Chapter III

"We Stand Strong":

Social Life in the Baliem Valley

Opakima hano:
Ninhogo
Mulukhogo
Sikhogo
Nyowatnerogo
Agekenhogo
Mulirogo

Our unity is alive, and so:
We stand strong
We grow big
We are plentiful
We grow strong
We grow warm
We grow fertile

Who are "the" Dani? Are they an agnatic, virilocal, endogamous tribal group, culturally coherent within, but linguistically and culturally distinct from their neighbours? (Heider 1970; 1988; Peters 1975)? Or are they a fuzzy-edged group whose identity is defined primarily by outsiders, internally rife with competing ideologies, with cultural practices indelibly shaped and constructed by contact with explorers, colonizers, administrators and military police (Hays 1993; Knauf 1993; Blick 1988)? One quality that the Dani do possess is the ability to challenge reifying generalizations about "highland peoples." Recently, anthropologists have attempted to conduct systematic comparative analysis of data drawn from across the highlands in Papua New Guinea and Irian Jaya, grounding their comparative building blocks in concepts of exchange (Rubel and Rosman 1978), evolution (Feil 1987; Ploeg 1988), and gender (Strathern 1988). These efforts have been critiqued by scholars for the epistemic underpinnings that ground
their work (Hays 1993). In particular, Knauf has suggested that analysis of regions reifies the study of certain characteristics of the region, whether or not these allow effective analysis. Thus the highlands "become widely associated with Big Men, elaborate systems of competitive exchange, clanship, and heterosexuality" (Knauf 1993:8), even though these categories obscure distinctive characteristics of a region, a group, or a process.

Instead of automatically categorizing the Dani based on traits found in other highland groups, notably kin and political categories, Knauf (1993) suggests that anthropologists in New Guinea need to consider beginning analysis with symbolic and cultural formations, and from the point of view of indigenous actors.

Knauf suggests that the relatively recent colonial history of New Guinea and the isolation of many of its residents, should push analysis towards indigenous relations rather than to the configuration of political and economic constraints, without denying the real impact of the latter. The force of local histories, residence patterns, and demographics shed light on the distinctive characteristics of each region more than do analytical terms such as Big Man or ceremonial exchange. Strathern (1991) also reminds us of the need to retain relations between people as a central concern. She argues that we can conduct adequate analysis of "partial connections" in Melanesia by focusing on relations between processes, however incomplete they appear, rather than seeking to situate them in "those taxonomies or configurations that compel one to look for overarching principles or for core or central features" (Strathern 1991:xx). Thus in this literature review/social context I privilege relations over situating events, people, or things into analytical abstracts such as "exchange" or "leadership." The relations discussed as important by the Dani and observed as important by myself are those of gender and those of the micro-contexts of politics. As Strathern notes, in Melanesia it is possible to conduct such analysis because "the issue is not so much that Melanesian networks are 'shorter' but that they are measurable" (Strathern 1994; 1991).
In this chapter I show how cultural beliefs about ancestors, body lore, and marriage patterns sustain processes that devalue women. Men and women define local worlds in which they have unequal status. The inequality in question is that of men over women, an issue phrased in the literature as "sexual antagonism" (see Herdt and Poole 1982) and one better described as "antagonism against women" for "most of the manifestations of antagonism between the sexes appear to be on the part of men towards women rather than the reverse" (Gelber 1986:12). Gender inequalities pervade all levels of social life. Knowledge and power among the Dani are structured to heighten domination of one group over another. These are indelibly linked to gender relations where men seek to make women's lower status appear inevitable and unchallengeable. I describe these inequalities reluctantly, for I should have preferred to discover, and then to argue, that women hold substantial power, but my research suggests that forces of power that constrain women are numerous, and effective overall (cf. Peters 1975).25

I ground my analysis of gender inequality in a historical framework, following the arguments set out by scholars such as Collier and Yanagisako (1987) that systems of social inequality are most usefully understood in historical terms. Following a brief introduction to the history of the region, in which I stress the impact of the sweet potato in enabling relations of inequality, the first section of this chapter summarizes some of the complex negotiations the Dani engage in with each other through past warfare, its enduring present impact, and with the very "real" demands of the ancestor spirits. I discuss these topics by looking at them primarily through the eyes of Dani men. The second section reviews the importance of the body in Dani cosmology. Godelier (1986) has argued that beliefs and practices of male domination begin with the body, and that the body is used as a core symbolic space to make gendered identities seem unquestionable. I

25It is possible that scholars from Papua New Guinea such as M. Strathern (1988) who have worked against accepting models of gender relations as defined by antagonisms have been building analyses from the different colonial and post-colonial experiences of societies who, in the main, have undergone more changes to social patterns than the more isolated Irianese highlanders.
review men and women's ideas about bodies and link them to the division of labour. Finally, I add to these the contested, uncertain and tangled web of marriage relations, a key life cycle moment in which bodily symbolism, gender politics, and ancestor interventions all play a part. I describe women's experiences, exploring in some detail the topic of antagonism between men and women by looking at the issue of "runaway wives," and at one man's attempt to acquire a second wife.

The merit of an overview from the angle of locally relevant cultural constructions and relationships is that this is the world of the infant. I describe histories, social relations, and symbolic understandings primarily in local terms rather than in broad analytic themes so as to highlight ways that local realities get constructed and contested. As discussed in the next chapter, infants are made, not born, and understanding these processes requires a familiarity with the ways that people understand and relate to each other. This chapter focuses especially on gender relations and on the construction of gender inequalities because these have a significant impact on the life of the infant.

**Inequality among Men**

"*Sweet potatoes are people fuel*" Benjamin Kossay

The Baliem valley differs dramatically from the jagged mountain range that surrounds it on all sides. The valley runs in a southeasterly direction, between 139 degrees east longitude and 4 degrees south latitude, and is nestled at 1500 meters above sea level between limestone formations that rise up to 3,500 meters. Throughout the mountain range that runs the length of the island of New Guinea there are many small valleys, but ones the size of the Baliem are rare; only the Lake Paniai flat land compares in size with the Baliem valley in Irian Jaya (Pospisil 1963). Both valleys support dense
Household Compound in Kuliama
Example: Oskar Hubi's Compound
Figure 7
An alliance leader kills a pig with an arrow to his side. All pigs are killed in this manner. This is the tenth pig killed for the funeral of an albino infant known as the "white baby."

Figure 8
The man with the ax is removing the bones and meat from a partially-butchered pig that lies in the center of a pile of sweet potato plant leaves. Note the alliance leader to the left of the axe explaining the butchering procedures to a curious youth.
Figure 9
Preparing a steam oven for sweet potatoes and pig.

Figure 10
"Sweet potatoes are people fuel." Women place the sweet potatoes carefully in the oven before it is closed over with grass.
Figure 11
Elders and leaders at an alliance-strengthening ritual debate the precise position of pigs, once they are dead and before they are butchered, in order to ascertain that the order in which they are placed is one that strengthens alliances and establishes political relations. A similar process of deliberation occurs once the pork was cooked in terms of who received what piece of the pig.

Figure 12
At a December 1994 church opening near Wamena, as many as 200 pigs were butchered for the event. Here women have cleaned out the pig intestines and are hanging them to dry while they wait for the pork and sweet potatoes to cook in the 20 ovens prepared for the event. It is this level of feasting that is deplored by Protestants, development workers and other newcomers. Each pig is worth from $100 to $500 US at the Wamena market.
Figure 13
Negotiations over the placement of the dead pigs are highly political. In this case, the argument over the order of the pigs went on for a full twenty-four hours. This is only the second pig to be killed, but two leaders (one in a flowered shirt) huddle over the dead pig to analyze the implications of the way the pig fell. The men, who all sit in front of the sili (men’s house), follow the politics of pig analysis closely.

Figure 14
Once the pig has been cooked men cut up the fat in a ritualized way. It is one of the many places where men may make the kind of error that forces ancestors to wreak havoc with the living.
populations and complex agricultural systems. The surrounding mountainous regions are generally covered with a forest composed of conifers, oaks, tree ferns, and mosses that thrive between 1,000 and 2,000 meters. In regions of intense cultivation such as the Baliem valley, techniques of slash and burn have reduced the number of marsupials, rodents and bats in the forest. In addition, deforestation because of the cessation of warfare and in-migration has been acute since the 1960s. Rain falls abundantly in the valley, about 2000 mm annually, and the water table is high. The Baliem river courses through the center of the valley, and regularly floods its banks during the rainy season, which continues from about October until April every year. Overall conditions—a temperate climate, adequate rainfall, and plentiful land—allow for relatively intense agricultural production at a level apparent in only three areas of the highlands of New Guinea. In each of these, people raise domesticated pigs, cultivate sweet potatoes in elaborately constructed gardens, and participate actively in complex exchange systems.

There is ample evidence that people have inhabited the island of New Guinea for at least 40,000, if not 50,000 years, arriving in several separate migrant streams (Flannery 1990:31). Wurm (1981), drawing on language patterns, notes that newer languages overlap but do not replace older languages. He hypothesizes that Papuan speakers spread throughout the island 15,000 years ago, in waves that lasted until 5,000 years bp (before present). Archaeological findings from the Kuk excavation site in the highland Wahgi region in PNG confirm that agricultural practices, including tree-fallowing and soil tillage, were well in place by 9,000 bp. For the Baliem valley, estimates hover around 7,000 bp (Haberle et al. 1991), and the cultivated crop of choice at that time was almost certainly taro. As a food staple, taro could not possibly sustain existing population levels: numbers grew because of the introduction of a more flexible food crop, the sweet potato.

Archaeologists who study highland agriculture have taken as a central question the role of the sweet potato (*Ipomoea batatas*) in shaping the patterns of inequality found in contemporary highland social life. The sweet potato was introduced approximately 250
years ago (Golson & Gardiner 1990). Watson (1967, 1977) has argued for an "Ipomoean Revolution" in which the sweet potato arguably transformed a region where population and agricultural production had been low, into a densely populated region where food was plentiful and yields high enough to sustain pigs as domestic animals. Because the potato grows well in poorer soils and has a higher yield than taro, it allowed more people to survive in regions with poor soil. As more gardens were planted, deforestation increased, allowing for pigs to forage in cleared areas. Pigs could also feed on poorer quality potatoes. Pigs, it has been argued, gained cultural value as forest mammals became more scarce (Feil 1987). However, the impact of the sweet potato tuber on the cultural values of egalitarianism and competition are incalculable: the "sweet potato theoretically enabled everybody to enter exchange systems previously inaccessible to anyone outside centers of high productivity for taro" (Golson & Gardiner 1990:408).

Sweet potatoes, through the value attached to potential surplus, legitimated forms of competition between men. The perception of today's Dani that the sweet potato is a source of life force and of strength, ultimately of political strength, is suggested in the quote that opens this section, and echoes in the archaeological record of the valley.

Sweet potato surplus affects relations between men and women, and between men and men. First, high levels of production of the sweet potato enable men to accumulate surplus for trade purposes, which allowed some men to accumulate wealth in the shape of pigs and take on several wives. Men obtain wives through giving away brideprice goods, primarily pigs and sweet potatoes to the woman's family and affiliates. Second, men note the status of men at least in part through the number of wives they have acquired. Modjeska argues that hierarchies among men link the production of sweet potatoes to unequal distribution of wealth (Modjeska 1982; Josephides 1985). Men of high status among the Dani and throughout much of the highlands are men who have accumulated enough surplus to engage in trade with clan members, trade partners, or members of an alliance and who use relations of trade to create debts and obligations.
There have been attempts recently to analyze obvious inequalities in men's status in light of international trade of the past five hundred years. Contacts between traders in other regions of New Guinea have had important implications for the acquisition and distribution of goods (Connelly & Anderson 1987; Brown 1995) and it has been proposed that similar factors influence social relations among the Dani as well (Blick 1988). This hypothesis seriously challenges assertions made by earliest ethnographers that the Dani inhabited a "pristine" world. In Gardens of War (Gardner and Heider 1968), Dead Birds (Gardner 1964), and The Dugum Dani (Heider 1970), indigenous warfare is presented as a static phenomenon that exists independently of any contact with outsiders or knowledge of tools of war such as firearms. According to Heider (1970), warfare generally occurs between competing alliances within the Baliem valley. In other words, the Dani liked to fight among themselves, consistent with their overall "inward looking" approach to political organization (Ploeg 1988:520). Heider described war alliances, numbering up to 5,000 people in the 1960s and subdivided into what Heider calls "confederations--the largest stable peaceful unit, not usually split by war or feuds" (Heider 1988:63) which war with neighbours from within the valley, thus allowing the Dani to practice aggressive large-scale warfare in an environment putatively unchanged by outside factors.

A review of 20th century expeditions and explorations in Irian Jaya challenges Heider's argument. In 1938, the moment of supposed "first contact," an American military pilot on a reconnaissance airplane flight saw from his military aircraft a vast and fertile valley where "the gardens and ditches and native-built walls appeared like the farming country of Central Europe" (Archbold 1941). However, a host of ground expeditions, all taking place prior to the well-publicized 1938 view from above, have been tallied in van Baal et al (1984), in Ploeg (1996), and even as an appendix in Heider (1970). For example, Dutch, American, and British explorers all conducted trips to various regions of the Irian Jaya highlands throughout the early parts of the 20th century.
Of these expeditions, the explorer Lorentz led 2 trips in 1909 and 1911 from the south into the central part of the Highlands. More relevant to the Baliem valley region, in 1921-1922, an extensive expedition was undertaken from the north which followed the Mamberamo river up to the Swart valley region, home to Western Dani. In addition, this same team of explorers traveled all the way to the upper Baliem river, to the border zone between the Western Dani and the Baliem valley Dani, which is less than a day's walk to the core of the valley. In the 1920s, Bijlmer, a Dutch officer, narrowly missed crossing directly through the central Baliem valley as he made his way across the North Baliem to scale Mt. Trikora, two days walk from the valley. These explorers passed through communities that had trade dealings with the Dani, during a time when contact between the easternmost Highlands and the western segment was indeed very likely (Mitton 1972; Pétrequin & Pétrequin 1990; Ploeg 1996). That information about white men, guns, and large-scale expeditions had not reached the Baliem valley by the year 1921 seems inconceivable.

If contact and trade shaped relations among men, likely they also shaped patterns of warfare. Heider (1970) analyzed warfare as having two different components: a ritual element, in which few are killed but most able members of the alliance participate and which serves to placate the ghosts of the dead; and secular warfare, in which pre-dawn raids on enemies are followed by large-scale killing of men, women, and children. Women did not take on roles in warfare; however, elder males would chop off portions of the fingers of young girls in a public demonstration of grief at funerals of dead warriors or elders (see Pospisil 1963 for ways women can engage in warfare). Directly challenging Heider's atemporal analysis, Blick (1988) has argued that escalation in available trade goods introduced by European contact caused the secular warfare pattern of the Dani to escalate to genocidal proportions. If this is the case, then the secular warfare patterns recorded by Heider might well reflect the influence of contacts the Dani had experienced prior to and throughout Heider's fieldwork in 1961-1963, increased
access to shells from the coast, and improved trade relations leading to increased accumulation of pigs, women, and alliances of influence.

The history of Dani warfare following the Harvard Peabody expedition and under Indonesian control provides support for this hypothesis (but see Knauft 1990; Shankman 1991 for opposing argument). In 1977, the Baliem valley Dani engaged in a large-scale "secular" war with their neighbours to the northwest, the Western Dani. This war led to Indonesian military intervention and the deaths of thousands of Western and Baliem valley Dani. Other post-contact incidents of a smaller size also support Blick's argument that, after contact, secular warfare increases (Hayward 1980; O'Brien and Ploeg 1964). Despite claims by the military to have pacified the Baliem valley, small secular incidents continue, even under some of the strictest pacification enforcements recorded in New Guinea. Thus for men, actions linked to warfare remain a key component of their identity, and politics continue to fit under structures more relevant for times of war than peace.26 "If there is no warfare we will go blind," said one elder in the 1960s (Peters 1975: 76). War and the prowess associated with it continue to mark status, and both men and women speak of influential elders as "great warriors" who proved their leadership through accomplishments in war. However, large scale ritual warfare has ceased since 1977, and I suggest that it has been replaced partially by an increasing emphasis on kanek, a key set of rituals which leaders perform to placate ancestors.

26 In a return visit to the Baliem valley in the 1980s, Heider suggested that pacification and development have reduced the importance of war alliance leaders in favour of confederate heads, as has happened in parts of New Guinea. Heider based this conjecture on the fact that a former alliance leader had to take a taxi "like everyone else." In fact, having the money to take a taxi is an indicator of status and should in no way be seen as an reflecting strained circumstances. However, data from my fieldwork in 1994-1995 and from Widjojo et al. (1993) do not back up Heider's claims of reduced power of alliance leaders. Confederate and alliance leaders both retain enormous political influence which is apparent in their involvement in burgeoning market economy activities, niches denied to all but the most influential. For example, the alliance chief for the northwest section of the valley has a construction company, one of the only Dani-run businesses in the valley, which he was able to set up during his time as elected government village head (it is now defunct). Other alliance leaders who shun development activities are nonetheless still the ones who call the adat and marriage festivals for an entire region.
Kaneke: Power through Ancestors

*Kaneke* is the first, *wam mawe* (marriage feast) the second, and *epe ago* (big pig feast) the third central ritual in Dani life. Intriguingly, *kaneke* ritual rated barely a mention in Heider's ethnographic work, yet a score of informants assured me of its central importance in controlling the fertility of women, the growth and health of children, the prosperity of the clan, and the fertility of pigs and gardens today (see Peters 1975). During times of war, a clan or an individual man could gain favour with ancestors through acts of war, now those who live must placate the dead through other means. Failure to placate the dead might result in any number of calamities, but of note here is the importance attached to indicators, such as infant health, that prove the success of ritual. If an infant dies, if gardens become infertile, or if pigs do not grow fat, men will look to ritual to understand why. The current high mortality rates of the very young may play a part in the current intensity and complexity with which men carry out *kaneke* rituals. In this section, I briefly summarize the ritual and show how the relationship between ancestors, ritual, and the well-being of a clan's children is a key local level relation.

Among the Dani today, ritual has replaced warfare as the key way to control the actions of ancestors. Men use the ghosts of dead war heroes and other ancestors as a means to establish status and economic gain and to link success in the material world with the benevolence of ancestors: "the realm of the non-empirical is always closely associated with...the empirical world" (Lawrence & Meggitt 1965:14). Power in the everyday is inextricably linked to ancestral relations. However, ancestors do not always perform as expected, and unexpected disasters such as the death of a child or a runaway wife are often linked to ancestors who are at best undependable and may be "vicious, vengeful and indiscriminate" in the ways they exact revenge on the living (Gelber

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27Heider was never able to see the *epe ago*, held every five years, which represents the culmination of *kaneke* rituals, and he acknowledges its ritual importance. However, he gives no attention to the many pig sacrifices that lead up to it.
1986:26). Their inconsistencies mean that, in the present day, Dani men worry a great deal about ensuring the happiness of ancestors, and will willingly engage in rituals such as the *kaneke* series as a means to show ancestors, particularly the recently dead, that they have not been forgotten.

A series of rituals conducted for the benefit of ancestors culminate in the *epe ago* every five years or so. In broadest terms, men conduct these rituals to get ancestors to support them in their efforts to dominate as a clan or as an alliance. Peters (1975) notes that *kaneke*, the first of three sets of highly ritualized words and acts within the *epe ago*, is primarily about community. Using *je* (smooth stones about 30 to 50 cm long that symbolize individual dead ancestors), in *kaneke*

In contrast, the second and the third ceremonies--the marriage festival and the final pig feast *epe ago*--have as the goal to ensure the strength and dominance of the group executing the rite, through ensuring that key ancestors are remembered, and given the respect they deserve for their actions while alive. Bromley, a missionary and linguist from the southern portion of the valley, called the *je* stones "lineage fetishes," as inalienable as the ancestors they symbolize--"the foci of power for battle and killing of enemies" (Bromley quoted in Peters 1975:115). In the 1960s as today, ritual for ancestors is inseparable from ritual for political gain.

*Kaneke* rituals unite a highly symbolic series of gestures that link pigs to humans through equating similarities in their bodies. In brief, in the *silimo*, the men's house of every traditional household compound (see Figure 6), men store smooth *je* stones, usually decorated around the middle with grass skirts and string to symbolize women and fertility, which they trade or display during a series of rituals designed to acknowledge the power of ancestors. Along with these stones, *yerak* (long shelled inch-wide bands of
fiber) and su (netbags made by women especially for this ritual) are all used in varying combinations to demonstrate links with ancestors, unity among alliances, and unity among clan members.

For almost all rituals that involve ancestors--in fact, for almost any ritual occasion whatsoever, including the birth of a child, a wedding, a death, and even church festivities--participants will kill a pig.\(^{28}\) In almost every case I observed, one of these pigs will have been set aside as a special ritual pig.\(^{29}\) The pig itself is often an ordinary one, that becomes a ritual one when cooked and tribal leaders each select a portion of the cooked pig carcass that corresponds to their leadership role within the tribal organization (see Figures 7 through 14). The structural parallels in this ritual are worth noting. In the one alliance ritual and several clan-level rituals I was fortunate enough to observe, clan leaders sit in a specific place at the back, side or front of the men's circular house. The formal clan head or leader sits at the front and portions pieces of the pig out: the participant at the rear receives the tail segment of the pig; the ones at the side receive the skin that covers both the left and the right breastbone; and the head spokesperson for the clan or alliance gives himself the tip of the ears. Leaders eat a small piece of each part, and, through symbolically ingesting the male pig, each leader strengthens the leadership and procreative abilities of the clan. In addition, each of these parts of the pig has a name that corresponds to the names of the places in the silimo, or men's house. Each of these names has certain character associations: the tail is for the aloak, the seat of wisdom, a man who talks little but offers wise counsel; the sides for the omolo, the actors and doers who will walk to round up men for a ritual or carry messages of import; and the pig ears go to the apisan, the head or the spokesperson who speaks for the decisions of the group.

\(^{28}\)At one formal church opening, Dani provided approximately 200 pigs for a large public ceremony. At another smaller ceremony to mark breaking the ground for a new church, church members brought 15 pigs. Intriguingly, although at this ceremony no adat rituals were carried out, each pig was lifted by two men and killed so that the arrow piercing the pig's body was aimed in the direction of the tribal alliance's enemy, to the northwest.

\(^{29}\)The two exceptions I noted were both church celebrations.
While the head is the most visible and seemingly important person, according to interviews with participants the wisest and most important member of the adat ritual is the aloak or oak, he who sits at the rear and grounds decisions and actions. The aloak is also most likely to become the future leader of the clan or alliance (Widjojo 1995). When the ritual involves alliances, two pigs are cut up and the same procedure is repeated twice with representatives from both members of the alliance.\(^{30}\) If something goes wrong, a garden floods, for example, leaders get together to try and determine whether someone sat in the wrong place, ate the wrong piece of pig, chanted incorrectly, and so on (see Figure 14). Since there is ample room for error, thus, misfortunes always can be traced to ancestors.\(^{31}\)

Through the successful execution of kaneke ritual, leaders assure their followers, sometimes through almost mystical powers (Heider 1970:90; Ploeg 1996), that they retain control over the power of Indonesian newcomers to appropriate land and transform women's lives through free and accessible birth control. Thus political power now extends beyond the ability to negotiate with ancestors for long-standing concerns towards newly potent symbols of docile women, healthy babies, and the means to gain control over all the newcomers who have invaded their land and bought off their gardens. As one leader succinctly put, "Our adat [ancestor ritual] is still strong; it is the enemy that has changed."

An important leader in the Hubi-Kossay alliance and a strategist in the 1977 war, Abel Hubi asserted links between the self-sufficiency of the Kuliama Dani and the

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\(^{30}\)The many ways the pigs are divided depend on the ceremony, the number of participants, and the clan/s involved. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to detail the different parts of the pig tail, side or head that can be used in a ceremony, but it is important to note that each ceremony documented by Aso-Lokobal (n.d.b), viewed by Widjojo (pers. comm.) and myself, or described in interviews all follow a basic tripartite division of the pig's body in a manner that corresponds to the parts of the human body and social roles that accompany those body parts.

\(^{31}\)The living link themselves to tetek (father), grandfather, great-grandfather and then to the "original ancestor" in shallow genealogies that collapse several generations. The names of original ancestors are clan secrets, for each clan claims that their original ancestor was the first Dani man. Making the name of the first man available to all would diminish the power of the clan, not to mention bring about the wrath of the ancestors such that gardens would fail, children and grown adults would die, and women would run away.
strength of *adat*. One muddy day, I met him at the Hubi clan sacred house, located off the river in Kuliama (see Figure 15). "We have the full strength of the ancestors in the sacred house," he said, "and it takes a lot of work to keep the ancestors happy. Too much support for new ideas, if it means that our women run away or that we neglect our gardens, will make the ancestors unhappy." The Hubi *adat* house, where Abel lives and where we sat talking, is set near the river, and every year during the rainy season the river floods and mud seeps into every corner of the courtyard.\(^1\) Sacred houses look like any other men's house in a traditional compound, except that they are larger and house all the *je* stones, *su* netbags and *yerak* shell strings in an enclosed space at the back of the house. Inside the dark and smoky raised house, a bundle of what literally are remains of dead enemies (bones, hair, scrapings of blood) are rolled up in copious amounts of banana leaves and strung up on the wall. This bundle, seemingly innocuous, is the cornerstone of all *adat*; that is, the bundle is what keeps the ritual participants stronger and more powerful than the enemy (see Peters 1975). Row upon row of several hundred pig tailbones saved from each *adat* ritual, ritually polished with pig fat as part of smaller *adat* rituals, also signal the importance of ancestors in the sacred clan house.\(^32\)

As Abel led me through the forest along the edge of the river back to Pastor Dominicus' house, he glared at the mud that in the rainy season splatters up to the knees and muttered "we need progress to get out of the jungle," a complaint echoed by many others. Pastor Dominicus' "modern" house has a couple of windows, a seating room for receiving guests and the rudiments of a toilet. In the seating room Pastor Dominicus has covered the walls with now-musty photographs he photocopied from Mitton's beautiful *The Lost World of Irian Jaya* (1983) when he was a student in Jayapura and with photographs I took two months before, of parishioners laying the stone and sand

\(^{32}\text{In a small museum constructed in 1991, LIPI staff in Wamena offered indigenous leaders the chance to store their adat bundles, spears, and pig tailbones in a "safe" storage on the museum's second storey. Some leaders chose to do so, and several have since recanted. The goal was ostensibly to de-emphasize warfare, but it ended up emphasizing which clan leaders supported government control over political life and which didn't. The majority of clan leaders, notably Catholic, did not move their adat objects.}\)
foundation of the new church being built along the edge of the road. Pastor Dominicus offered us coffee, cigarettes, and complaints about lack of funds to finish building the church. Abel listened skeptically as his concerns lie more closely with *adat*, his position well known to the Pastor. As we sat waiting, we talked about the flood that had just washed out a number of gardens and a few homesteads as well. Abel blamed the flood on a weakening of *adat*, linking it to a few sickly pigs and the increase in women running away, notably Holasike whose parents had made a "good" marriage for her but who, just the week before, had run away from her husband before the wedding celebrations were even half over. This time Pastor Dominicus held to his counsel, although Holasike was nominally Catholic and partially held to the church's position of monogamy and marriage by choice, a position known to Abel. This male "veiled" speech (Strathern 1971:240) alludes to the animosities between their institutional ideologies as well as the intersection of their beliefs about prayer, redemption, pigs and ancestors within which the ancestors are seen almost invariably as the givers of ultimate power and the makers and breakers of personal fortune.33

As a former warrior and *adat* leader, Abel personifies the responsibilities and advantages that accrue to having control over the distribution of symbolic knowledge. As Keesing (1982) points out, Melanesian societies are societies where information is power, and the deployment of power in the Baliem valley entails knowing differences made between *adat* leaders and other men and between men and women. Male leaders try to constitute ideologies out of *adat* power, "disguising human political and economic realities as cosmically ordained" (Keesing 1987:161). Through parts of the pig and its relations to the human body and through symbolic expressions such as the *je* stones, men

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33In Elagaima, all six or seven active churchgoers raise *adat* pigs, and most of them also trade pigs and engage in traditional marriage practices, acts which affiliate them with the ancestors. The Pastor raises a pig for the pig feast but engages in no other *adat* activities. Yet he acknowledges that his first thoughts on why events happened go towards ancestors and his actions in relation to them.
lay claim to control over the material world of gardens, of flood and forests, and of the world of events, childbirth, and wives, docile or otherwise.

The intensity of male leadership activities aimed at controlling women suggests that most men with power are explicit in their aims. Exposure to Catholicism and to newcomer Indonesians, who place some women in positions of some power, has been strong enough that men who sustain active relations with ancestors are aware of the implications for women's roles. Many men articulated clearly the merit of a world view aimed at ancestors as well as the need to control women to bring about prosperity for all Dani. Clan leaders as much as men with little power all worry a great deal about the actions of women that undermine local gender ideologies; only three men, during my research, actively sought to change normative patterns to give women more political and financial power. Still, men who lead work incessantly these days to maintain their status in the community and with the ancestors. They negotiate, organize, and execute rituals constantly and can seem harried and preoccupied by the energy required to be successful. Thus men may seem lazy to outsiders, undirected, and aimless34, but in their own view they are exceedingly busy with the important task of attempting to control the path and progress of everyday life and to heighten their place in it.

Body Lore

Knowledge of the body helps create and sustain perceptions of gender inequities. As Kelly (1993), Godelier (1986), and Bonnemère (1993) argue for Melanesia generally, the power to construct ideas about the body is controlled to varying extents by men who gain by it. Cosmologies of the body define the potential and prohibition for action; so, what can and cannot be in the realm of the body is key to understanding limitations on

34"Masters of the shade" is a term used jokingly to refer to men in the Biliem valley, mostly by relocated Indonesians. The perception of men as aimless was a key assumption behind a large-scale health and development project that sought to give men more responsibilities for production at a household level.
behaviour. Knowledge about the body is inextricably linked to broader spheres: to the 
environment; to notions of space and time; to food intake and production; to gender, age 
and reproductive status; and to concepts of personhood. Yet, despite all these threads that 
tie the body to other spheres, the body itself remains an important site of knowledge 
construction and confirmation. I provide a brief summary of ethnographic data that 
supports the observation that "Melanesians...are highly if not relentlessly material and 
bodily in their aspirations and their construction of social identity" (Knauft 1994:421). 
Gendered knowledge about the body centers Dani action and itself feeds into actions 
(Bonnemère 1993; Strathern 1988; Meigs 1984; Godelier 1986).

Overall, men and women informants were all in basic agreement that the ebe 
(body) is "built," and does not develop unless worked upon. It is built from the 
contributions of semen and blood of the biological mother and father at conception; it is 
strengthened through breast milk, through food, through gifts, through ritual consumption 
of foods, through knowledge, through the transmission of skills, and through sexual 
intercourse. The body can be weakened by a "shortage of blood," through lack of breast 
milk, through lack of food, incomplete gift giving, individual misbehavior, through 
sorcery, through ancestor revenge, through too much work, through giving birth to too 
many children, through engaging in too much sexual intercourse, and simply by old age. 
Thus the making of an adult requires consistent long-term human effort, both to ensure 
control over maturation and to reduce the risk of inhibitors of maturation.

Using body mapping techniques, a research method that asks non-literate 
participants to draw their knowledge about physiology (Cornwall n.d.), seven participants 
drew the insides of bodies for me in fireplace ashes. For all of them, the inside of the 
body is composed of a great deal of blood, bones, and a column running from the mouth 
to the anus in which the etai-egen, a round, fist-sized organ, sits at the center behind the 
sternum. The etai-egen is the site of emotions and of personhood, what Heider 
summarized as "soul, seat of the personality, spirit" (Heider 1970:226). Every human has
one and so does every pig. This knowledge of the body comes from two main sources--
partial autopsies of dead warriors from before 1977 and pig innards. "Pigs are almost
people," one informant said, "and we have the same insides, except that pigs' etai-egen
are much bigger than ours." In a striking confirmation of the strength of this model, one
semi-literate informant who wanted to impress me had sought out and memorized the
anatomical atlas of the body from a nursing textbook in preparation for his interview with
me. He reproduced all of the body parts in the diagram he had seen the day before, but
drew all the parts that were extraneous to his understanding, such as the pancreas, the
uterus and the appendix as dead-end organs sticking out at right angles from a column
that ran straight through the center of the body from mouth to anus.

The importance of bodily characteristics in defining what an individual can
become cannot be overstated. The term epe, which means "body," also means "person."
Thus a woman who bears a child is described by others as he epe, which literally
translates as female person, which means woman with children. Before children, she is
called he dukum, translated as female with skirt. This change in terminology connotes
that full personhood for women is achieved only after becoming a mother. The term epe
is also used to indicate moiety affiliation. Body, person, and social identity all collapse
into a single term.

Another aspect of Dani language that draws out further the importance of the
body in all imaginings is the use of the prefix "ne" or "ni" to indicate inalienable
possessions. Words that receive the prefix are parts of the body, relatives, ancestors, adat
possessions, and warfare.35 Thus the body is inalienable from social networks, from
objects that constitute it, and from events and actions that define the clan or alliance.
When describing parts of the body, Dani will attach the prefix to every part when
speaking of themselves.

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35 Possessions that are not inalienable, such as wood, cigarettes etc., are described using the
suffix "mege" which is attached to the personal pronoun (Peters 1975).
Men, however, talk about the body differently than do women. For example, according to Pastor Dominicus, a highly literate and analytical man, in a "traditional" homestead attention to bodily symbolic detail is vital. A homestead's structure represents the human body and repeats key body parts that are central to all pig-killing rituals: the head, the sides, and the anus (see Figure 6). The *silimo* (men's house) where clan ritual objects are stored and where men eat, sleep and gather to talk, is poised at the end of the fenced-in homestead and represents the head. Along one side of the fence lies the cookhouse, on the other are the women's houses. These represent the sides of the body. Women store belongings and sleep in these houses. At the end of the homestead lies the entrance, symbolically representing the anus. As in all ritual pig killings, the head, the body trunk and the anus are the key body elements that have their equivalent in patterns of political leadership.36 No traditional home that I visited in Kuliama deviated from this pattern, and Pastor Dominicus' lucid explanation was reiterated, albeit less fully, by another tribal leader, and is also present in analyses by Widjojo (1995).

Julianus, a middle-aged man, also equated the body's functions with political practice. He listed the eyes, the mouth, the teeth and the rectum as essential parts of the body. The eyes are "for seeing, to call for an *adat* ruling", the mouth is "for talking," and the teeth and the rectum for eating and for defecating:

What goes in the mouth has to come out as garbage. All food goes down one channel, through the *netai-egen* (soul) and out. If you eat too fast your *netai-egen* fills up too fast and it hurts. People who have poor *adat* eat too fast and too much. Pigs can eat and eat, a whole netbag full of potatoes, and not be full, whereas we know the value of being full because our *adat* is strong.

Esebius, an unmarried young adult, summarized relationships between food, bodies and well-being as follows,

If there is no *adat*, then you can never get full, you don't know how to share, you eat, eat all the time and never get fat. Here we have strong *adat* and we have big

36Heider (1970) describes a similar social embodiment when identifying people by clan: each clan had a name that corresponded to a part of the body that could be pointed to as a means of identification, and the moiety was represented symbolically by gesturing towards the whole body.
potatoes. We are big people and we can be full on two potatoes. If our adat goes wrong we will lose our fertile gardens, our potatoes will get small, we will not be able to control our eating and our bodies will not be as big and healthy as they are now.

Men also talk about smoking as an act that sustains the well-being of the body and the person. All adult Dani smoke tobacco that grows plentifully and those with money enjoy packaged cigarettes. Smoking helps people talk, male informants say. It smooths out the etai-egen and cleans it out so as to allow for amiable discussion.

In contrast to the images offered by men, women describe a body grounded in pragmatics. Lina showed how the built body is recognizable and divisible into component parts. Lina described what she considered the most important body parts:

the nileken (eye), to see with, as in 'I can see for myself' which is what is needed for proof to call for adat ruling; the nele (face), which means a presence somewhere, being present; the nawak (nose) for smelling, for insulting someone by sniffing them as though they smell; the napelep (mouth), for talking, someone who talks too much is called apelep apik, someone who can be charged for telling secrets; the netai-egen (soul), the place of fear, of sense of danger, which can also be used for legal purposes. The senses are all important, none matters more than the other.

Lina listed other body parts of importance:

The shoulders [nyonoro] are for carrying stones, sticks, babies, shovels, sweet potatoes. The head is also a strong place, as is the back. Each of the fingers have special functions and special names: The thumb and index are for picking and eating food; the index finger is for pointing at people; the two middle fingers have the same name, but no task, the smallest finger is for calling attention, to poke someone or to pick your nose. The thigh [narisu] is also important, for walking or for a prop when weaving a netbag; feet are important too for the same reasons.

What is noteworthy about this list is how many of the body parts listed pertain to Lina's work routine. Women repeatedly use the shoulders and head to transport heavy potatoes and leaves from the garden or to the market. They use the thighs to balance children while digging out potatoes or hoisting up a heavy load of dirt onto their shovel. Women also use their hands extensively during non-gardening hours for dexterous manual tasks such as making netbags and cleaning, washing, and cooking potatoes.
Overall, the fact that Lina thinks of her body through what she does with it, while suggesting different experiences than those of men, also suggests that what she does takes up a very large percent of her time. Almost without exception, Dani women work hard. They have slim strong bodies, with well-defined muscles, and exceptionally muscular shoulders and arms. Their bodies confirm the high social value that both men and women place on women's work, on the products of their work, and on their social contribution through work. Yet the thin, muscular female body does not hold high symbolic value. Even though this body type implies that women produce sweet potatoes and pigs for men's political gain, women and men disparage thin women as "lacking blood" and as therefore being undesirable. On the contrary, the plump body of the young bride is perceived as attractive by both men and women.

Gendered values pervade the body parts that are seen to distinguish men from women. For example, semen is seen as a source of strength, the "male life force," a spiritual substance that distinguishes men from women more than it distinguishes Dani from other social groups (Hauser-Schäublin 1992:95). Semen replenishes itself through the regular intake of food by men. Sweet potatoes, produced by women, fuel male sexual acts, which in turn reproduce the patrilineal clan. Men, with their larger, fatter bodies that can reproduce later in life, take a great deal of credit for their role as reproducers.37

In contrast, menstrual blood is polluting, can kill garden plants, reduce soil fertility, and make men sick if they eat food offered by menstruating women. The first menstrual period of young women is seen as a "crisis situation when the evil spirits have to be driven away by dancing and singing continuously during the night" (Peters 1975:37). Menstrual blood is necessary for procreation but is not a "life force" in the

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37In one interview with an elder man, he claimed one key adat secret is that women's breast milk is the source of semen. Impotent for a time, he admitted, he claimed to me he solved this problem by drinking breast milk from one of his lactating wives and now he claims to be able to have as much sex as he wants. I was unable to corroborate his assertions with other men, but overall his claims fit with other highlands data on how men seek to demean women's reproductive capacities by attempting to appropriate their power because they are in fact keenly aware of the generative capacities of women.
same way as is semen. Women's thinness in later life is attributed in part to her lifelong loss of blood through menstruating. Vaginas are also polluting--a woman angry at her husband merely has to step over his food for him to become acutely ill. Peters (1975) documents how at the epe ago feast, men ritually cleanse other men of the power of the bite of the crayfish, a symbol for the vagina, before they get married. The women, in contrast, are stuffed full of pork fat and rubbed with as much pork fat as possible, as though to imbue them with this most masculine of symbols and divest them of the power that accompanies their reproductive capacities. As Godelier argues for the Baruya which can also apply to the Dani, in the realm of reproduction "it is as if men, already concretely dominating the process of production of the material conditions of existence, had endeavored by means of thought to magnify their role in the reproduction of life and hence to deprecate the primordial role that women patently play in this process" (Godelier 1986:229).

In sum, there is merit to arguments that women's bodies, in the realm of bodily values, are defined negatively whereas men's are defined positively. While I argue that men interpret and act on a moral order that favors them, women are not passive recipients of the male interpretations of the moral order. For example, some women ignore menstrual prohibitions. Women run away from a marriage, even after the rituals of pork and crayfish should have made them incapable of doing so. Women have a developed sense of their own worth. A sense of worth does not necessarily translate to power, however. Women resist, but they do so within existing confines of the cosmologies of the body for they do not have the means to redefine them. However, as the following section reviews, men must and do work hard to promote an ideology of female weakness because women always threaten male power: "women are the locus of two kinds of resource--fertility and labor--and the attempt to control these two variables in one persona gives rise to the tangled field of sexual politics" (Lindenbaum 1976:56; see also Strathern 1987; Buchbinder & Rappaport 1976).
Women's World

"Sweet potatoes are women's work"  Deli Asso

In this section, I describe some of the many factors that contribute to highly antagonistic gender relations that appear, from every angle, to favor men over women. The division of labour that sees women producing both subsistence as well as surplus produce has been analyzed by several scholars as key to understanding gender relations in the highlands (Josephides 1985; Biersack 1991). While undeniably pivotal, the division of labour thrives on and feeds ideologies about gender that draw from multiple other sources as well. Power does not derive solely from the production of surplus, I propose, but from a multitude of sectors, of which marriage demographics are among the most important. Since women do not control cosmologies but live within them, the following sections scrutinize local processes closely. Throughout the following section, the reader is reminded that infants share these spaces with women. Women must negotiate the constraints of child care and the implications of having children to care for in their decisions and their responses to what is expected of them.

The Division of Labour

If men's domain is that of consumer of the sweet potato, women's is that of producer. No men work at cultivating the potato, and no adult woman is free from the arduous chore. Women's worlds are mostly bound to the village, to the garden, and to the home; spaces invisible to the uninitiated. Tucked away among groves of banana trees, in little valleys or alongside rivers or streams, sit traditional households that accommodate
as many as 40 or 50 people. Fences encase the compounds and keep the pigs out. Households are long, oval-shaped compounds that include the *silimo* at the end directly opposite to the entrance, and the women's houses and the cookhouse ranged along each side. For women, much of what occurs in the highly complex net of local social relations does so inside the relative privacy of the walls of the household compound and the space of the village.

Women's work, however, takes women out of homesteads to sweet potato gardens almost every day. Women work hard all day long and almost every day in their gardens, finishing the secondary soil work of hoeing and weed clearance. Women also have the time-consuming and crucial task of planting, weeding, harvesting and replanting sweet potato gardens. Most women, unless they were in mourning, were menstruating or had newborn infants, went to their gardens every day while I was living in Irian Jaya. After a breakfast of sweet potatoes cooked in the firepits of the cookhouse, women set off to garden about 9 AM, young children in tow, shovel and stick in hand. Gardening is hard, physical work; the sun is hot and blinding for the midday hours, and women often cover their heads on particularly hot days or rest in the shade for a while during those hours. Young children help their mothers sometimes but more often they play together, often enough causing delays and frustrations for the mother who on occasion admits she wished her children were old enough to look after themselves. Young babies were carefully tended to: the ones I observed were hung on a tree branch or fence post well in the shade, and the mother frequently stopped work to feed or change the child. Part of every woman's day includes harvesting sweet potatoes. Using short sticks, women dig down into the roots of mature plants and pick out just enough red- and yellow-skinned potatoes to feed the family. A woman walking home from the garden in the late afternoon often carries up to twenty kilograms of sweet potatoes in a netbag slung over her head, another netbag full of sweet potato greens draped on her head on top of the potatoes, and a child on her shoulders or asleep in yet another netbag.
Overall, women shoulder most of the load of day-to-day subsistence. Bent over almost double under a netbag full of potatoes, potato leaves, and babies, women heading home are often passed on forest paths by male leaders, who carry nothing, but are busy negotiating an important trade in the pigs that the women raise and tend (see Table 1, drawn in part from Handali et al. 1994). Women's negotiations have mostly to do with estimating their daily harvest carefully, for too little could incur the anger of husbands, and too much might appear an open invitation to unwanted guests. Increasingly, some younger women are turning to selling sweet potatoes or crop vegetables such as carrots and corn at the Wamena market, which allows them to earn some income, and buy salt, soap and cigarettes even as they maintain gardens for subsistence production. However, there still remain a number of older women who have never been to Wamena and show no desire to get into a motor vehicle and travel to town to sample the wares of modernity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Work</th>
<th>Men's Responsibility</th>
<th>Women's Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open new gardens</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build fences</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make garden beds/ditches</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Till and loosen soil</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant sweet potatoes/vegetables</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weed garden</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvest sweet potato</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport food</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raise pigs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sell produce or sweet potatoes</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for firewood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for water</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child care for children under seven</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build housing</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisions about <em>adat</em></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisions about pig killing</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisions about selling pigs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in government initiatives e.g. rice paddy projects</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Josephides (1985) has argued that highland men convert excess produce, and appropriate women's labour, to further their status through alliances, gifts, and the accumulation of pigs and wives. She suggests that even when women from important lineages or wives of important men "gain credit or prestige for themselves as a result of the transaction they helped to bring about, they still cannot turn this to political advantage at the level of group leadership" (Josephides 1985:291). In short, men and women have differential access to the arenas of competition, not solely through appropriation of labour but through symbolic and sociopolitical ideologies as well. This argument is convincing in terms of the agricultural transitions in the valley. Modjeska (1982) has
shown, for example, that ideologies about gender roles can be heightened in agricultural zones of intense production. As forest zones are depleted, the importance of agriculture increases along with population density due to migration: these changes place pressures on the production of subsistence foods in gardens and pressure on men to ensure that women produce enough food for their household: "instead of nature as the subject of their labour, garden work places women within a domesticated production site" (Modjeska 1982:69). In that women sustain heavier physical work loads and in that both subsistence and prestige produce are appropriated by men, one potential source of antagonism between men and women lies in contemporary patterns of production.

Marriage Patterns and Social Organization

Division of labour tells only a partial story, however, and cannot describe the multiple interlinkages that weave men's and women's lives together, notably in the arena of symbolic constructions. Though apart for most of the day, and rarely alone, men and women live interdependent lives, and each has methods of controlling and constraining the other.

This complexity was brought home to me one day, about four months into my fieldwork, when I squelched through the never-ending mud to meet my friend and research assistant, Lina Matuan, to begin a series of formal, private conversations which opened my eyes to women's perspectives on social life and to their perceptions that the constraints on their behaviour come from many domains, not just from the division of labour. Lina had gone to her garden early that morning by herself and had already put in four or five hours of work to be back in time for our scheduled meeting at noon. Her

38In-migration from the Western Dani has a significant impact on household production and consumption. For example, in the house of Oskar Hubi, over the course of four months three guests stayed with Oskar and ate produce that Oskar and his wife produced (either purchased or harvested). One of the guests moved in with Oskar's brother and became a long-term household resident who had to be fed but who made no contributions to garden work.
noken (netbag) full of sweet potatoes tucked away against the wall of the cookhouse, she sat in front of her fireplace making a new noken out of store-bought red and blue string. She shooed her youngest child outside to play, and we began work together in her temporary capacity as my "assistant," a status she attained after her husband Benjamin negotiated her daily wages and argued for benefits (free cigarettes). Young enough to speak Indonesian well, but old enough to have had portions of her fingers cut off to commemorate dead relatives when she was a child (a practice banned in the mid 1960s), Lina has five children; remarkably, all are alive and Lina has attained an age from which she can speak with confidence about what she knows.

Women are restricted through marriage rules, Lina said, and must work hard to forge supportive relations among distant kin and frequently unfriendly compound cohabitants. Lina, like every Dani in Kuliama, belongs to several different social groupings--from political alliances to household--but her patrilineage defines who she can marry and where she lives. A "patrilineage" is a term used by Peters (1975) to describe close-knit members of a clan, living in proximity to each other, who share responsibilities for ancestor rituals and for debt assistance, in short, people who can be counted on to help out on the basis of close personal ties ("sib" in Heider 1970; "parish" in other highland ethnographies). Lina is from the waya moiety, and is married to a Kossay, a man from the weta moiety. Lina lives far away from most of her clan relations: like many women in similar situations, she feels lonely most of the time.

In addition, when Lina was pregnant with her fifth child, her husband Benjamin suddenly married again. The jealousy between Lina and her co-wife was intense. Lina felt betrayed by Benjamin, who had promised her he would never take on a second wife, and whom she felt did little to help her raise her five children, being so busy looking after his second wife's family and their needs that he neglected hers. In situations of polygyny, it is apposite for a man who has more than one wife to provide a firepit and a sleeping house for each wife. While not all men have as many women's houses as they have wives,
wives always have their own firepit in the cookhouse. They thus have the power to invite individuals to whom they feel responsible—their children, nieces and nephews, members of their clan, their husband's kin—to share food, warmth, and company. Lina and her co-wife hold court over pits that are placed as far away from each other as possible. As she told me about this sad but typical situation, Lina continued making her netbag, smoking cigarettes and occasionally poking about the coals for the two small sweet potatoes she was cooking up for us. "I'm too old to run away," she said, "and not pretty enough either. I'm stuck with a bad husband and a co-wife who has netai-egen weyak (a horrible personality)." In other words, ties by marriage bind a woman to her husband's household and to her husband's clan, and if the ideal of maintaining a close relationship with her brothers and their children does not work out, then a woman must rely on a husband who does not necessarily provide support to her. Invariably, "it is always with a group of men that a woman identifies herself" (Reay 1959:182).

Marriage patterns generally conform to the following 'rules' (adapted from O'Brien 1969b): everyone should marry; girls should marry at a sufficiently mature age ("when her breasts are like papayas," said one informant); polygyny is prestigious and desirable; men should ideally marry into their mother's clan; and marriage must occur with a member of the opposite moiety. Although marriage is preferential rather than prescriptive, there are no cases I know of wherein people of the same moiety married. This taboo also applies to sexual relations within one's moiety, but this and other prohibitions apparently are frequently broken. I heard of several tales, and I listened to a couple of accounts of people who had committed incest in a situation of adultery. What one hears and what might have happened, however, are two different tales. In a society grounded in talk as a means to create social worlds and impose power (Brison 1992), people talk about adultery and incest partly as a means to communicate sentiments about

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39 Personality is associated with the etai-egen. Dani will call someone with an unpleasant personality netai-egen weyak, or occasionally as having a "blocked" soul through which sweet potatoes and other foods ingested through the mouth cannot pass.
something else entirely. And yet, there is so much talk that I suspect that extra-marital sexual activities, within one's moiety or outside of it, occur with something approaching the regularity with which these activities are talked about.

Like murder, incest will out. Many people confess to having committed incest, although usually not until a significant amount of time has passed. The need to confess occurs when an adulterous person, male or female, assesses that health, gardens or family well-being have come under threat. The actor links current problems with her/his past incestuous behaviour and obtains forgiveness through the ritual *ima wusan*. Again, the act of confessing does not necessarily mean the confessor engaged in sexual activities, but the presence and frequency of a ritual designed to absolve guilty parties suggests a link between talk and action. *Ima wusan* is a ritual of considerable importance to the overall structure of rituals designed to enhance good relations with the ancestors (van der Pavert 1986). Unnoticed by Heider and his colleagues in the early 1960s, the ritual was "discovered" by the Catholic priest Frans Lieshout in 1966. Van der Pavert (1986) produced a small monograph on the confession ritual which caused somewhat of a furor in the small community of Dani scholars, as Heider had stated that "moiety exogamy is strictly observed," that sexual energy was low, and that extramarital incest was extremely rare (Heider 1970:72; 1976; 1993). Lieshout and van der Pavert's documentation of an elaborate, public, and relatively common ritual directly challenges Heider's conclusions (see Heider 1988 for discussion).

If extra-marital sex and incest are as prevalent as the Dani say they are, then it calls into question the nature of the Dani postpartum sex taboo. The Dani have become famous in anthropological circles for observing up to a six-year withdrawal from sexual activities following the birth of a child, the longest period of abstinence found in ethnographic literature. Heider has proposed that "postpartum sexual abstinence is not just an ideal norm; to the best of my knowledge it is actually observed" (1970:74). Male Dani equanimity in the face of putative biological urges led Heider to propose a "low
energy" sexual system, with little pre- or extra- marital sex, and little sexuality in symbolism that corresponds with what he terms a "low intensity" culture overall: "Dani sexuality is remarkable not for its form, but for its [lack of] intensity" (Heider 1992:4; Heider 1976).

In direct contrast to Heider's argument, men and women I knew well told me, through gossip intimations and through informal conversation, that they think about sex, like to have sex, and try to have sex as much as possible. They also assert that the postpartum taboo is ideal, but that frequently it is not observed with much rigor. The *ima wusan* ritual formalizes penance, but does not proscribe chaste behaviour. As one friend said when I asked him to tell me who attended the most recent *ima wusan* ritual in Kuliama, held in 1993, "lots of people came. Of course I don't know exactly what people have done, but there are always a lot of people there."

One way for men to get around sexual rules is to acquire as many wives as possible. Having many wives means a man is more likely to be able to engage in sexual relations in the prescribed way. Polygyny is sanctioned and most men and women, excluding devout Christians, are willing to participate in a polygynous household. Polygyny is a male status symbol, again excluding baptized Christians, and marks a man as able to fulfill his exchange obligations to his and his wife's kin, and as able to maintain a household that is healthy and prosperous. Table 2 shows that 63% of married men in Kuliama have more than one wife. Of the seventeen men who have one wife, I know six well enough to attest that conversion to Christianity and baptism made them choose a monogamous marriage. If those six Christian households are excluded, it can be argued that at least 73% of Dani men have more than one wife.
I knew several youth who wanted to be married but were not able to draw together the brideprice payments, and I knew of two men who were now without a wife. The first had become mentally unstable and had lost all three of his wives; the second was of very low status (e.g., had no pigs, no gardens, and therefore little political influence), had had two wives run away from him, and seemed unable to obtain a third. Otherwise, all adult males were married. The Dani pattern of ongoing polygyny sets the Dani apart from most groups outside the central valley core (in the south Baliem, the north Baliem, the Yali and the Western Dani) who have come under the influence of Protestant or Baptist missions advocating the total destruction of previous cultural values, rituals, and ritual objects (see O'Brien and Ploeg 1964 for an early example). In contrast, the Catholic church in the central valley has taken a dualistic approach: traditional ancestor belief may survive, as long as Catholic adherents recognize that the Christian God rules over all people, including ancestors. This approach has been well-received for it allows the inward-looking and self-sufficient Dani to adopt Christianity without abandoning the belief that ancestors rule everyday life. A man may call himself a Catholic, say he believes in God, and still have several wives. Catholics in the valley also

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One wife</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two wives</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three wives</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four wives</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five wives</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six wives*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than six wives*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>46</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Clan and alliance leader
continue to throw huge funerals where guests consume up to fifty pigs. For example, organizers of a feast celebrating the opening of a new Catholic church just outside of Wamena killed over two hundred pigs for the three thousand guests that attended, a display of conspicuous consumption much maligned by Protestant development workers and less wealthy Protestant Dani from the valley fringes (see Figure 11). Thus, the Dani remain the only group within a thirty kilometre radius of Wamena to actively practice polygyny, to possess large numbers of pigs, and to have significant amounts of wealth (a large pig sells in the Wamena market for about $500 U.S.). Polygyny most clearly defines the valley Dani as different from those on the outside.

Brideprice payments have changed little since 1960s reports. Men can still purchase a wife for an average of five pigs, but this pattern may not last long. In Papua New Guinea, Marksbury (1993) has described how the influx of a cash economy in Papua New Guinea dramatically altered brideprice payments, types of obligations to affines, and the ability to keep marriages within village or regional networks, from "a decreasing significance on who a potential mate is (kin-oriented considerations) and an increasing significance placed on what a potential mate does or can do within the context of a cash economy" (Marksbury 1993:9, emphasis in original). Enormous cash brideprice payments and wealthy migrants seducing village girls into running away to the capital characterize marriage stories in contemporary Papua New Guinea. In contrast with some recent cases reported from Papua New Guinea, the top price I have recorded of fifteen pigs paid by a clan chief for a wife (about $3,000 U.S.) seems wildly conservative (cf. Filer 1985; Jorgensen 1993; Zimmer-Tamakoshi 1993). Baliem valley Dani, who live in the most commercial and developed zone in the Irian Jaya highlands, continue to engage in marriage patterns that Pflanz-Cook (1993) described as already on the wane in a remote region of the Australian New Guinea highlands by 1962. Men in the Baliem

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40 Filer cites an example: "kina 10,027 in cash, 1994 armshells, 183 bags of rice, 103 bales of sugar, 100 bags of flour, two pigs and other foodstuffs" (Filer 1985:175).
valley continue to describe wives in terms of their contributions to food production and procreation, not their cash value:

We pay a lot for women because they have high value. They have high value because they know how to work and they make children for descendants. If you pay for her well then she will provide for you well. This payment gives you the right to come in and say "aduh, I'm cold make me some food" because this is what you paid for and the woman has to be responsible for that. They make children for you to give your inheritance to.

Few Dani have gained positions within the low-paying Indonesian bureaucracy, and almost none have been able to take advantage of economic opportunities outside their community, with the result that there are no wage earners to speak of who can afford to pay hyper-inflated prices. Polygyny remains prestigious; girls continue to marry primarily through the *epe ago* feast, closely linked through their participation in this event to ancestors, the value ancestors place on the acquisition of women, and their role in the reproduction of the clan.

In sum, local values of kin and marriage, particularly what Gelber (1986) calls an "ideology of gerontocracy," hold that men value women as status objects which they can acquire through marriage in order to stabilize their political alliances. While men state they love women, need women, and appreciate women, they do so within limited ideals of acceptable behaviour. Thus when men invoke the saying, "women are like the veins that hold the blood; if they burst we die," or "women are like a forked stick that holds up a tree," they are talking not only about men's dependence on women to reproduce and to nurture, but they are also referring to her inalienable position as producer of food and tender of pigs. Men also angle to decide the marriage outcome of their daughters and, in some cases, their sister's daughters. They do not take the young woman's desires into account, but rather decide on the basis of alliances and, more frequently, on the porcine wealth of the prospective suitor. Thus women hold high value, and have a well-defined and an acknowledged crucial role to play in social life, but they do so within cosmologies that insistently places male political goals over the well-being of women.
"Runaway Wives" and the Demographics of Marriage

This last section looks at changing marriage patterns and ways that women attempt to create worlds in which they have some power. In particular, I review the phenomenon of "runaway wives" that is currently giving adat leaders such cause for concern (see Figure 16). I also suggest that technologies of pacification, allowing women some freedom to move, and technologies introduced by the nation-state, such as free birth control, function as dividing practices that dissolve older cultural practices even as they reinforce divisions between genders. Overall, new technologies give women more power to worry men, without women necessarily being able to alter the structural conditions of their lives.

Despite abundant mention of runaway women in earlier ethnographies of highland societies, there is little analysis of women's actions. Scholars do not describe this act as a social "problem," as Dani men lament today. Reay (1959) briefly mentions that unhappy women will run away or even kill themselves. A high rate of elopement is reported for the Maring (Brown and Buchbinder 1976:7), and LiPuma (1988) notes a divorce rate of 32% for just-married couples among the Maring. Langness (1969) notes that 35 to 50% of brides attempt to escape at least once in their married life, and he suggests that the stronger-willed the young bride is, the more likely she will get what she wants. Strathern (1972) notes that women can confound their husband's exchange plans by instigating a divorce. Meigs also reports women running away among the Hua: "if women ran away they were allegedly trussed up on poles like pigs and returned to their husbands" (Meigs 1984:15; see also Gelber 1986). If running away is such a universal option for highlands women, a gendered response is suggested that offers power and options to women who are constrained from acting in many other ways. Running away also interferes with men's status-driven negotiations; a wife who runs away late in the stage of brideprice payments can complicate relations between men significantly.
Figure 15
Abel Hubi leaves his *siimo* during the rainy season. This *siimo* houses the sacred remains of ancestors of the Hubi clan and is a key *wesa* (sacred) site in Kuliana.

Figure 16
A "runaway wife" goes to village court to ask not to be sent back to her first husband. He is sitting in the striped blue shirt in the middle of the room; the second husband is seated against the wall to the right. The Hubikossy village head judges after listening to the case that the woman has to return to her first husband. "A few hits, what is that?" the head said, "not enough reason to leave a man."
Instead of focusing on women who run away from marriage, scholars have tended to study female suicide instead, seen by some as an effective resistance strategy (Counts 1984b; Johnson 1981; but see Zimmer-Tamakoshi 1993). However, because it is more common and because it is a strategy available to many, I argue that running away deserves attention as a possible attempt to subvert the control men have over women.

Among the Dani in 1995, and as shown in the story of Imare, Lucia, and Paskalis below, running away involves more than the escapee, it requires a lot of negotiation, and it causes community distress, costs a lot of money, and takes a lot of courage and no small measure of cunning on the part of an escaping woman.

The following tale of two runaway wives illustrates some of the complex relationships that running away sets in motion.

A young and intelligent man named Paskalis found himself in a bind in April 1995. A woman named Imare had run away to him, leaving her husband, an influential alliance leader, who she said beat her and treated her poorly. One of seven wives, she refused to return to her husband, even though Paskalis was not sure he wanted to take on an additional wife. His first wife, Lucia, was adamant she did not want to share her husband and her cookhouse with a second wife. In addition, Lucia and Paskalis were baptized Catholics and as such had taken a vow to monogamy. They had been using birth control for about four years, and thus engaged in regular sexual relations from the time their daughter was two years old.

Imare refused to leave, however, and when her first husband tracked her down it came out that she and Paskalis had engaged in sexual relations at the opening of the Catholic Church near Wamena four months before. Paskalis then decided that he would pay the brideprice to Imare's former husband, along with the fine of one pig for adultery, and acquire himself a second wife. Imare was not cheap, however, for her first husband was a prominent tribal leader and had paid eight pigs for her. Thus nine pigs was the price he set for Paskalis to pay.

What could have been a straightforward payment of a brideprice of nine pigs became a local problem and the source of considerable antagonism. Unlike

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41In Elagaima, one case was brought to village court over the past four years (vs. four cases in Counts 1984b, and five in Johnson 1981). This well-documented case of female suicide in 1991 resulted in a formal hearing at the hukum (indigenous court) in Elagaima, where the payment compensation to the parents of the drowned woman amounted to more than twenty fair sized pigs, more than twice as much as was accorded to the relatives of a murdered man the same year (see Counts 1984b for similar settlement). Thus, when women commit suicide, husbands have to pay an enormous fine and the community ostracizes them. Women I talked to about the court case said the victim killed herself out of despair at her husband's beatings, not out of some desire for delayed revenge.
many youth, Paskalis had money in the bank because he had carried through an entrepreneurial garden project that net him enough cash to purchase a couple of large, impressive pigs, at $400 U.S. apiece. He had to wheedle several small pigs from his first wife--who had no real choice as she handed them over but who lectured him nonetheless about his wisdom--and cajole another from his mother, who also reluctantly complied. He topped these off with another purchase of two smaller pigs at $150 U.S. apiece, and a small suckling pig to pay the fine for adultery.

When Imare's former husband gathered with all his kin to argue out the details of the transaction, he was shocked at the small size of the pigs being offered. He declared the brideprice payment to be inadequate. He then left, with all the pigs in tow, Imare unwillingly escorted along behind, and the dispute still unresolved. Imare promptly ran back to Paskalis the next day, and the first husband, along with many of Paskalis' neighbours, decried Paskalis for his bold attempts to weasel out of a full brideprice payment and still keep the wife.

After four days had passed Paskalis' first wife Lucia ran away to Wamena. Paskalis was preoccupied with his loss of honour in the face of the failed purchase of his would-be-wife, and once he was informed that Lucia had not run away to another man, but to Wamena itself (engaged in prostitution, rumours flew) he did not give her chase. Lucia claimed she left him because she discovered after the fact that he had given away the adat pig (the special pig kept for the epe ago feast held every five years) in building his brideprice payments. Lucia felt that was a high risk thing to do as it would anger the ancestor spirits and make her daughter sick. Lucia was mortified that he did not go to Wamena and bring her back, but she was given an honourable way out when Paskalis did an unprecedented thing. He took his second wife to the airport, bought the two of them a ticket to the coast and they disappeared from the valley. Lucia and others in the village could thus categorically say that Paskalis had clearly lost his mind.

Runaway wives have become, according to tribal chiefs, the village head, and Indonesian government officials, the "number one" social problem in the valley today. As Table 3 shows, runaways and assault/rape cases make up almost half of all village-level legal disputes. Many more cases do not make it to this official level but are resolved between clan and confederation chiefs. Other cases never make it to any legal body at all. Women do run away, but they are often hauled back by their husbands and beaten. I witnessed one man who trailed behind his four wives who were walking home single file. He beat the last one every ten or twelve steps. When I questioned him a few months later, he said that she had run away for a day and almost certainly had committed adultery.
during that time in his estimation, and therefore, he punished her publicly so everyone would know that she had tried to misbehave but that he had prevented it.

A runaway wife that requires legal action can be defined as a woman who leaves her husband, either for another man (most cases) or to return home to her parents. In these situations, men have to negotiate the return of brideprice payments. The term "runaway" is a carryover from warring times during which a woman who wanted to leave her husband literally had to run quickly in order not to get killed by her vengeful husband or his relatives. Nowadays the term still applies, for women do run, often just before dawn, and disappear for a time in order to escape the wrath of husband and kin. Only when families have come to terms with the disappearing woman and tempers have cooled will the woman's new husband appear to claim his new wife and proffer brideprice payment.

Table 3. Type of problem resolved at Hubikossy village office legal court between February 1993 - February 1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Number of Cases</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Runaway women</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Rape and other Assaults on women</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Pig theft</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Garden vandalism</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Fighting</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Theft of money</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Relatives inadequately cared for</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Other theft</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Widow marriage problems</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. <em>Honai</em> (house) or forest fire</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2,5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Killing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2,5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Suicide</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Death</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total Cases                                  | 79              | 100%    |
Status issues for women such as Lucia and Imare are brought into sharp relief by the concern over runaway women. Running away is a defiant act meant to challenge existing status imbalances that needs to be seen as an expression of women's power as well as an expression of real powerlessness. Running away can alter relations; it can scare men into behaving with propriety and can provide women with material goods, a gentler new husband, or temporary respite from hostile affines. And yet, men do not run away from women, only the reverse, and thus the whole construct of "running away" connotes a high degree of powerlessness on the part of women. As Zimmer-Tamakoshi (1993) recently argued, acting out by women should not be seen as resistance but as reactions: resistance implies agency and deliberation, words that do not apply to women constrained by cultural beliefs, domestic violence, and economic marginalization. The act of running away does not undo the structural constraints that bind women. Thus Imare could only actually run away to another man, to assume the same role--garden producer, co-wife, tender of pigs--in another compound. Lucia, in running away to Wamena, was breaking normative codes but in such a way as to ensure her reduced status and to make it difficult for her to find herself another husband, if local condemnation for her actions in Kuliama are anything to go by. The small number of women who engage in prostitution in Wamena undoubtedly signal future directions for women's work options but, as Zimmer-Tamakoshi (1993) and Hammar (1996) demonstrate for Papua New Guinea, changes in sexual practice do not necessarily transform gender inequities.

**Analytic Summary of Women's Status**

In the previous sections, I argue that men seek to control women's lives and, overall, succeed in doing so. What little opposition women put up exists within cosmological, structural, and symbolic constraints that, in the end, give women little real
room to maneuver. In a model derived from the work of Herdt, Feil, and Sanday, Knauf (1993) has suggested that scrutiny of the five following arenas allows researchers to assess the relative status of women:

1. Women's sexual and marital choice;
2. Female acquisition of and control over culturally valued property;
3. Female participation in public affairs and ritual celebrations;
4. Incidence of female pollution beliefs and of disparaging images of women; and
5. Incidence of wife-beating and domestic violence against women.

Following these categories, I have constructed a chart which summarizes how the Dani might be ranked in each of these arenas. Summarizing the data in a condensed format provides support for my overall argument that women have few options. A "high" ranking means that, relative to other highland women, Dani women appear to fare better than others; a "low" ranking women have less control than do most other highland women:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATUS INDICATOR</th>
<th>COMPARATIVE RANKING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Women's sexual and marital choice:</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasingly, women can choose their own partners, particularly if parents subscribe to Christian values. However, even so-called &quot;modern&quot; parents still select mates for their daughters. Peters (1975) says women are free to choose their own mates but Heider (1970) contradicts this and based on the evidence from 1995, Peters may have been discussing results from a sample influenced by Christian beliefs. As the financial side of brideprice increases its hold on the relations of marriage, women may end up with even less choice about who they marry. At the same time, education, roads, development projects and the crucial pacification of 1977 has allowed women unprecedented freedom to seek mates beyond the confines of the village or the alliance. Access to effective birth control through government initiatives has increased women's sexual freedom, but women continue to act within normative relationship models.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Acquisition and control over culturally valued property</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Women control netbag production and distribution. They can make the special su netbags for kanake rituals. Women rule the garden, and their production and distribution of sweet potatoes is crucial in all celebratory rituals. The sweet potato is also valued as highly symbolic food. A woman can gain power by withholding sweet potatoes from her menfolk if she is angry or by displaying fine
specimens, thereby gaining status during funerals, weddings, and other large feasts. However, women have almost no control over distribution of pigs. Boys are always given a pig to raise as an early childhood chore, whereas girls are not. Women are also forbidden from seeing any of the sacred kanеke ritual objects and have no role in their safekeeping. Thus since successful storing of kanеke ensures prosperous gardens, control over the ritual objects holds status, not the work the woman puts into it. Nonetheless, women can raise money by selling garden produce at the market, this is having a minor effect on relations of power in the household.

3. Participation in public affairs and ritual celebrations

Women play very small roles in all levels of ritual celebration. The first day of a funeral, women have the important function of crying loudly so as to let the ancestors know of the depth of their grief. During weddings, women play an important role exchanging netbags between newly linked kin (see also Lederman 1986). The bride must receive netbags and women have the job of carrying the pig carcass gifts to the bride's new homestead. Older women maneuver for rank at these exchanges. However, women are not involved in decisions about warfare, alliances, formal village negotiations, ritual events or the nature of the rituals and are not privy to any secret names of ancestors or techniques of epe ago or kanеke ritual. In other highland societies, women can participate actively in the vaunted sphere of exchange (e.g. Strathern 1972; Lederman 1986); among the Dani, however, women's role appears that of helper, of facilitator of husband or brother's exchange.

4. Incidence of female pollution beliefs and disparaging images

Among the Dani, women are potentially dangerous because they can pollute food and spaces, and because their polluting abilities can carry over to the spirit world and affect the outcome of rituals for ancestors. Compared to other highland societies, however, pollution beliefs are moderate (cf. Meigs 1984; Lindenbaum 1976; Biersack 1983; Poole 1981,1985; Godelier 1986; Gillison 1993). Unlike many other highland societies, women do not go to a special menstrual hut but instead remain in the cookhouse when they are menstruating. Women tend not to prepare food for their husbands while menstruating. A woman will not step over the netbag in which she places her child or sweet potatoes for she can pollute both of these. Finally, a woman is not supposed to enter men's houses, because they are a sacred place that she may pollute, but increasingly this happens (Heider 1988). In short, while pollution taboos are present, they are not inviolable. Faithorn (1976) calls attention to male polluting abilities: Dani men have the potential to pollute as well. Semen can pollute breast milk--this is arguably the most important pollution belief to shape everyday Dani life.

5. Incidence of wife-beating and violence against women

Women seek men who treat them kindly and do not display violent tendencies. Nonetheless controlling women through violence is an accepted way
to negotiate family relations. Dani of both sexes say that women who do not behave well, who run away or who commit adultery put themselves at risk of getting a beating. Observations in 1994 suggest male aggression towards women is high (note incidence of rape in Table 3). On the other hand, some men are known as quick to anger and have difficulty getting a wife because they beat them. Wife-beating has been disparaged as a social problem by the church and by development agencies; the discourse on the issue appears to shape perceptions of what is inappropriate behaviour. Attitudes towards wife-beating often reflect the extent to which a person participates in the market economy and in development initiatives. Thus incidence varies along a continuum defined by the status of the man in question, by the behaviour of both husband and wife, and by their degree of commitment to an introduced morality.

Little in the summary of gender relations suggests that Dani men or women are particularly "peaceful" people, as Heider proclaimed on the basis of his 1960s research (Heider 1988). Women regularly try to challenge their low status position and the ideological arguments that seek to keep them there, but they achieve only small pockets of success. That women are running away in epidemic proportions suggests that women are slightly freer to assert themselves than they were in times of warfare. The Indonesian presence offers some resources for women: free and easily accessible birth control; positions of responsibility for Indonesian women in government offices; and an increased freedom of movement brought about by the cessation of warfare in 1977. Before this transition, boundaries set by dangerous no-man-zones between alliance groups and tight control by kin meant that young girls could rarely stray from the watchful eye of their female kin. As one older woman said, "Before, if you wanted to run away you had to be very bold, and very fast. If you weren't careful you could get killed or your old husband could start a war. Now it is easy, everyone does it." Overall, I suggest that women's status ranks as medium, neither appreciably higher nor lower than other highland societies. Data from this brief survey suggests that women's status has improved slightly over the past 30 years with the freedoms gained through birth control, education, and cessation of warfare and that many women are strong and assertive. As a result, men worry more than they used to and place increased energy on kaneke rituals in an attempt to retain control over women's behaviour.
Conclusion

Women struggle within the confines of systematic practices and symbolic formations that men define and sustain. Relations have been shaped by trade, exploration, and contact with newcomers. The study of gender relations in the Baliem valley demonstrates the force of cosmologies as they interlace with new ideas, competing sources of power and processes of everyday life.

Within the analytic frame of gender relations, it is hard to imagine that Dani men and women would find each other congenial enough to want to have children together. And yet they do; men and women make children who thrive in the love of their parents. Men and women work together in a spirit of complementarity and cooperation to make and raise a child. Complementarity, however, does not entail relations devoid of power.

The discussion of beliefs about procreation, conception, and birth that follows in the next chapter shows ways that couples work together to make children. As the data suggests, gendered antagonisms and animosity are tacitly recognized generalizations that play a key part in local relations and knowledge surrounding infants. However, when analysis moves down another notch to a focused attention on the symbolic attributes of infants and their meaning in the context of social relations, we find in infants a place where practices and tacit assumptions are both unproblematically made and instantly contested. Using data drawn from the men and women of Kuliama, I argue that the body of the infant is linked to social relations. Thus I focus on the conception, birth, and early care of infants as a lens through which to view the dynamics of family relations and the power relations involved in the production of infants in a community setting. Through their powerful physical presence, infants generate consequences that reverberate from the body of the child out through the parents and into the clan, the household, and ultimately to the level of the alliance.