Inside – Outside

Sawos – Iatmul relations reconsidered

Christin Kocher Schmid

Édition électronique

URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/jso/430>
DOI : 10.4000/jso.430
ISSN : 1760-7256

Éditeur

Société des océanistes

Édition imprimée

Date de publication : 1 décembre 2005
Pagination : 113-127
ISSN : 0300-953x

Référence électronique

Christin Kocher Schmid, « Inside – Outside », *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* [En ligne], 120-121 | Année 2005, mis en ligne le 27 novembre 2008, consulté le 22 avril 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/jso/430> ; DOI : 10.4000/jso.430

Inside – Outside. Sawos – Iatmul relations reconsidered

par

Christin KOCHER SCHMID*

RÉSUMÉ

La plupart des anthropologues considère que les Sawos et les Iatmul vivant dans la plaine du Sepik en Papouasie Nouvelle-Guinée constituent deux groupes linguistiques et culturels différents, les Sawos étant les sujets de la dominance culturelle et économique iatmul. À partir du modèle écologique, on a pu montrer que les Sawos et Iatmul sont une unité organique qui s'est adaptée avec succès à un environnement difficile, instable mais riche en ressources. Ils constituent donc les deux faces d'une même culture ; les villages sawos sont à l'abri des dangers et cachés parmi les marécages dans un intérieur sécurisé pendant que les villages iatmul sont perchés sur les berges exposées de la rivière dans un extérieur dangereux. Sawos et Iatmul ne partagent pas en confiance seulement leur nourriture mais aussi les matières premières importantes, les artefacts et les cérémonies. Selon ce modèle, les villages iatmul peuvent être vus comme des forts gardant l'accès aux ressources en sagou dans l'intérieur, c'est-à-dire aux villages sawos, alors qu'en même temps ils garantissent l'accès des Sawos aux ressources de la rivière. La quantité de données sur lesquelles cet article est basé a été collectée entre 1972 et 1974 par les membres de l'expédition Sépik de Bâles et jusqu'ici uniquement publiées en allemand.

MOTS-CLÉS : ethnoécologie, adaptation, relations culturelles, distribution et gestion des ressources, Sepik, Iatmul, Sawos.

ABSTRACT

Most anthropologists consider Sawos and Iatmul people living in the Sepik plain of Papua New Guinea to constitute two different cultural-linguistic groups with Sawos being subject to Iatmul economic and cultural dominance. Using an ethnoecological model it can be demonstrated that Iatmul and Sawos are an organic unity successfully adapted to a difficult, instable but resource-rich environment. They constitute two facets of the same culture; the Sawos villages are safe and hidden amongst the swamps on the safe inside while Iatmul villages perch on the exposed river banks on the dangerous outside. Sawos and Iatmul not only trustingly share their food with each other but also crucial raw materials, artefacts, and ceremonies. Extending this model, Iatmul villages can be seen as forts guarding the access to the sago resources of the inland, that is to the Sawos villages, while at the same time they guarantee the Sawos access to the resources of the open river. The bulk of the data on which this article is based were collected in 1972-4 by members of the Basel Sepik expedition and hitherto only published in German.

KEYWORDS: ethnoecology, adaptation, cultural relations, distribution and management of resources, Sepik, Iatmul, Sawos.

* Department of Oceania, Museum der Kulturen Basel, Christin.Kocher@gmx.net.

In 1972-1974 the Basel Institute of Ethnology under the direction of Meinhard Schuster conducted extensive co-ordinated research in the the Middle Sepik area of the then East Sepik District of the present state of Papua New Guinea: the Basel Sepik Expedition (BASE hereafter). BASE included eleven participants. In four Iatmul villages six Basel PhD researchers were based for lengthy periods of time: Kararau, Yensan, Palimbei, and Kandingei, to the north at the Sawos village of Gaikorobi one PhD researcher, and at Aibom to the south the research director and his wife worked while two other senior researchers were based farther upstream with Kwoma people.

BASE has produced a huge body of data, many of them published but unfortunately most of it in German and thus not accessible to most other Melanesianists¹. This major research undertaking was followed up by a program initiated and designed by Christian Kaufmann of the Museum der Kulturen Basel: the Basel Iatmul Catalogue of Objects (BICO hereafter). BICO aimed at collecting as much additional evidence as possible relating to visual cultural aspects from field notes, photographs, films, and tapes amassed by the BASE researchers (Kaufmann 1990:589). This undertaking was only partially successful, the reasons are varied but include the almost proverbial inclination of anthropologists towards individual working patterns and our unfamiliarity with team work. By 1984 a slimmed down German version of the first part of the collection had been completed and was published in microfiche format (Obrist et al. 1984). Meanwhile this first version of BICO is translated into English and further unpublished and published material by BASE researchers but also by others² were added. However, there is still a considerable amount of work to be done before BICO in its final form can be published as computer disk while funds are reduced to a trickle.

This article wants to demonstrate the strength of co-ordinated research and of an equally co-ordinated evaluation and synthesis of the amassed data. However, it seems that such an undertaking is only successful from a temporal and spatial distance and should not be attempted

by one of the originally involved researchers. The parts so far finished have been assembled and written up by, first Brigit Obrist, then Antje Denner³, and now myself – all three of us have not participated in BASE, have worked in other areas of Papua New Guinea but are well acquainted with Sepik research issues.

Sawos-Iatmul relations constitute a central topos in the anthropology of Middle Sepik peoples, thus the work of all BASE researchers (and also of others having conducted research in the same area) includes more or less detailed or elaborate data and reflections on them. While BASE participants' work focussed on other topics (gender relations, socialisation, ritual, social structure, mythology, technology), their work contains a wealth of smaller and larger chunks of valuable information on Sawos-Iatmul relations. This article combines this dispersed information and proposes a new model of Sawos-Iatmul relations while applying an ethno-ecological perspective⁴. According to the research locations of the BASE researchers it focusses on the Central Iatmul and their Sawos partners living in the forest north of the river, and consequently also on the period of time BASE (1972-1974) was carried out. This also means, that questions of history and origin are largely excluded, they have been dealt with at length by others (Gewertz, 1983; Schindlbeck, 1984; Wasmann, 1990; Newton, 1997). However, the results of historical work accomplished by BASE researchers is in accordance with the model I wish to present here (see also Newton, 1997). Further, this focus on the location of BASE researchers means that this article deals with the 'true' Sawos living north of the Sepik river, and not with the Sawos-like populations south of the river. These behave economically towards Iatmul more or less like «"true" Sawos, but they have neither a common history with the Iatmul and Samburi (Chambri) they interact with, nor do they originally share a language (Du) with them» (Kaufmann, 2003: personal communications).

When conducting research on land use and -management as well as on the impact of logging operations in the West Sepik border area (1996-2000, see Kocher Schmid, 2000a), I noticed similarities between Iatmul culture with which I was

1. BASE participants are, Brigitta and Jörg Hauser-Schäublin, Christian and Anne Kaufmann-Heinimann, Markus Schindlbeck, Jürg Schmid, Meinhard and Gisela Schuster, Milan Stanek, Jürg Wassmann and Florence Weiss. See references for their publications.

2. For instance the complementing ethnobiological data of Christian Coiffier's excellent thesis, see Coiffier (1994).

3. In addition, Antje Denner has assembled and evaluated data on religious systems and knowledge transfer which were collected by BASE researchers, see Denner (1998).

4. In their resumé of the Basel Sepik conference, Lutkehaus and Roscoe (1987: 581) quote a statement by Richard Scaglion, that compared to the ethnographically comparable Amazon, «how relatively impoverished Sepik anthropology is in basic economic and ecological research». It seems that in the Sepik other topics have imposed themselves forcibly on field researchers.

well acquainted (see Schmid and Kocher Schmid, 1992) and the culture of the Bo speakers I was working with. Both are living in a similar lowland environment, use similar resources with sago as a staple, and share some mythical motifs⁵ as well as other specifics⁶. However, compared to the culture of Bo speakers which is based on a mobile, procuring lifestyle, Iatmul culture looked to me more and more like a late, marginal but baroque, luxuriant and lush blossom. Marginal in the sense, that Iatmul seem to be situated near the easternmost edge of a large cultural complex of «sago-people» with a centre somewhere in northwestern New Guinea and eastern Indonesia⁷. Baroque, luxuriant and lush, as the wealth of mythological narratives and elements, the rituals connected to them and foremost the wealth of material objects produced by this culture is breathtaking and overwhelming with hardly another culture found in Melanesia to match its glory.

This is the background with which I returned to Basel and began to occupy myself with BICO. The data for this article are taken from the BICO files, published work by members of BASE, and published work by other Sepik researchers. In addition, and most important, I talked to BASE researchers – in alphabetical order: Christian Kaufmann, Jürg Schmid and Florence Weiss – and discussed with them the topics I was interested in. Their contribution to this article is crucial and I acknowledge their patience and willingness to look back thirty years later⁸.

The setting

The Sepik is Papua New Guinea's mightiest river system with a length of 1,100 km and a catchment area of 78,000 km² (Osborne, 1993: 343). It is an unstable environment. The river constantly changes its course, creating new oxbow lakes where river meanders are cut off, and there are numerous side arms and lakes, grass swamps and floating islands. Annually the river bursts its banks and sets a wide area under water. In addition, the Sepik region is also tectonically unstable with frequent earthquakes.

The Iatmul live in the periodically inundated flood plain of the Middle Sepik with many of

their villages right on the river banks, while Sawos settlements are situated farther away from the river outside the area of periodical flooding. Iatmul villages are in the open and exposed, Sawos villages hidden amongst the sago swamps (Hauser-Schäublin, 1990: 477-478). Iatmul have to rely on their canoes for any movement during the flood period, and for most of their activities during the rest of the year. Most of the year it takes between one and several hours on foot to reach the Sawos villages, during the flood period part of the way can be made by canoe. The staple for both, Sawos and Iatmul, is the starch extracted from the trunks of sago palms. However, while the Sawos have on their territories extensive stands of sago palms, the Iatmul have no access to any or enough sago palms to cover the starchy component of their diet. Thus, their women barter with Sawos women for processed sago flour at specially designated market places close to the Sawos villages.

The starting point: gender equality

Right at the beginning, Florence Weiss who took a closer look at Iatmul gender relations (Weiss, 1995), insisted on two basic facts. First, the character of Sawos-Iatmul relations as expressed by their regular markets follows the same pattern as Iatmul husband-wife relations. Second, Iatmul husband-wife relations, that is gender relations are characterised by equality between the partners. With Iatmul people the activities of husband and wife complement each other, and they have to rely on each other. While the female contributions to a household are continuous, the male contributions are intermittent. Iatmul women are responsible for the regular supply of food, they are fishers and market traders, Iatmul men are craftsmen. Iatmul women continuously fish and continuously trade part of their catch with Sawos women for sago starch, the other crucial component of their diet. Iatmul men intermittently build and maintain houses and manufacture canoes. The materials, timber and rattan, required for their craft they have to buy from their Sawos neighbours (Coiffier, 1994: 347 and 1036; Schmid, 2003; and BICO Categories. 12. and 4). Without canoes, there

5. For instance the story of Nau and Tepmeaman, see Schmid and Kocher Schmid (1992: 75-76).

6. For instance the indispensable use of «» for elements of ceremonial men's houses (Kocher Schmid, in print).

7. See also Pamela Swadling (1996) and Matthew Spriggs (1998). Further, according to Douglas Newton (1997), Iatmul culture seems to be indeed a «late blossom».

8. Looking back is important in Iatmul culture and the reason for a *naven*, see Florence Weiss (1984: 218). Further I have benefited from comments by Christian Coiffier, Antje Denner and the participants in the roundtable in honour of Peter Dwyer held 2003 at the Musée de l'Homme, Paris.

would be no fish and thus no food while the importance of houses is certainly undisputed as is the regular supply of food.

«None of the genders disposes of an instrument of power suited to force anybody to work or to claim the produce of the work of somebody else. The situation is rather characterised by fixed proportions of exchange between the sexes. Every person controls the products he or she has generated.» (Weiss 1995: 62)

Gender equality is not restricted to the purely economic sphere: male rituals cannot be staged without the women's consent, as they play vital roles in their preparation, «[...] thus here as well a relatively strong mutual dependence results, without the contribution of both no ritual can be staged. And thus no ritual takes place without the mutual consent of both men and women¹⁰» (Weiss, 1995: 65). The private dealings between men and women are also characterised by equality if not by a slight female dominance: Iatmul women may pick their husbands and lovers, and not the other way around (Weiss, 1995: 57, see also Bateson [1936]1958: 144-145). In addition, a husband has no rights on his wife's body:

«You always have to ask your wife first. The vagina is not a wooden hole, you cannot penetrate her whenever you wish.»¹¹ (Stanek, 1983: 370)

The symbolic system as well, which is so important in Iatmul thought, shows no indications of a devaluation of the female sphere.

«Thus, all lakes and forests, villages and houses – including men's ceremonial houses – personify female ancestors, all creeks, the Sepik river, tall trees, the rain, the wind, and the mountains male ancestors. [...] The primeval being from which all people are descended is androgynous. In these allocations no discrimination of the female can be made out.¹²» (Weiss, 1995: 66-67)

The relations between Sawos men and women seem to be very similar if not the same, although the division of labour is less strict (Schindlbeck, 1980: 69-72).

The first, preliminary model

It can be concluded that with male-female relations being equal and balanced and if Sawos-Iatmul relations do exhibit the same pattern, these must be equal and balanced as well. We can thus draw up the following preliminary model of a balanced exchange:

1. Iatmul women as well as Sawos women continuously deliver food to their husbands.
2. Iatmul men as well as Sawos men intermittently deliver craft products to their wives.
3. Sawos women continuously deliver sago starch to Iatmul women.
4. Iatmul women continuously deliver fish to Sawos women.
5. Sawos men intermittently deliver building materials (timber, rattan) to Iatmul men.
6. Iatmul men intermittently deliver other things to Sawos men.

Thus, within households men and women exchange their products, while women continuously trade with other women for food, and men intermittently trade with other men for other things. I deliberately use the expression «other things» because point 6 is the critical relation in this model and will later lead us on. Points 1 and 2 are based on the equality of men and women set out before, and thus need no further discussion.

About the balanced relations of the food exchange between Sawos and Iatmul, points 3 and 4, opinions differ. It looks like the Iatmul women were much more dependent on Sawos sago than the Sawos women on Iatmul fish. However, it also looked to some observers that despite this imbalance, Iatmul women had the upper hand in this exchange. Deborah Gewertz for instance (1983: 19), cites an incidence where a Iatmul woman who had already exchanged a fish for a lump of sago, saw a nicer and fresher chunk and abused her former Sawos trading partner who, without comment, cancelled the transac-

9. «Kein Geschlecht verfügt im Bereich der Oekonomie über ein Machtinstrument, das geeignet wäre, jemanden zur Arbeit zu zwingen oder über ein Arbeitsprodukt einer Person zu verfügen. Die Verhältnisse sind vielmehr dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass festgelegte Tauschverhältnisse zwischen den Geschlechtern bestehen. Jede Person verfügt über die von ihr erarbeiteten Produkte.»

10. «[...], so ergibt sich auch hier [...] eine relativ starke gegenseitige Abhängigkeit; ohne den Beitrag beider ist kein Ritual durchführbar. Und so findet auch kein Ritual ohne gegenseitiges Einverständnis von Männern und Frauen statt.»

11. «Du musst immer deine Ehefrau zuerst fragen. Die Vagina ist nicht ein Loch im Holz, du kannst sie nicht penetrieren, wann du willst.»

12. «So verkörpern alle Seen und Wälder, Dörfer und Häuser – auch die Männerhäuser – weibliche, alle Bäche, der Sepik-Fluss, hohe Bäume, der Regen, der Wind und die Berge männliche Ahnen. [...] Das Urwesen, von dem alle Menschen abstammen, ist androgyn. In diesen Zuteilungen lässt sich keine Abwertung des Weiblichen ausmachen.»

tion, that is took back her sago and handed over the fish. However, there is as anecdotal incidence for the reverse situation. Sawos women do not take any fish offered by Iatmul women, they show clear preferences. Markus Schindlbeck (1980: 163) reports Sawos women refusing to barter their sago for fish they did not consider to be fresh enough. Catfish¹³ is preferred over the introduced «makau»¹⁴, and fresh fish over smoked fish (Hauser-Schäublin, 1977: 23; Schmid, 2003: personal communications; Weiss, 2003: personal communications). Further, Sawos women cherish variety. There were complaints about Iatmul women bringing only 'makau' to the market (Schindlbeck, 1980: 167). The variety is higher with the fish Sawos women procure in their own territories than with the fish they trade in from the Iatmul (Schindlbeck, 1980: 173). BASE researchers observed that Iatmul and Sawos women treated each other as equals and that Sawos women did not feel that they had to work harder for their equivalent in the barter (Hauser-Schäublin, 1977; Schindlbeck, 1980; Schmid, 2003: personal communications; Weiss, 2003: personal communications). I do not think that calculations and comparison of working hours spent per unit of exchange (Schindlbeck, 1980; Gewertz, 1983) will lead us to a better appreciation of Sawos-Iatmul relations. There is a much more intriguing situation: a considerable proportion of Sawos women only rarely exchange their sago for Iatmul fish (Schindlbeck, 1980: 171-184) while Iatmul women have to continuously trade in sago starch in order to feed their families (Weiss, 2003: personal communications). Sawos women could thus well do without Iatmul fish. The crucial question therefore is: why do Sawos women barter with Iatmul women at all? The explanation presented by Schindlbeck is the most convincing: barter with Iatmul women increases Sawos food security:

«On the other hand, barter offers a certain security to be continuously supplied with fish while this security is not given with domestic fishing which is subject

to considerable fluctuations.»¹⁵ (Schindlbeck, 1980: 172-173)

This argument can be extended, as Sawos women not only barter for fish with Iatmul women. Other market items include, crocodile meat, turtles, swampen¹⁶ eggs and perhaps also mayflies¹⁷. These are resources of the open water, that is of the river and the lakes of the Iatmul flood plain. Further, these are seasonal resources: turtles and crocodiles are largely taken in the dry season (Schindlbeck, 1980: 166; Schmid, 2003: personal communications), and swampen eggs are abundant when the waters fall and the grass has grown sufficiently along the riverbanks where the women can collect them from their canoes (Coiffier, 1994: 317) while mayflies span perhaps twice a year. Thus, by maintaining barter relations with Iatmul women, Sawos women increase their own food security. They gain access to the resources of the rich ecotones¹⁸ and the open waters outside their territories. For them the produce they trade in acts as a buffer to balance their own supplies as well as to add further variety to their diet. Variety is most important as an incidence reported shows:

«A woman of Kraiembit [a village section of Gaikorobi, cks] is said to have insulted the people of Kambok [another village section of Gaikorobi, cks] by saying that they only ate 'makau', a fish which is largely traded in from the Iatmul. Whereas the people of Kraiembit had a larger variety of food. This insult was so serious that a brawl between the village sections could only just be averted.»¹⁹ (Schindlbeck, 1980: 173)

A high regard for food variety seems to be widespread and its effects should not be underestimated. Yopno people of Nokopo for instance, are proud of the characteristics of their territory which allow them to access resources of several ecological zones (Kocher Schmid, 1998: 110), while Maenge people on New Britain treat unusual crop cultivars as collector's items (Panoff, 1969: 22). Thus, for both, Sawos and Iatmul, barter markets and balanced relations comple-

13. *Arius* spp. (Coiffier, 1994: 1710), *kami* in the vernacular, «pis i gat nil» in Tok Pisin.

14. Tok Pisin for *Tilapia sparmanii* (Coiffier, 1994: 1710).

15. «Dagegen bietet der Tauschhandel eine gewisse Sicherheit, regelmässig mit Fischen versorgt zu werden, während diese Sicherheit bei den grossen Schwankungen im eigenen Fischfang ja nicht besteht.»

16. *Porphyrio porphyrio*, the purple swampen, *wudameli* in the vernacular (Coiffier, 1994: 1712).

17. *Ephemera ?danica*, *kal* in the vernacular (Coiffier, 1994: 1715).

18. An ecotone is the transition zone between two ecozones, in the Sepik flood plain ecotones are constantly created by the Sepik river's flooding and its changing its course. In ecotones resources are concentrated in time and space. See Christin Kocher Schmid (1998: 112-113).

19. «Eine Frau von Kraiembit soll über die Menschen von Kambok die Beleidigung ausgesprochen haben, dass sie nur den Fisch "makau", der ja hauptsächlich von den Iatmul eingehandelt wird, essen würden. Die Menschen von Kraiembit sollen dagegen eine grössere Vielfalt an Nahrungsmitteln zur Verfügung haben. Diese Beleidigung war derart gravierend, dass eine Schlägerei zwischen den Dorfteilen nur mit Mühe verhindert werden konnte.»

ment and buffer gaps in their respective food supplies. For Sawos seasonal fluctuations can be counterbalanced, and they gain access to the rich resources of the flood plain, while Iatmul rely on Sawos sago for the carbohydrate component of their diet.

With balanced relations between the genders and between Sawos and Iatmul women, we expect to find balanced relations between Sawos and Iatmul men (points 5 and 6 of the model). The significance and volume of the building materials (timber, rattan, sago fronds) intermittently delivered by Sawos to Iatmul men, has long been underestimated or even not recognised. Laycock (1965) for instance, writes when discussing the height of the gables of men's ceremonial houses:

«For instance, on the river, where timber is plentiful, the gables reach their greatest height [...]» (Laycock, 1965, cited in Hauser-Schäublin, 1990: 477)

Quite to the contrary, timber is not plentiful on the river. Large enough trees with strong and durable timber as is required for houses²⁰ are only found in any significant numbers outside the periodically inundated flood plain, on Sawos territories (Coiffier 1994: 292). Timber suitable for building canoes has also to be traded in from the Sawos²¹ while the canoe is a crucial item for Iatmul livelihoods (BICO Cat. 4; Kocher Schmid, 2004). Without canoes, and without houses, life on the riverbanks would not be possible. In addition, the hard palmwood *yaman*²² required to manufacture spears, a traditionally important hunting tool and weapon of Iatmul men, comes from Sawos territories. Rattan as well, a crucial construction material and a material of high ritual significance (see Schmid and Kocher Schmid, 1992: 79; Coiffier, 1994: 1036), has to be traded in. Nowadays Iatmul men pay Sawos men considerable amounts of money to obtain these crucial materials. In 1988, the heaviest and densest timbers (e.g. a *Dysoxylum* sp.) were worth 200-300 Kina (i.e. about the same amount in Euros)²³ per tree, the 'canoe tree' *wane* (*Octomeles sumatrana*) 100-120 Kina and a «kwila» (*Intsia bijuga*) 80-100 Kina. Further, Iatmul men

paid for better quality rattan five Kina, and for the lesser quality two Kina per 10 metres. Even the tiles from sewn up sago fronds used for thatch had to be bought for 30 Toea each from the Sawos (Coiffier, 1994: 347) by those Iatmul who had no direct access to sago palms.

The question remains of what did Iatmul men give to Sawos men in exchange for all these indispensable materials before they had access to money? With barter markets we have seen that they allow the Sawos to access the resources of the open waters, that is of the river and the lakes in the Iatmul flood plain. The exploitation of these resources is largely but not exclusively the task of Iatmul fisherwomen. Iatmul men procure animals which are rare, prestigious and restricted to the open waters. They not only hunt crocodiles but also build special constructions into the river to catch shark and sawfish which migrate upriver from the sea (Schmid, 2003: personal communications; see also Bateson, 1932: 251). These three creatures of the open waters seem to hold special significance for Iatmul as well as for Sawos²⁴. In addition, there is a range of larger birds which are restricted to the open waters and are hunted by Iatmul men, for instance great egrets²⁵. However, this seems not enough for a balanced exchange relation, the more so as Iatmul men obtain additional and crucial produce from Sawos men. They receive planting stock of vegetatively propagated crops for their gardens from the continuously producing Sawos gardens which are not subject to annual floods and thus destruction of the parent plants. This is most important after times of exceptionally high water levels which periodically occur (Schindlbeck, 1980: 201; Schmid, 2003: personal communications). Domestic animal stock is also replaced from Sawos sources: chicken, piglets, young cassowaries (Schmid, 2003: personal communications). Further, a range of ritual artefacts and ritually used materials are obtained from the Sawos (Newton, 1963; Gawi, 1977: 95; Coiffier, 1994: 348; Coiffier, 2002: 189; Kaufmann, 2003: personal communications). All these crucial materials and resources (construction materials, planting

20. For instance *kwarep*, Tok Pisin «kwila», *Intsia bijuga* or *miaba*, Tok Pisin «garamut», *Vitex cofassus* (Coiffier, 1994: 1719, 1721).

21. Or even from more distant groups farther upriver (Kaufmann 2003, Schmid 2003).

22. A *Ptychococcus* sp. (Coiffier, 1994: 292, 1111).

23. At this time the Kina had a value of about SFr. 1.50, or Euro 1.-.

24. This special significance is clear in the case of the crocodile, which represents the paramount primeval being in Iatmul and Sawos thought (see e.g. Stanek, 1982, 1983; Schmid and Kocher Schmid, 1992). The special significance of sharks is demonstrated by a pattern on Sawos pottery representing sharks (Bateson, 1932: 291) while sawfish masks are reported from the Central Iatmul (Coiffier, 1994: 747).

25. *Egretta alba*, *saun awwan* in the vernacular (Coiffier 1994:1712). The plumes of these birds are used to decorate dancers (Stanek, 1982: 52) and shell valuables (Stanek, 1983: 325).

stock, young animals, materials used in ritual) are nowadays paid for with money. Money²⁶, like shark and sawfish or driftwood, circulates along the river, that is, Iatmul living on the banks of the river, have better access to this resource than Sawos who live in the forest. The tourist ships for instance, visit the Iatmul but not the Sawos villages, and it is the Iatmul who receive money for staging a «singsing»²⁷ or from the sale of artefacts (Schmid, 2003: personal communications). However, not only nice and useful things circulate in and on the river and can be harvested. The river is also open to raiders or foreign troops (like in WW2), and life on its banks is dangerous.

Summing-up: Iatmul live risky and spectacularly in an exposed situation, Sawos live safely and inconspicuously in a well hidden situation. These thoughts lead us to the second, an ethnoecological model of Sawos-Iatmul relations.

The second, ethnoecological model

In 1985 Markus Schindlbeck has very cautiously proposed the model I want to elaborate, detail and test:

«Between Iatmul and Sawos villages are many similarities, and perhaps we even could say that they represent *one* culture with different economic bases, differences in style and language.» (Schindlbeck, 1985: 167)

It should be added here that Iatmul villages as well display differences in style and language between themselves, see for instance the case of the Palimbei- and the Nyaura groups. On the other hand, Schindlbeck is wrong in only one but crucial point: Iatmul and Sawos share a common economic base. They have successfully adapted to a difficult, unstable but resource-rich environment. Only when we consider them an organic unity occupying the Middle Sepik plain, harvesting, managing and distributing its resources, we can understand their relationship. When we take these reflections a step further, we may even consider Iatmul a highly specialised part of Sawos culture²⁸. The vital part of this organic unity, the Sawos villages, are well hidden and safe between the sago swamps of the forest while the Iatmul villages perch precariously in the open on the river banks. Via this specialised part of the

Sawos-Iatmul cultural organism, its vulnerable «body» which is well sheltered in the forest and swamps gains access to the resources and opportunities of the open and dangerous river. When searching for a picture, a polyp or other reef animal flashed into my mind: vulnerable body hidden in a crevice with colourful tentacles swaying through the water, attracting attention and fishing for titbits. The tentacles withdraw when in danger, and this is just what Iatmul do. When, towards the end of the 19th century, Yensan was threatened by Korogo²⁹ it joined its Sawos partner village Nangusap in the forest. Only after 1908, when the German colonialists had made their appearance, the present village was erected at its old riverside location (Schmid, 2003: personal communications). Similar moves are documented by Markus Schindlbeck (1985: 168) and for Kararau by Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin (1990: 479).

Within the area visited by BASE researchers we are not dealing with a Sawos culture and a Iatmul culture, even not with a single Sawos-Iatmul cultural organism but with a series of separate, dual Sawos-Iatmul units: Kararau-(one section of) Gaikorobi, Kanganamun-(another section of) Gaikorobi, Yensan-Nangusap, (different sections of) Palimbei-(different sections of both) Marap and Yamok.

«The most important institutionalised and regular trade relations are not maintained amongst themselves [amongst the Central Iatmul, cks] but with a number of Sawos villages...»³⁰ (Stanek, 1983: 40).

This brings us back to Florence Weiss's structural identity of Iatmul gender relations and Sawos-Iatmul relations: within a Iatmul household vital produce is exchanged between the partners, the same applies to the dual units, and this vital produce includes food. Even where there is such a rigid division of labour between the genders, and men and women follow separate ways (also literally: there are women's and men's paths) as with Iatmul, we would not consider them to be of two different cultural groups. Markus Schindlbeck (1980: 208) rightly makes the point that the exchange of food and its acceptance means intimacy and trust. Thus, food is given and trustingly accepted within households and kin groups and this trust is extended

26. And in former times other valuables, such as mollusc shells or stone for adzes.

27. Tok Pisin for a dancing and singing function which may include masking.

28. In this context of course, the historical perspective cannot be totally neglected: «It could also be argued, conversly, that the Iatmul are, historically speaking, simply a part of the Eastern and Central Sawos.» (Kaufmann, 1990: 590).

29. Then Kaulagu.

30. «Die wichtigsten institutionalisierten und regelmässigen Handelsbeziehungen unterhalten sie [die Zentral Iatmul, cks] aber nicht untereinander, sondern mit einer Anzahl von Dörfern der Sawos...»

to include the respective dual unit. Further, all over Melanesia staple foods are powerful symbols of lifestyle and cultural identity (see Christian Kocher Schmid with the FRP-PNG working group 2000: 64), and people can be quite fussy about what they eat and what they reject³¹.

Sharing food creates indissoluble bonds, this is illustrated by the reflections of Mbarangawi of Palimbei when considering what would happen if his Sawos partners tried to break their part of the agreement:

«There is something which has its origin with us and which is lodged within them, within the people of Marap! It is the fish they have eaten! If we call back this fish which is lodged within them, then, I reckon that they will have a problem!»³² (Stanek, 1983: 213)

On the other hand, although Mbarangawi does not mention it, it is clear that the people of Palimbei are in a similar position. They, too have integrated into their bodies food originating with their partners: the sago they eat as a staple. Sago is not just any food, in mythical view it is conceived to be the sperm of a primeval being (Schindlbeck, 1980: 101). Sago plays an important role during initiation, that is in the process of turning Iatmul boys into adult men. According to Iatmul conceptions a child is formed by the mother's blood which turns into blood and flesh and the father's sperm which forms the bones. In the initiation process, the maternal blood is drained by scarification and is then during seclusion, replaced by the huge amounts of sago the novices have to eat. Thus, the body of an adult Iatmul man does no longer include any female components, as these have been replaced by the primeval being's sperm (Schmid and Kocher Schmid 1992: 119-120)³³, or, to put it differently, by Sawos sago.

Sawos and Iatmul use their own pictures to represent their organic unity. They refer to the Sawos village as mother and the Iatmul village as her child (Schmid, 2003: personal communications). The mother-child unit is «the irreducible and elementary social grouping» (Fox, [1967]1970: 37) and thus *the* basic unit of any human social organisation, a very strong picture, indeed. This picture is also elaborated in a myth

(published by Stanek, 1982: 31-36). An equally strong picture was related to Milan Stanek (1983: 208-209): the Palimbei-Marap dual unit is based on two brothers, descendents of a mythical ancestor who migrated from the northern Sawos forest to the river and thereby created the creek nowadays running from his former territory to the Sepik. On the river fish was plentiful but there was no sago. Thus, the younger brother decided to return to the forest where sago extraction was possible. The brothers decided for the younger to deposit the processed sago chunks near the creek their ancestor had created, and the older brother to fetch them there and leave fish in their place. These historical events were used to legitimise the Palimbei claims over the Marap sago:

«This sago does not belong to everybody. Not every village may have of it! If you ask in other villages, they will tell you the same! All villages have [their exclusive exchange relations], Yamek, Nangusap, or Gaikorobi, and all are able to relate the corresponding mythical events.»³⁴ (Stanek, 1983: 209-210)

This evidence makes it also very clear that there is not a single Sawos-Iatmul cultural organism but a series of autonomous dual units. Markus Schindlbeck (1980: 201) reports a third picture: during a dispute about the market relation between Gaikorobi and Kanganamun, the Iatmul river area was called the «outside» and the Sawos forest area the «inside». The opposition of inside and outside is a traditional concept which is also used in other contexts. Avra³⁵ of Kanganamun explained that the belly of a ritual enclosure, the inside, is the «good» side while the outside, the back is the «bad» side (Schmid and Kocher Schmid 1992: 102). When we replace «good» by safe and «bad» by dangerous, which is possible when we go back to the Tok Pisin terms «gutpela» and «nongut» originally used by Avra, this inside-outside concept illustrates very well the situation of Sawos and Iatmul respectively. Keman of Yensan used the same concept to explain the transition from life to death. Life is like the inside of a human palm while death corresponds to the back of the hand. Dying means to proceed from the inside to the

31. Markus Schindlbeck (1980: 266) relates that people of Gaikorobi claim, that only their own sago starch really repletes them, the starch produced in other Sawos villages not.

32. «Es gibt etwas, das bei uns seinen Ursprung hat und das nun in ihnen, in den Leuten von Marap steckt! Es ist der Fisch, den sie gegessen haben! Wenn wir diesen Fisch, der in ihnen steckt, zurückrufen, dann, glaube ich, wird es ihnen nicht gut ergehen!»

33. And symbolically, their bodies become «all bones» (Kaufmann, 2003).

34. «Dieser Sago gehört nicht jedermann. Es geht nicht, dass ein beliebiges Dorf davon haben kann! Wenn ihr in anderen Dörfern fragt, werdet ihr überall dasselbe erfahren! Alle Dörfer haben [ihre ausschliesslichen Tauschbeziehungen], Yamil, Nangusap, oder Gaikorobi, und alle können auch die entsprechenden mythischen Berichte erzählen.»

35. Avra is Avuran-mali, the son of Malikindjin, see Gregory Bateson ([1936]1958: 138).

outside (Schmid and Kocher Schmid, 1992: 102). Inside and outside are thus – how we would put it – the two faces of the same coin – or to use a Sawos-Iatmul picture – the two sides of a door (Kaufmann, 2003: personal communications); in any case inside and outside are not separate entities. Thus, Iatmul are the children, the older brothers, or at the dangerous outside while Sawos are the mothers, the younger brothers, or at the safe inside. Whatever picture is used, the basic unity of Sawos and Iatmul is made clear. It is based on this unity that the river groups claim a right not only on sago but also on planting materials to replace the crops destroyed by the annual flood, or on refuge in case of extraordinary high water levels, attack by a stronger adversary, or other mishaps. They have a right to all this because they are the ones living precariously in the open, at the outside.

There is still a gap left in the previous model: what contributed Iatmul men to a balanced exchange with their Sawos partners (except procuring rare, large and prestigious animals, and nowadays money and in former times other valuables)? Let us return to the polyp sitting in its crevice and swaying its tentacles. It is not only the tentacles which are outside but also its teeth or claws (or whatever a polyp may have to defend itself). Iatmul settled in the flood plain and along the riverbanks not only guarantee the Sawos access to the rich resources of the ecotones created by the constantly changing waters, and to the goods circulating on the river but they are also their defense line. Iatmul are not only the fishers but also the warriors of the Sawos-Iatmul units.

Milan Stanek (1983: 48-50) distinguishes two types of traditional armed conflicts: head-hunting raids, a ritualised relation between the groups, for instance Central Iatmul against Western Iatmul (Nyaura), and warfare for economic and political reasons, mainly resource wars, for instance the wars with Samburi. Wars were staged on the river, the men occupying well-defined positions and functions in the large war canoes which were owned not by individuals but by clans (Coiffier, 1994: 1136-1137). Only rarely there were terrestrial armed conflicts with the Sawos villages of the forest³⁶. As every head of state knows, maintaining an army includes the risk of them staging a coup. Perhaps the rare armed conflicts between Iatmul and Sawos have to be interpreted in such a context. Normally the forest settlements would have been able to control the river settlements, their army, by just withdrawing supplies. At least this is what Iatmul

women do when their husbands do not fulfill their part in the intra-household, or domestic exchange. Women need canoes to fish and thus feed their families, canoes when old and leaking need to be replaced. Men often delay this arduous task until women force them to deliver by denying them food (Weiss, 2003: personal communications). BASE researchers and also others have in several instances observed the wretched situation of men undergoing such a treatment (Bateson, [1936]1958: 149; Schmid, 2003: personal communications). On the other hand, it is possible that the rare armed conflicts between Iatmul and Sawos were part of the conflicts between separate dual Sawos-Iatmul units. In any case, the only reported incidence of a Iatmul village attacking its Sawos partners ended in disaster for the winning Iatmul party. Around 1800, old-Sotmeli (or Yamanangwa) was wiped out by its Iatmul neighbours after it had raided its Sawos partner village Yamok and thus cut its own supplies (Schuster, 1973: 480; Newton, 1997: 369-70).

Seeing Iatmul as specialised warriors perfectly fits Bateson's Iatmul male ethos, where pride and histrionic self-consciousness are valued (Bateson [1936]1958:124), as well as the course of male initiation where a first phase of humiliation of the novices is followed by a phase of teaching, and concluded by a test of endurance (Schmid and Kocher Schmid, 1992: 98-89). This is the same treatment any army subjects its recruits to. Successful Iatmul warriors wore badges, tassels hung from their lime spatulas (see BICO Categories 2.2.1.4. and 2.2.2.3), to indicate their success. The specialised marksmen had the right to one tassel for every killing, their commander who was responsible for the war canoe and its crew had the right to a tassel for every kill his crew achieved (Coiffier, 1994: 1137). Here again, the parallels to the customs other armies adhere to are obvious. This impression is furthered by the hierarchical way the war canoes were manned. According to Christian Coiffier (1994: 1136), the most prestigious positions were at the prow, where the commander had to fend off the hostile spears with a special war paddle (see BICO Category 4.3.5), and the stern where the helmsman steered the boat to always face the enemies' crafts. Right behind the commander, the three marksmen were placed one behind the other, while the rest of the crew between marksmen and helmsman was rowing the canoe.

In former times Iatmul villages may even have been fortified. Walter Behrmann (1918: 335,

36. Brigitta Hauser (1977: 51) for instance, reports that the Iatmul village of Kararau had never been at war with its partner Sawos village Gaikorobi. The Iatmul village Yensan, as well, never fought its Sawos partner village Nangusap (Schmid, 2003).

cited in Hauser-Schäublin, 1990: 473) saw watchtowers near Iatmul villages which were sometimes fenced with gates. John Pernetta and Lance Hill (1981: 299)³⁷, when discussing the significance of space in terms of limiting resources, take for an example the distribution of Maori forts in New Zealand which «can be correlated more closely with shellfish, fern root and freshwater eels and crayfish resources, than with sweet potato planting». They conclude:

«It would appear that forts were built to defend protein resources in particular, rather than food supplies in general.» (Pernetta and Hill, 1981: 299)

Viewed in this perspective, Iatmul riverside villages can be interpreted as forts guarding valuable resources claimed by the respective Sawos-Iatmul units. The more so as these forts are built where the waterways leading to their respective Sawos partner groups join the river.

The Iatmul settlements perch proudly on the exposed river dams, and it is not astonishing that the *gawi* eagle³⁸ is of paramount significance. Its wooden representations perch high on the towering gable tops of Iatmul men's ceremonial houses and represent a settlement's fighting strength and aggressive power (Bateson [1936]1958:140). Under these eagles' eyes, captured enemies were ritually killed and their heads then displayed on the ceremonial mounds in front of the gables (Coiffier, 1994: 1460-1; BICO Category 12.1.4.1. and 12.2.1.). The eagle «looks out over the enemy country and sees them there as “birds preening themselves” or as “fish jumping in the water” – ready to be killed» (Bateson, [1936]1958: 140). A most powerful picture illustrating the role of Iatmul settlements as forts guarding the valuable resources of the Sawos-Iatmul units, and also guarding the access to the respective forest areas, with the members of a men's house community as the warriors manning them.

John Pernetta and Lance Hill (1981: 299) continue:

«In general we might say that the richer and the more diverse the environment, the more likely it is that the community will obtain its survival requirements in a shorter time; therefore time will become available to alternative activities – socialisation, transmitting knowledge, cultural activities, or simply sleeping (and conserving energy).»

Sawos and Iatmul have managed to not just eke out an existence from the unstable but diverse and thus resource rich river basin they inhabit but have built a flourishing culture. Its artistic expressions have fascinated visitors, art collectors and researchers, and continue to do so. This explains also the «assymetric flow of pottery, shell valuables, carvings, magic, whole ritual complexes and even linguistic constructions out of Iatmul territory» (Roscoe, 1989: 227). Given the comfortable material position Sawos and Iatmul enjoy, this is not astonishing.

However, to be more precise: there is not a flow of cultural produce out of Iatmul territory but out of Sawos-Iatmul territory. The spectacular products of 'Iatmul' culture are based on Sawos materials and products. Large plaited masks, for instance, are made from Sawos rattan and are often manufactured by specialised Sawos craftsmen (Coiffier, 1994: 348; Kaufmann, 2003: personal communications) before getting the finishing touches in Iatmul settlements (see also Herle and Moutu, 2004: 39). The tigasso oil³⁹ which is so important in Central Iatmul figurative expression and ritual, is produced at Gaikorobi by Sawos specialists under ritual precautions (Coiffier, 2002: 189-190). And of course, as for constructions and canoes, timber for carving is often of Sawos origin. In addition, finished artefacts which are used in Iatmul rituals are made by Sawos craftsmen. Gregory Bateson (on 35.167 [Cambridge] in showcase 41) for instance comments on a mask he collected at Kanganamun and which looks like an *avwan* face mask, to have probably been made by Sawos. *Malu* boards as well, which are links to the world-beyond and were used under certain circumstances in the Iatmul initiation process, are of Sawos origin (Kocher Schmid, 1985: 180; Schmid and Kocher Schmid, 1992: 134). Such boards were used in distinct rituals by Sawos which were partially adopted by Iatmul (Newton, 1963), thus not only artefacts but also rituals of the Sawos-Iatmul culture originate with Sawos people.

Comparing cultural inventories, Kaufmann (1990: 590) concludes, that the differences «between the Western Sawos and the Nyaura Iatmul seem to be on the level of subtypes rather than of that of types...». However, there is not just a flow of cultural produce out of Sawos-Iatmul territories but also a flow into and

37. Based on L.M. Groube (1970).

38. The *gawi* is most probably the White-bellied Sea-Eagle, *Haliastur leucogaster*, or Brahminy Kite, *Halisatur indus*, but certainly not the New Guinea Harpy Eagle as suspected by Coiffier (1994: 1712), see Beehler, Pratt and Zimmerman (1986). However, its carved representations often include features of hornbills, *Rhyticeros plicatus*.

39. Tigasso oil is called *gwat* in the vernacular, and is the exudate of a tree, a *Camposperma* sp. (Coiffier, 2002: 187).

through them. Iatmul women for instance, supplied their Sawos partners with pottery products manufactured at Aibom south of the river (Schuster and Schuster, 1972; Schuster, 1987). The Sawos in turn, traded this pottery to the northern grassland villages (Schindlbeck, 1980: 188-189). On the other hand, maritime mollusc shells which were used by Sawos and Iatmul for valuables were traded in from the north via the Sawos villages. In the case of the *yua* snail shells (*Turbo marmoratus*), not just the plain shells were acquired and used by Iatmul and Sawos but an ensemble of shell and small plaited face which was manufactured by Boiken people (BICO Category 13.5.2.; see also Kocher Schmid, 1985: 194 and 1987: 343).

Early collectors travelled on the Sepik river. In museums' collections all these artefacts which include a higher or lower Sawos input, were routinely labelled after their place of purchase. That is, they seem to be of purely Iatmul origin while their Sawos component is obliterated. Moreover, Sawos artefacts have been labelled «Middle Sepik» and were considered to be the products of 'superior' Iatmul craftsmanship but later investigations revealed their Sawos origin. This applies for instance to a set of house posts (Basel Vb 19612-19617, Panzenböck, 1963) as well as a pair of water drums (Basel Vb 21231 and 21232, Panzenböck, 1964) kept in the Basel museum. The posts come from a men's house at the Sawos village of Kingawi, the water drums from the Sawos village Yindegun. Correct identification of their provenance was only made possible by in situ investigations by BASE researchers – Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin, Christian Kaufmann et Meinhard Schuster (Kaufmann, 2003: personal communications). These examples also make clear that Sawos architecture and ritual artefacts are as spectacular as their Iatmul equivalents.

The obliteration of the Sawos contribution to Sawos-Iatmul culture is unjustified but was carried on by anthropologists who were predominantly based with river people and not their forest partners. Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin (1990: 478) notes:

«It is, I believe, Western-centric and a result of Bateson's (1936) brilliant study that the Iatmul are regarded as the group that dominated the Middle Sepik.»

In addition there is (still) widespread prejudice towards an unfamiliar mobile lifestyle, and on the other hand there is the impression Iatmul (as well as Samburi) people choose to convey.

«These bushdwellers, after all, were gaining regularized access to "sweet-tasting shrimps and fish", which undoubtedly **released** them from their dependence upon a migratory hunting and gathering life-style while it allowed their hamlets to grow larger and more solidary.» (Gewertz, 1983:29, my emphasis)

There is not the slightest indication that a mobile and procuring lifestyle is locally seen as unpleasant and thus to be changed. My experiences with other Sepik peoples living this same kind of so-called «semi-nomadic» life⁴⁰ have convinced me that such a lifestyle may be considered inadequate and also awkward for their purposes, by administrators, missionaries, and developers but not by the concerned populations themselves (Kocher Schmid, 2000b and n.d.). Patricia Townsend (1969), Alfred Gell (1975), Peter Huber (1977), Bernard Juillerat (1986) and Philipp Guddemi (1992) have described other such mobile forest folks happily pursuing similar land management strategies⁴¹. Discontent and dissatisfaction only arise when people are exposed to Western (and Asian) development ventures, that is when they are subjected to forces which are not under their control (see Kocher Schmid, 1999: 24-27). In addition the lures of an urban or suburban lifestyle make their impact.

However, this holds true also for other people, not last for the Iatmul where the majority of the able bodied male population has long ago moved to the coastal towns (for Palimbei, Stanek, 1983: 22-23; for Yensan, Schmid, 2003: personal communications) while absenteeism seems to be lower at least in the Sawos village of Gaikorobi (Schindlbeck, 1980). Moreover, there are numerous examples reported by anthropologists that living in large nucleated settlements is for many Sepik people, and for other Melanesians, not a desirable goal. After Independence and with regular patrols and thus foreign control abolished, in many places people have taken to living in small dispersed hamlets again⁴². It is unfortunate that prejudice of the kind outlined before, has taken root in anthropological output and academic debate and is regrettably carried on

40. Bo speakers of the Kilimeri CD in West Sepik Province.

41. All these strategies are subsumed under the identical land management systems 1402 for West Sepik and 1507 for East Sepik by Bourke et al. 1993 and Allen et al. 1993 respectively.

42. See also Roscoe 1996:655 and following, who discusses the social and economic advantages of a dispersed settlement pattern, and the defensive necessities furthering nucleated settlements.

and perpetuated. Simon Harrison (1987: 496) for instance relies on Deborah Gewertz (1983: 24), who with limited first-hand knowledge of Sawos claims that «the social and ritual complexity of the Iatmul villages is not even approached by their Sawos counterparts». A statement which is clearly proven wrong by the work of Markus Schindlbeck (1980, 1981, 1984, 1985), who did conduct prolonged fieldwork in a Sawos village. Further, it is particularly annoying when blatantly misleading interpretations are used as firm data in otherwise sophisticated regional analysis and comparisons. Bruce Knauff (1990: 287-288; 1993: 193) for instance, relies on the wrong assumption that Iatmul would at the same time raid inland populations and trade sago from them, when he compares their strategies with those of Asmat people.

Contact and change

As we have seen, goods, tourists, and anthropologists circulate on the river, as did war parties and early collectors. The Sepik river is the highway leading into Sawos-Iatmul territories where goods and ideas are carried. Its banks were the first areas to see the arrival of colonialism, labour recruitment, and later missions, schools, and development ventures. Consequently the Iatmul living on the riverbanks had earlier experience with foreign notions and concepts than their Sawos counterparts living farther off in the forest. This made Iatmul the gatekeepers of development and tilted the balance between them and their Sawos partners in their favour. This means, that even considerably early anthropologists like Gregory Bateson⁴³ met with a Iatmul part of Sawos-Iatmul culture that had attained disproportionate importance compared to the Sawos part of the same culture⁴⁴. This further means, that we have to tread very carefully when trying to draw conclusions about the history and origin as well as the characteristics of Sawos-Iatmul relations, as the picture relied to us is distorted. We have to consider these recent distortions not only with early anthropologists' accounts but also with the picture riverside, that is Iatmul informants relate to

us. It looks like for Iatmul their exposed situation as the flashy tentacles of a larger organism, has brought them some serious misfortune – such as the spread of *Salvinia molesta* in their fishing grounds (Weiss, 1984: 354-356) or earlier rather unpleasant colonial experiences. However, it has also brought them cultural dominance – at least in the eyes of the foreign beholders.

Thus, the Iatmul are the visible part of Sawos-Iatmul culture, its showy façade. Here we find again parallels to Iatmul gender relations. «It is the men who take the spectacular part. Although women represent ancestor figures in their dances and pantomimes, it is not them who play the music and wear the grand costumes. With all great rituals it is the task of the men to ensure contact to the ancestors and to render this link fecund to the village or the group»⁴⁵ (Weiss, 1995: 65). There is no doubt that the Iatmul take the spectacular part in the Sawos-Iatmul units. They are the fierce warriors staging highly ritualised combats on the river⁴⁶. They are the knights in shining armour or the «princes of the Sepik» (Gewertz, 1983: 124). However, their impressive men's ceremonial houses which so proudly symbolise their strength and aggressive prowess are built from Sawos timber as were their large war canoes, while the warriors manning them fought with spears made from Sawos palmwood and derived their male bodily integrity and strength from Sawos sago. It is most understandable that these knights and warriors sometimes tend to forget the humble origin of their shining armour.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ALLEN Bryant *et al.*, 1993. Agricultural systems of Papua New Guinea, Working Paper 2 East Sepik Province, ANU, PNG DAL, UPNG.
- BATESON Gregory, 1932. Social structure of the Iatmul people of the Sepik river, *Oceania* 2, 3, pp. 245-291.
- , [1936] 1958. *Naven. A survey of the problems suggested by a composite picture of the culture of a New Guinea tribe drawn from three points of view*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.
- BEEHLER Bruce M., Thane K. PRATT and Dale A. ZIMMERMAN, 1986. *Birds of New Guinea*, Princeton,

43. See also Stanek (1994: 234) for a discussion of Bateson's obliteration of the colonial situation under which his research took place.

44. At the time of Bateson's research, Iatmul had already experienced a generation-long contact situation.

45. «Es sind die Männer, die den spektakulären Part übernehmen. Zwar stellen auch die Frauen in ihren Tänzen und Pantomimen Ahnenfiguren dar, doch sind nicht sie es, welche die Musik spielen und die grossen Kostüme tragen. Es ist Aufgabe der Männer bei allen grossen Ritualen den Kontakt mit den Ahnen zu gewährleisten und für das Dorf oder eine Gruppe fruchtbar zu machen.»

46. In the mid-1960ies young men of Yensan and Palimbei staged the last river-borne combat we know of. There were no casualties but in 1973 some animosity between the two villages still persisted (Schmid, 2003).

- Princeton University Press, Wau Ecology Institute Handbook 9.
- BEHRMANN Walter, 1918. Die Wohnstätten der Eingeborenen im Innern von Neu-Guinea, *In* Festband Albrecht Penck, Stuttgart, pp. 324-39.
- BICO, Iatmul Catalogue of Objects (extended English version), Basel, Department of Oceania, Museum der Kulturen, typescript.
- BOURKE R.M. *et al.*, 1993. Agricultural systems of Papua New Guinea, Working Paper 3 West Sepik Province, ANU, PNG DAL, UPNG.
- COIFFIER Christian, 1994. L'écorce et la moelle du rotin : *tshimbe kuvu, kwiya kuvu*. Conception iatmul de l'univers, thèse de doctorat, Paris, École des hautes études en sciences sociales.
- , 2002. Une « huile » végétale aux multiple usages dans la région du fleuve Sépik (Papouasie Nouvelle-Guinée), *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 114-115, pp. 187-200.
- DENNER Antje, 1998. Geschichtetes Wissen – Gesichtetes Wissen. Religiöse Wissenssysteme und der Aspekt der Geheimhaltung am Beispiel der Iatmul und Abelam, East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea, MA (Lizentiat) thesis, University of Basel.
- FOX Robin, [1967]1970. *Kinship and marriage*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books.
- GAWI Jeffrey, 1977. Minjimbait (Mindimbait) section of the Kararau village complex, East Sepik Province, *East Sepik high school research essays, Oral History* 5, 8, pp. 95-101.
- GELL Alfred, 1975. *The metamorphosis of the cassowaries: Umeda society, language, and ritual*, London School of Economics on Social Anthropology 51.
- GEWERTZ Deborah B., 1983. *Sepik River Societies. A historical ethnography of the Chambri and their neighbors*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press.
- GROUBE L. M., 1970. The origin and development of earthwork fortifications in the Pacific, *Studies in Oceanic Culture History* 1.
- GUDEMI Philipp, 1992. When horticulturalists are like hunter-gatherers: the Sawiyano of Papua New Guinea, *Ethnology* 31, 4, pp. 303-14.
- HARRISON Simon, 1987. Cultural efflorescence and political evolution on the Sepik River, *American Ethnologist* 14, pp. 491-507.
- HAUSER-SCHÄUBLIN Brigitta, 1977. *Frauen in Kararau. Zur Rolle der Frau bei den Iatmul am Mittelsepik, Papua New Guinea*, Basel, Ethnologisches Seminar der Universität und Museum für Völkerkunde in Kommission bei Wepf & Co. AG Verlag, Basler Beiträge zur Ethnologie 18.
- , 1990. In the swamps and on the hills: traditional settlement patterns and house structures in the Middle Sepik, *in* Nancy Lutkehaus *et al.* (ed.), *Sepik heritage. Tradition and changer in Papua New Guinea*, Durham (North Carolina), Carolina Academic Press, pp. 470-479.
- HERLE Anita and Andrew MOUTU, 2004. *Paired brothers. Concealment and revelation. Iatmul ritual art from the Sepik, Papua New Guinea*, University of Cambridge, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.
- HUBER Peter B., 1977. *Traditional land use in Papua new Guinea: anthropology and rural development*, Port Moresby, Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies Discussion Paper 26.
- JUILLERAT Bernard, 1986. *Les enfants du sang : Société, reproduction et imaginaire en Nouvelle-Guinée*, Paris, Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme.
- KAUFMANN Christian, 1990. Swiss and German ethnographic collections as source materials: a report on work in progress, *in* Nancy Lutkehaus *et al.* (ed.), *Sepik heritage. Tradition and changer in Papua New Guinea*, Durham (North Carolina), Carolina Academic Press, pp. 587-95.
- KOCHER SCHMID Christin, 1985. Katalog, *in* Suzanne Greub (ed.), *Ausdruck und Ornament. Kunst am Sepik. Bildwerke einer alten Tropenkultur in Papua-Neuguinea*, Basel Tribal Art Center, Edition Greub, pp. 177-210.
- , 1987. Traditioneller Handel in Neuguinea, *in* Mark Münzel (ed.), *Neuguinea. Nutzung und Deutung der Umwelt. Bd.1*, Frankfurt a.M., Museum für Völkerkunde, Roter Faden zur Ausstellung, pp. 331-348.
- , 1998. The cultural importance of floristic diversity, *Worldviews. Environment Culture Religion* 2, 2, Special issue on biodiversity edited by Kay Milton, pp. 107-122.
- , 1999. Rainforest dreams and millennial nightmares, *in* Christin Kocher Schmid (ed.), *Expecting the Day of Wrath. Versions of the millennium in Papua New Guinea*, Port Moresby, NRI Monograph 36, pp. 1-33.
- , 2000a. Vanimokilimeri, site of intensive interdisciplinary research, *in* Christin Kocher Schmid and Roy F. Ellen (eds), *Tropical Rainforest Peoples Today. Volume V, regional volume Pacific: Melanesia, Program Future of Rainforest Peoples*, Brussels, APFT (Avenir des peuples des forêts tropicales), pp. 57-86.
- , 2000b. Traditional land management and land use in the Kilimeri Census Division of Sandaun Province, report written for Sandaun Administration, Agriculture & Livestock Branch (<http://www.ukc.ac.uk/anthropology/staff/dpi.html>).
- , 2004. Massgefertigt und unentbehrlich: Kanus vom mittleren Sepik (East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea), *in* Dorotea Deterts (ed.), *Auf Spurensuche. Forschungsberichte aus und um Ozeanien zum 65. Geburtstag von Dieter Heintze*, Tendenzen, Jahrbuch 11, Bremen, Uebersee-Museum, pp. 173-182.
- , in print. Woodworking in Papua New Guinea – a closer look at trees, *Jahrbuch des Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden* 52.

- , n.d. Ne'er the Twain Shall Meet? Local and external views of land management and development, Kilimeri CD and Vanimo town, Sandaun (West Sepik) Province, Papua New Guinea, paper presented at the conference *Resource Tenure, Forest Management, and Conflict Resolution: Perspectives from Borneo and New Guinea*, Canberra 9th to 11th April 2001, submitted to conference volume.
- KOCHER SCHMID Christin with the Future of the Rainforest Peoples - Papua New Guinea (FRP-PNG) Working Group, 2000. Money, Food and Time. Constructions of the future in Papua New Guinea, *Focaal* 35, special issue on *The study of the future in anthropology*, edited by G. Persoon, D. van Est and W. Van Beek, pp. 53-68.
- KNAUFT Bruce M. 1990. Melanesian warfare, a theoretical history. In: *Oceania* 60:250-311.
- , 1993. *South coast New Guinea cultures. History, comparison, dialectic*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- LAYCOCK D. C., 1965. *The Ndu language family*, Linguistic Circle of Canberra Publications C 1.
- LUTKEHAUS Nancy and Paul ROSCOE, 1987. Sepik culture history: variation, innovation, and synthesis, *Current Anthropology* 28, pp. 577-581.
- NEWTON Douglas, 1963. *Malu: Openwork board of the Tsuosh tribe*, New York, The Museum of Primitive Art, Studies Number Two.
- , 1997. Materials for a Iatmul chronicle, Middle Sepik-river (East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea), *Baessler-Archiv Neue Folge* 45, pp. 367-385.
- OBRIST Brigit *et al.*, 1984. Iatmul Catalogue of Objects (abridged German version), Basel, Department of Oceania, Museum der Kulturen, microfiche.
- OSBORNE Patrick L., 1993. Biodiversity and conservation of freshwater wetlands in Papua New Guinea, in Bruce M. Beehler (ed.), *Papua New Guinea conservation needs assesment*, Washington, The Biodiversity Support Program, Boroko, Government of Papua New Guinea, Department of Environment and Conservation, pp. 327-380.
- PANOFF F., 1969. Some facets of Maenge horticulture, *Oceania* 40, pp. 20-31.
- PERNETTA John and Lance HILL, 1981. Subsidy cycles in consumer/producer societies: the face of change, in Donald Denoon and Catherine Snowdon (eds), *A time to plant and a time to uproot. A history of agriculture in Papua New Guinea*, Department of Primary Industries, pp. 293-309.
- ROSCOE Paul B., 1989. The pig and the long yam: the expansion of a Sepik cultural complex, *Ethnology* 28, pp. 219-231.
- , 1996. War and society in Sepik New Guinea, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* n.s. 2, pp. 645-666.
- SCHINDLBECK Markus, 1980. *Sago bei den Sawos (Mittelsepik, Papua New Guinea). Untersuchungen über die Bedeutung von Sago in Wirtschaft, Sozialordnung und Religion*, Basel, Ethnologisches Seminar der Universität und Museum für Völkerkunde in Kommission bei Wepf & Co. AG Verlag, Basler Beiträge zur Ethnologie 19.
- , 1981. Sawos (Neuguinea, Mittlerer Sepik) – Totenfest in Gaikorobi: Anrufung und Tanz der Ahnen, Gesänge und Flötenspiel. Film E 2481, Heinrich Schlenker und Markus Schindlbeck, *Encyclopaedia cinematographic. Publikationen zu wissenschaftlichen Filmen*, Sektion Ethnologie Serie 11, 6, Göttingen.
- , 1984. Ueber den mythischen Ursprung der Sawos und Iatmul (Papua-Neuguinea), *Ethnologica Helvetica* 8, pp. 153-160.
- , 1985. The importance of relationships in Middle Sepik history, *Reviews in Anthropology* 12, 2, pp. 166-172.
- SCHMID Jürg and Christin KOCHER SCHMID, 1992. *Söhne des Krokodils. Männerhausrituale und Initiation in Yensan, Zentral-Iatmul, East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea*, Basel, Ethnologisches Seminar der Universität und Museum für Völkerkunde in Kommission bei Wepf & Co. AG Verlag, Basler Beiträge zur Ethnologie 36.
- SCHUSTER Gisela, 1987. Nutzung der Erde. Töpferei in Aibom, in Mark Münzel (ed.), *Neuguinea. Nutzung und Deutung der Umwelt. Bd.1*, Frankfurt a.M., Museum für Völkerkunde. Roter Faden zur Ausstellung, pp. 289-330.
- SCHUSTER Meinhard, 1973. Zur Dorfgeschichte von Soatmeli, in Kurt Tauchmann (ed.), *Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von Helmut Petri*, Köln Wien, Böhlau Verlag, pp. 475-491.
- SCHUSTER Meinhard und Gisela SCHUSTER, 1972. Aibom (Neuguinea, Mittlerer Sepik). Topfmarkt, *Institut für den wissenschaftlichen Film Göttingen, Encyclopaedia Cinematographica, Editor: G. Wolf*, Film E 1370.
- SPRIGGS Matthew, 1998. Research Questions in Maluku Archaeology, *Cakalele. Maluku Research Journal / Majalah penelitian Maluku* 9, 2, pp. 51-64.
- STANEK Milan, 1982. *Geschichten der Kopffäger. Mythos und Kultur der Iatmul auf Papua-Neuguinea*, Köln, Diederichs.
- , 1983. *Sozialordnung und Mythik in Palimbei. Bausteine zur ganzheitlichen Beschreibung einer Dorfgemeinschaft der Iatmul. East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea*, Basel, Ethnologisches Seminar der Universität und Museum für Völkerkunde in Kommission bei Wepf & Co. AG Verlag, Basler Beiträge zur Ethnologie 23, pp. X-x.
- , 1994. Die Männerinitiation bei den Iatmul. Der Funktionswandel unter dem Einfluss der kolonialen Situation in Papua-Neuguinea, in Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin (ed.), *Geschichte und mündliche Überlieferung in Ozeanien*, Basel, Ethnologisches Seminar der Universität und Museum für Völkerkunde in Kommission bei Wepf & Co. AG Verlag, Basler Beiträge zur Ethnologie 37, pp. X-x.

- SWADLING Pamela, 1996. *Plumes from paradise. Trade cycles in outer Southeast Asia and their impact on New Guinea and nearby islands until 1920*, Boroko, Papua New Guinea National Museum in association with Robert Brown & Associates.
- TOWNSEND Patricia, 1969. Subsistence and social organization in a New Guinea society, PhD thesis, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan.
- WASSMAN Jürg 1990. The Nyaura concepts of space and time, in Nancy Lutkehaus *et al.* (eds), *Sepik heritage. Tradition and change in Papua New Guinea*, Durham (North Carolina), Carolina Academic Press, pp. 23-35.
- WEISS Florence, 1984a. Magendaua, in Fritz Morgenthaler, Florence Weiss & Marco Morgenthaler, *Gespräche am sterbenden Fluss. Ethnopschoanalyse bei den Iatmul in Papua-Neuguinea*, Frankfurt a.M., Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, pp. 173-232.
- , 1984b. Vier Jahre später, in Fritz Morgenthaler, Florence Weiss & Marco Morgenthaler, *Gespräche am sterbenden Fluss. Ethnopschoanalyse bei den Iatmul in Papua-Neuguinea*, Frankfurt a.M., Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, pp. 349-56.
- , 1995. Zur Kulturspezifität der Geschlechterdifferenz und des Geschlechterverhältnisses. Die Iatmul in Papua-Neuguinea, in Regina Becker-Schmidt und Gudrun-Axeli Knapp (eds), *Das Geschlechterverhältnis als Gegenstand der Sozialwissenschaften*, Frankfurt/New York, Campus Verlag, pp. 47-84.