabrik* (factories), *alam* (nature), and *batu delima* (precious stones). Each of these movements was about something that many Europeans also value, but by classifying them together under the framework of “cargoism” Gaiy and Godschalk imply that they are irrational.

In the abstract of this article Gaiy and Godschalk write that the people of Irian Jaya are searching for something that goes beyond guarantees of human rights, social interactions based on fairness, and a reasonable share of economic benefits through development. They are searching for “a world in which they will enjoy health and a life of youthfulness; in which they will live with one another in peace and happiness, and have access to wealth without limit” (1993: 330). An unstated assumption of this article is that this is an unobtainable utopia, and that the people who hold these beliefs are naive about the real world. Gaiy and Godschalk describe cargoism as “a heavy fog [that] is enveloping the human landscape of Irian Jaya” (1993: 341), and conclude with a discussion about the strategies that have been employed by the Indonesian government to control cargo movements. I spoke with many people in Misty Ridge about *pabrik*, *alam*, and *batu delima* but I think that these topics are similar to each other only in that they all involve etic knowledge that has been reworked by the “Mee” into distinctive beliefs.

Throughout the history of exploration of New Guinea, the colonizers have reported cargo cult activity (Souter 1963). An article in the widely read *Conformity and Conflict: Readings in Cultural Anthropology* characterizes cargo cult phenomena in New Guinea as “bizarre,” “fanatical,” and involving “religious frenzy” (Worsley 1974: 439-40). Worsley writes:

Of course the cargo never comes. The cults nonetheless live on. If the millennium does not arrive on schedule, then perhaps there is some failure in the magic, some error in the ritual. New breakaway groups organize around “purer” faith and ritual. The cult rarely disappears, so long as the social situation which brings it into being persists (1974: 445).

On the contrary, indigenous movements in this vein have often brought about concrete results. In a general sense it can be said that the cargo has arrived, since there are many more industrialized goods available in New Guinea, when compared to before the colonizers arrived. A specific example of concrete results is the Manseren Revolt which was described in a letter to the *American Anthropologist* as a “nativistic movement” (Heldring 1950). The event happened shortly after the Allies bombed the Japanese who were occupying Manokwari (see Figure 1.2). The Allied bombing was viewed by many Papuans as

signifying that a Redeemer called Manawar was going to come to New Guinea. A religion called Manseren, which borrowed heavily from Christian missionary ideology, was born and followers began to change their lives in preparation for the coming of the messiah. The people were incited “to burn the churches and schools, massacre the school teachers and missionaries, drive out the shopkeepers and kill the Japanese slavedrivers” (Heldring 1950: 563). The alternate ideological system of Manseren served as a successful motivating force that allowed these people to conquer their oppressors. However, descriptions of this alternate interpretation of reality have been framed as illegitimate by the colonial regimes.

Many contemporary anthropologists treat change as a phenomenon that is universal to human cultures. Leading theoreticians have abandoned the notion that change in indigenous societies is necessarily pathological. Instead anthropologists have sought to return agency to the people. Sahlins wrote his classic article “Cosmologies of Capitalism” in 1988 in order to “join the anthropological chorus of protest against the idea that the global expansion of Western capitalism, or the World System so-called, has made the colonized and ‘peripheral’ peoples the passive objects of their own history and not its authors” (1994: 412).

Since theories of cultural *evolution* have faded out of fashion among socio-cultural anthropologists, models of change in non-western societies have focused almost exclusively on the encounters between local cultures and global forces. Sahlins (1994) describes encounters with Western capitalism from the perspective of three different cultures: Chinese, Kwakiutl, and Hawaiian. In a like manner I have shown how etic knowledge is interpreted in the local terms of the Oge Bage Mee (Chapter Eight); how specific elements from industrialized society have been selectively appropriated in a process of non-linear evolution (Chapter Five); and how traditional authorities have been challenged as a result of contacts with Indonesian culture (Chapter Seven).

However, texts that exclusively focus on the encounter between local groups and the forces of globalization diminish the importance of local processes of change. Sahlins (1994) only gives agency to the colonized in regards to their experience of the colonizers. I suggest that current models of cultural change that exclusively address change in relation to globalization, industrialization, capitalism, or colonial encounters deny agency to local cultures.

The Oge Bage Mee are undergoing many internal processes of change, which are parallel to the processes of change that have arisen in response to external factors. In the conclusion of Chapter Six I model one of these local processes: competing cultural authorities within Oge Bage Mee society enforce their particular idiolects on other members of their society, thereby causing semantic shifts. Homegrown cultural changes are found widely in the literature of anthropology. For example, historical linguists recognize that “languages are constantly changing, and there are no sharp breaks in their continuity between one point in time and another” (Arlotto 1981: 22). The approximately 250 languages that are currently found in Irian Jaya have all been derived from a much smaller stock of original languages through a process of local innovation (Franklin 1997). Change has been taking place continuously in Oge Bage Mee society even before their first encounter with the forces of globalization.

While the Oge Bage Mee are agents in the creation of their own culture, they have been the victims of oppression. Several years before I first came to Irian Jaya the *peristiwa tebu* (Indonesian: sugarcane incident) took place. A man named Yap, a former OPM leader that had become a police informant, guided an Indonesian military patrol up the Siriwo River in search of OPM troops. Yap had told the authorities that there were OPM soldiers in a particular Oge Bage Mee village. But when the group entered this village no troops were to be found. Not wanting to disappoint his masters, Yap pointed out several young men who were promptly captured. Downstream, on the way back to Nabire, the young men were given sugarcane to eat while their captors discussed their fate. Before the men finished the sugarcane the Indonesian troops shot them dead.

Anthropology as a discipline has historically been a tool of imperialism. Not only have anthropologists directly worked towards the objectives of those in power, but we have been producing middle-range theories that legitimize relationships of dominance and exploitation. It is imperative that models be evaluated not only in relation to their utility in explaining data—the political, social, and economic impacts of theories on the peoples that we study must carefully be evaluated. The challenge that we currently face is to devise new ways of thinking that empower the powerless and bring the aspirations of anthropological Subjects into mainstream discourse.

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GLOSSARY

- ADAT** Indonesian: Custom, tradition, manners, or local knowledge.
- AGAI** Oge Bage Mee: Eels.
- BAGE** Oge Bage Mee: Tribe, race, or peoples.
- BEDO** Oge Bage Mee: Refers generally to the class of birds but it is defined in detail in Figure 6.1.
- DOGE** Oge Bage Mee: Fish, frogs, and tadpoles. Also see Figure 6.1.
- EKARI** This is the term that the Moni peoples use to refer to their neighbors. In Indonesian this word is pronounced Ekagi. Several authors have used this term to refer to the “Mee” even though this name is insulting: Steltenpool (1969), Kudiai (1979), van Nunen (in Kudiai 1979), Hylkema (1988), Sanggenafa (1990), and Thaime (1998).
- EMIC** Kenneth Pike (1954) coined this term from the linguistic word phonemic, which refers to an approach to studying a single language. An emic approach attempts to discover and describe the pattern of a particular language or culture in reference to the way in which various elements relate to each other. Also see *etic*, and the detailed discussion on page 123.
- ENISA** Oge Bage Mee: This is a spirit that is usually invisible and is frequently deadly. The animals *utu wawa*, *agai kamaï*, and *ugi kuney* are believed to harbor this spirit. If a person sees one of these animals the *enisa* smells him or her and then follows to the village where it slowly eats the victims body.
- ETIC** This term comes from the linguistic word phonetic (Pike 1954). An etic approach is concerned with general statements about data from a wide range of linguistic or cultural systems. The investigator attempts to classify and type these data. Also see emic, and the detailed discussion on page 123.
- IRIAN JAYA** The territory that is currently known by this term was previously been known as Netherlands New Guinea. Indigenous people who seek independence from Indonesia refer to their land as Papua Barat (Indonesian: West Papua). Jaya is an Indonesian word that means glorious. There are several proposed etymological origins for the word Irian. Some sources state that it means curly hair. Others say that it is a pun: *Ikut Republik Indonesia Anti-Netherlands* (Indonesian: Join the Republic of Indonesia Against the Netherlands).
- ISU** Oge Bage Mee: Katydid, grasshoppers, and preying mantids. See definition in Figure 6.1.
- JAYAPURA** The provincial capital of Irian Jaya, where UNCEN is located.
- KAGABO** Oge Bage Mee: Stick insects.
- KAPAUKU** This is the name that the Mimika people on the south coast of Irian Jaya use to refer to their neighbors in the highlands. According to Oge Bage Mee interlocutors it denotes backwards mountain people, or cannibals. This was the term used by the Dutch Administration for the “Mee” (Doble 1960). Pospisil (1999, personal communication) continues to use this term in published articles and academic presentations.

- KEGO** Oge Bage Mee: Ghoul. The spirit of a *kogou* enters a woman's body and causes her to kill other humans so that the spirit can feast on the corpse.
- KEPALA DESA** Indonesian: Village Head. This is a formal administrative position was created by the Indonesian government in each village that was large enough to be recognized. The Desa is the lowest level of administration in the Indonesian government, being subservient to the *Kecamatan* (Indonesian: County) and *Kabupaten* (Indonesian: District) levels of organization.
- KOGA** Oge Bage Mee: Crickets.
- KOGOU** Oge Bage Mee: Eagles, hawks, owl-nightjars, and owls.
- KUGI PASAI** Oge Bage Mee: The creator of all material wealth. This supernatural person created all of the basic food that people eat in Misty Ridge. The Orang Tua became angry with him so he left the Siriwo region and went to America. In America Kugi Pasai created factories, cars, planes, and all other industrialized goods. Interlocutors said that when a city was built in the Siriwo region Kugi Pasai would return.
- “MEE”** This word literally means people in several phonologically distinct languages in the eastern highlands of Irian Jaya. The people who I studied refer to themselves as Mee. In the context of this thesis the term “Mee” denotes the sub-groups in Paniai, Kamu, Mapia, Yabi,, and the Oge Bage Mee who I studied. I use it in a way that is analogous to other author's use of the terms Kapauku or Ekari. The term appears in quotes since other groups (i.e. the Moni and the Auye), who are not generally considered to be part of the same ethnic group, also use the word *mee* for human. The loose boundaries of the term “Mee” accurately reflect the overlapping cultural traits and concentric ethnic identities shared by these groups.
- MISTY RIDGE** The pseudonym for the village where I conducted my research.
- NABIRE** The capital town of the *Kabupaten* (Indonesian: County) Paniai, where my field site is located.
- OBAT** Indonesian: Medicine.
- OGE** “Mee”: This term has different meanings in different “Mee” dialects. In Oge Bage Mee it means the hot-lands or lowlands. This includes all of the area from the provincial capital of Jayapura to Nabire. In the Auye language *oge* means foreign. All things Indonesian are considered *oge*, as are all industrial goods (Mike Moxness, personal communication 1998). In the Kamu dialect *oge* means hidden or unable to be seen (Leopold Pospisil, personal communication 1999).
- OGE BAGE MEE** My thesis is the first written account that uses this term to denote the “Mee” who live in the Siriwo River Valley and do not belong to the Auye tribe. This name is used by the people who I study to refer to themselves when they talk with highland “Mee” groups. This term effectively separates these people from the other “Mee” groups because of the different meanings of *oge* in local dialects. Until the 1970s the Oge Bage Mee were not in contact with highlands “Mee” (Leopold Pospisil, personal communication 1999).
- OPM** Indonesian: *Operasi Papua Merdeka*, or the Operation for Papuan Freedom. This is a group of freedom fighters who oppose Indonesian occupation of Papua Barat (Irian Jaya).
- ORANG** Indonesian: Person, ethnic group, or classifier for people.
- ORANG TUA** Indonesian: Old People, Parents, or Ancestors. This term was variably used by interlocutors in Misty Ridge to refer either to ancient ancestors who lived in a distant past or to refer to the older [traditional] generation. In standard Indonesian usage *orang tua* refers to someone's parents.

OTE Oge Bage Mee: A type of snake that is eaten by most people in Misty Ridge, but is prohibited for members of the Dege or Uweia clans.

PAPUA This term has been used in a racist manner in the colonial literature to refer to the “natives” of New Guinea. However, this term has been appropriated and reworked by people to be a positive expression of an ethnic identity that is distinct from Indonesia.

SEKERETARIS DESA Indonesian: Village Secretary. Also see *Kepala Desa*.

SIMISO Oge Bage Mee: An evil supernatural being who has the power to fly through the air and freeze people’s muscles. Bats and stick insects are his familiars.

SINA Oge Bage Mee: Snakes, caterpillars, grubs, and worms.

TAMAN MINI (aka Mini) Indonesian: A Disneyesque theme park in Jakarta that promotes nationalist ideology.

TENE Oge Bage Mee: Departed shadow. When a human or dog dies a *tene* is born. Depending on the relationship of the deceased to the living a *tene* can be helpful or harmful. A benevolent *tene* will give information to living humans that have its’ favor. A *tene* can seek revenge on those who originally killed its’ former body.

TINI The acronym for the Indonesian Armed Forces

UNCEN The abbreviation for the Universitas Cenderawasih (Bird of Paradise University). I was enrolled as a student at UNCEN while I was in Irian Jaya.

UTU WAWA Oge Bage Mee: This is a huge stick insect that has a bright red abdomen. It is believed that this animal harbors an *enisa* and is extremely deadly. See story on page 128.

WODA Oge Bage Mee: Small game animals including marsupials and rats. See Figure 6.1.

INDEX

- “Mee” viii, ix, 64-71, 120
Adat (Indonesian: custom) 25, 117, 121, 123-124; (sorcery) 117, 123-124
 Auye 66-68
 Bateson, Gregory x, 36, 47, 95
 Bourdieu, Pierre 110, 122
 Cannibalism 20-23, 33, 36, 62, 65, 124, 146
 Cassowaries 68, 84, 85, 99-100, 119
 Categories 27, 43, 46-47, 95-110, 111, 119
 Clans (Dege) 121, 127, 148; (Uweia) 89, 121, 148; (Magai) 100, 120
 Coherence 55, 107-109, 127
 Dani 21, 27, 36, 67
 Darwin, Charles 48, 133-134
 Disease causation 131-132
 Dogs 70, 74, 85, 98, 124-126, 148; (edible) 62, 98, 119, 126
 Douglas, Mary 64, 95, 108, 111
 Drought 43-44, 93-94
Enisa (a type of spirit) 124, 128-129, 146
 Fieldnotes xi, 15-16, 54
 Funerals 125-126, 130
 Gold 15, 20, 40, 88-90, 132
 Haraway, Donna 36, 59
 Identity xiii, 24-25, 37, 43, 58, 61-62, 64-71, 118, 120-121
Kugi Pasai (the creator of material wealth) 117-118, 147
 Language ix, 16, 28, 52, 64-65, 68, 70, 96, 123, 138
 Millenarian movements 135-137
 Mintz, Sidney 111, 118
 Modernity 21, 58, 118
 Moni 65-66, 146, 147
 Parsimony 109
 Photographs 55-58
 Pigs 112-113, 118
 Pospisil, Leopold 11, 52, 66-70, 74, 76, 112, 125, 146, 147
 Religion arriving 117, 123, 126
 Said, Edward 19, 21, 108, 132
 Sanctions on eating viii, 62, 83, 117, 120, 121
Simiso (a leader among evil spirits) 99, 124, 148
 Taboos 62, 68, 105; (Female) 68, 112, 121; (broken) 120, 122
Taman Mini 24-26, 148
Woman the Gatherer 116
 World view 24, 117, 125, 127