Being and Belonging: Exchange, Value and Land Ownership in the Western Highlands of Papua New Guinea

By Rosita Henry

1. Introduction

Since colonial times there has been a division of land in PNG between 'customary' land and 'alienated land'. In line with colonial government policy that indigenous land interests should be protected, land could not be bought directly from customary landowners by outside individuals or companies, but could only be leased after prior acquisition by the state. Today, all over PNG, so called 'alienated land' (that is, land that has been acquired by the state) is held uneasily by the state and/or its current lessees in the face of the customary landowners for whom land is not something that is conceptually alienable. As Gregory (1982: 163) notes, 'Land is the ultimate inalienable gift and…it is not easily converted into the simple private property right of an individual' (see also Weiner 1992 on 'inalienable possession').

In this chapter I explore changing concepts of land ownership among speakers of Temboka (Tembagla) in the Western Highlands of Papua New Guinea, in the circumstances of state intervention in transactions concerning land. I pay particular attention to anthropological debates on property, theories of value and the role of land in how value continues to be measured and realized in the Western Highlands. My exploration is via a case study on the relationship between the Temboka speaking Ganiga people and their neighbour Joe Leahy, who established a coffee plantation on their land (the subject of the well-known documentary films *Joe Leahy's Neighbours* and *Black Harvest*). I analyze the complexities of the relationship between the Ganiga and Joe Leahy and provide an up-date on the fortunes of the coffee plantation today. The Ganiga are part of a large 'tribe', Ulka, numbering about 7000 people who live in the Nebilyer

Valley of the Western Highlands province. Ulka has six levels of named subdivision. The two higher level segments are Ulka Kundulge and Ulka Pinga. The Ganiga are on the Ulka Kundulge side along with the Gaimelka, with whom they were about to engage in a 'tribal fight' in the film *Joe Leahy's Neighbours*. But, when it comes to conflict with others, the Gaimelka are the Ganiga's closest allies. A central feature of social organization in the Nebilyer Valley and other parts of the Western Highlands is the pairing of tribes and tribal segments. This tendency towards pairing occurs not only in relation to the segmentary tribal structure but also in many other aspects of social life.

In relation to land, Ganiga and other Temboka speaking people use the term *ma(i)* (*graun* in Tok Pisin) or *kolya* (*ples* in Tok Pisin, which is a local lingua franca, and one of three official languages of PNG). But both *mai* and *kolya* and their Tok Pisin translations (*graun* and *ples*) are more than mere ground or soil. They carry value through association with human sociality, activity, practice, lived experience and memory. In other words, they stand for social relations. For example, *as ples* (lit. base place) refers to 'original place, hometown, and birthplace' but can also be used to refer to the original *people* of that place, the customary landowners themselves. These are referred to *kolya pul* (lit. 'place base/root'); also used is the phrase *pul yab* (lit. 'base people'). *Pul* can also translate as ancestor, god, and foundational essence. Thus, the core of what it means to be human is to be planted in some place and land is considered to be an 'inalienable possession' in that it is the ultimate source of *kopong* ('grease' or 'fat'; *gris* in Tok Pisin), the substance that is constitutive of life itself and a fundamental resource in the cycles of reciprocity and exchange that define social life.

David Graeber (2005: 451-2) defines value: 'as a way people's own actions become meaningful to them, how they take on importance by becoming incorporated into some larger system of meaning'. Graeber links value to the creative energy that people put into creating social

persons. In the Western Highlands, in order to effect the reproduction and growth of social persons, much creative energy is focused on the transformation of land, as mere ground or soil, the material source of exchange relations, to place (*kolya*, *ples*), valued as an articulation of human sociality.

Land is not alienable for the very reason that it is the *source* of the *kopong* ('grease') that forms and sustains the human body. According to the indigenous model of human life in the Western Highlands, a fetus is produced from *kopong* created out of a combination of female blood and male semen. After being born, a child grows through ingesting the *kopong* in breast milk and food, the produce or 'fat' of the land. The *kopong* of the land is transformed through human reproductive and productive labour into human corporeal and social life, especially via the ceremonial exchange of pigs fed on the produce of the land. The value of pigs in the system of gift exchange lies in the fact that they represent *kopong* in its most concentrated form. Thus land is fundamental to human sociality in that it is 'transformed into exchange' (Strathern and Stewart 1998: 220). In this context, just as land is valued as inalienable so also is the labour that harnesses and transforms the 'fat' of the land since the products of human labour accrue social value through their conversion into inalienable gifts (Feil in Strathern 1988: 154). As Marilyn Strathern (1988: 167) puts it, gift exchange 'involves a process in which human value is made apparent'.

2. Temboka

Most of the people in the Western Highlands province of Papua New Guinea 'speak dialects belonging to a single language continuum which ranges east at least as far as Kujip, north to Ruti, West to the Kaugel Valley, and south to Ialibu in the Southern Highlands Province' (Merlan and Rumsey 1991: 322). The language continuum is classified as Papuan, of East New Guinea Highlands Stock and of the Chimbu-Wahgi family.

Anthropologists are probably most familiar with the name of the dialect spoken in the Mount Hagen area, Melpa, mainly through the work of Andrew and Marilyn Strathern. According to Andrew Strathern (1971: 6) Hageners divide themselves into speakers of Melpa, Temboka and Kowul. 'Temboka talk' is said to be spoken in the Nebilyer Valley (and into the Kuta Range above the town of Mt Hagen) and by groups who have migrated from this area.

Nebilyer people themselves do not use the name Temboka. Each dialect group calls their way of speaking *bo ung* (lit. seedling/cutting/human talk/language). The metaphor of planting, growth and fertility is a key theme in the cosmology of peoples of the Western Highlands and people themselves are referred to as *bo*, as planted beings, seedlings, cuttings or offshoots. This is crucial for understanding concepts and principles of land tenure.

There does not appear to have been any linguistic work published on the dialects of the Nebilyer Valley, apart from a grammatical sketch of Ku Waru (meaning 'steep stone' or 'cliff') by Merlan and Rumsey (1991) and some rich material by Rumsey[1] on this dialect in several journal articles and book chapters (eg. 2000, 2002). Ku Waru is spoken by people who have grown up at Kailge, near the stone cliffs. These people refer to peoples and dialects of the Valley floor, such as the Ganiga, as Meam. The *bo ung* of Ganiga people is evidently only slightly different to Ku Waru and Melpa and people say they have no problems understanding one another.

3. Principles of Social Organization and Land Tenure in the Nebilyer Valley

Ganiga people of the Nebiyer Valley have a system of social organization very similar to the patrilineal segmentary lineage system which has been extensively described for the Melpa. Nebilyer people use the generic term *talapi (taglaip)* to refer to the segmentary lineages within a tribe (this term tends to be used for clan; there is no generic name for tribe). Within clans there

are sub-groupings that are referred to as *lku tapa* (‘men’s house’) or *haus man* (Tok Pisin). The system is not a segmentary lineage system in the classic anthropological sense derived from African ethnography, such as Evans-Pritchard’s description of the Nuer. On the contrary, according to Merlan and Rumsey (1991: 36) ‘notions of descent and apical ancestor are of little or no relevance in the Nebilyer area…Nebilyer *talapi* are segmentary in the simple sense that, within a single *talapi*, distinctions are made among multiple, homologous, named sub-groupings, each of which is further subdivided in the same way, etc’. While *talapi* can be translated as ‘something like “line”, “row”, or “column”’ (Merlan & Rumsey 1991: 36), this does not refer to a line of descent from an apical ancestor. ‘What is locally relevant is not a vertical, genealogical line, but a horizontal, tactical one: the line of men who form a single flank on the battlefield and dance as a single row at ceremonial exchange events’ (Merlan and Rumsey 1991: 36). As Merlan and Rumsey have documented for Ku Waru speakers, and I have also documented for the Temboka-speaking Penambi Wia clan living in the Kuta range, the known genealogical ancestry of groupings is relatively shallow (only about three generations).

All land ‘except for the deepest forest hinterlands and certain interstitial or contested no-man’s lands’, is divided into the *kolya* (‘place’, ‘region’) of one *talapi* or another. Any place or piece of land that is identified with a lower level grouping such as a *haus man* (*lku tapa*) ‘is also identified with all higher level segments that subsume it’ (Merlan and Rumsey 1991: 41). For example, the land of the Ulkamp *haus man* (patriline) which is a segment of the Penambi Wia clan, is identified at a higher level as Penambi Wia land, which is in turn subsumed within the higher level segment, Penambi. Similarly, the territories of each of the different Ganiga *haus man* are identified as Ganiga and Ganiga territory in turn is subsumed by even higher levels of the tribal category Ulka. While men of each *haus man* tend to live and work the land identified with their particular segment, *haus man* that are routed in war or for some other reason can be given

refuge by other groups and provided with land to use. If they stay on, their descendants become like siblings and their group is eventually incorporated as a segment of the clan. This is the case, for example, with the Kwel Melka who are in the process of becoming a segment of the Penambi Wia clan. I shall show below how and why this happens in my interpretive account of the relationship between Joe Leahy and the Ganiga, which demonstrates that even in the face of dramatic social change, state intervention and the introduction of very different principles of land tenure and ownership, there is cultural continuity in terms of how the connection between people and place is conceptualized and realized, or practiced. But first I will discuss some linguistic dimensions of possession and ownership in Temboka in order to enable exploration of the associations between language and culture with regard to principles of land tenure.

4. Linguistic dimensions of possession and ownership

Temboka has a three-term person system in the singular and a two-term system in the non-singular categories (Merlan and Rumsey 1991: 325). With regard to mechanisms for expressing 'possession' in Ku Waru, Merlan and Rumsey (1991, 2002) note that 'instead of word-level case suffixes as in Latin or German (or prepositions as in English), Ku Waru has case *postpositions*, which occur only on the last word within a noun phrase which they modify' (1991: 335). The Genitive *–nga* marks possessor. The relations between Possessor and Possessee vary from possession in a narrow sense as in (2) to association as in (3). All the examples below are from Merlan and Rumsey (1991: 328-342).

(1) ul olto-nga-yl
affair we two-GEN-DEF
It's our (du) affair.

(2) abayl-n mol kangabola kan-yiyl-nga

woman-DEF:ERG no child man-GEN

kang-yiyl-n kangabola na-nga mol

man-ERG child I-GEN no

The woman says ‘no, the child is the man’s; the young man says ‘the child is not mine’.

(3) olyo-nga uj lu-n sulymulu

we-GEN wood ax-INST split:HAB:1pl

We split our wood with axes.

(4) olyo-nga langi-ma onlyo-nga tara-ma-n bo

we-GEN food-COLL we-GEN ancestor-COLL-ERG plant

tok tiring tep molymolu

strike/do:NF:2/3pl do:REM PAST:2/3pl do:NF:1 stay:HAB:1pl

In the same way as our ancestors planted foods, so we still do.

(5) ab keyn-nga *kot* kongun *tuned* tingi

Woman Keyn-GEN court day Tuesday do:FUT:2/3pl

They are going to hold Keyn’s court case on Tuesday.

(6) don-nga lku si nyim

Don-GEN house crowdedness be/say:PERV:3sg

Don’s house is crowded.

(7)	na-nga mai	aprali	tek	lying-lum		na	tena	pab
	I-GEN land	seize	do:NF:2/3pl	take-PERV:2/3pl.if		I	where	go:OPT:1sg

If they take my land, where am I supposed to go? [ie where do you suppose that I go?].

The Genitive *-nga* has a number of other functions, including 'for the benefit of' or 'affecting' (dative sense) in (8) and 'about' in (10).

(8)	kalunsab	na-nga	po	kani	makunsun-lum
	Cook:BEN:OPT:1sg	I-GEN	sugar cane	that	tie up-BEN:PERV:2sg:if

I'll cook for you if you tie up my sugar cane for me.

(9)	na	*leda*-ti	yab-ma-nga	tonsikir
	I	letter-sg/INDEF	person-COLL-GEN	strike/do:BEN:PRES PROG:3sg

I am writing a letter for some people.

(10)	i	tepa	pelym	peba-nga
	thus	do:NF:3sg	remain:HAB:3sg	remain-FUT:3sg:GEN
	mol	nyik	telymeli	
	no	say:NF:2/3pl	do:HAB:3sg	

Concerning the fact that it has always been that way and will remain so, they say no [ie they deny it].

Example (11) shows that possession of any item appears to be marked in the same way; that is, there is no grammatical difference based on what can be possessed.

(11)	na-nga kola	'my place' [hand, pig, land, etc]

nu-nga kung	‘your pig’ [hand, land, place]
olto-nga	our (dual) [true friend, men’s house]
olyo-nga	our [uncles, mourning house, skins, friend]
kolya-ma-nga	my ancestor (place-pl-GEN)

On the other hand, there is a difference in the way the possession of items is marked in possessive clauses constructed on the basis of existential verbs.

4.1 The Possessive Use of Existential Verbs (Classificatory Verbs of Being)

According to Merlan and Rumsey (1991: 330) Ku Waru has no verb for ‘to have’. They note that ‘instead of predicating possession by placing the ‘possessor’ NP in the transitive subject position, in Ku Waru it is done by making the ‘possessed’ NP the subject of an intransitive verb of “being”’. Merlan and Rumsey (1991: 338; see also 1997) identified four classificatory verbs of being for Ku Waru but have more recently added a fifth (Rumsey 2002: 188, 192). These five existential verbs are:

pe- ‘lie, sleep’ - used with internal body parts, abstract nouns referring to sources of trouble, eg. *kapo el* ‘property dispute’, and ‘of almost any kind of animate or inanimate object, generally only if it is lying flat’ (Merlan and Rumsey 1991: 338)

mol- ‘live’, ‘be’ (animate) - used of liquids, certain other inanimate objects (eg.shoes when wearing them) and all living things (including plants)

angaly- ‘stand’, protrude’ - used mainly for certain body parts, mainly but not exclusively the appendages) and certain kinds of human artifact, eg *lku* ‘house’

le- ‘lie, be prostrate, be’ - generally of an inanimate entity, but if of an animate, implying prostration or impairment; used of nouns referring to wealth objects

o- like *ipa-* in Enga occurs with subject NP ‘whose typical referents are to be judged to be intermittent, capable of growth, liquid or gas; eg. ‘river’, ‘rain’, ‘hair’, ‘blood’ and ‘vine’ used for rope (Rumsey 2002: 180)

There are resonances here with Moscona (Gravelle, Chapter 3) which also has classificatory verbs. Like the Ku Waru verb *le-*, the verb associated with ‘lie, prostrate’ in Moscona is used as a possessive verb. Existential clauses in Ku Waru can be expanded into a corresponding possessive by making the possessed NP the subject of an intransitive verb of ‘being’ as follows (from Rumsey 2002: 188-191 and reviewed by Rumsey pers. com. 20 Oct. 2011):

(12) *pe-* ‘lie’, ‘sleep’

a. ung mari pelym
words some pe-HAB:3sg
Words remain (‘…to be said’ i.e ‘We haven’t heard the last of this’).

b. olto ung mari pelym
we (du) words some *pe*-HAB:3sg
We two still have some words (to say).

As the subject *ung mari* is not grammatically plural, the interlinear gloss of *ung* could also be 'verbiage' or 'talk' (Rumsey pers.com. 20 Oct. 2011).

(13) *mol-* ‘live’, ‘be’ (animate, liquid)

a. no bia naa molym
liquid beer not *mol*-HAB:3sg
There’s no beer.

b. Na no bia naa molym

I liquid beer not *mol*-HAB:3sg

I have no beer.

(14) *angaly*- ‘stand’, ‘protrude’

a. kub-ki angure angalyilym

leg-arm four *angaly*-HAB:3sg

There are four limbs.

b. yabu-ma kub-ki angure angalyilym

people-COLL leg-arm four *angaly*-HAB:3sg

People have four limbs.

(15) *le*- ‘lie’, ‘be prostrate’, ‘be’

a. ku moni ya naa lelym

stone money here not *le*-HAB:3sg

There’s no money here.

b. olyo ku moni naa lelym

we stone money not *le*-HAB:3sg

We have no money.

(16) *o*- ‘capable of growth’, ‘intermittent’

a. kidipidi olym

beard/whiskers *o*-HAB:3sg

There's a beard/whiskers.

b. yi ada-ma kidipidi olym

man old-COLL beard/whiskers *o*-HAB:3sg

Old men have beards.

In terms of the semantics of Ku Waru existential verbs, Rumsey (2002: 195) argues that there are 'two cross-cutting axes of contrast that figure centrally in the meanings of four of them'.

> One involves a difference between things that are openly visible or manifest' vs those that are concealed or latent, and the other a difference between things that are or may be 'in place' through a process that is beyond their control, vs others for which this is not necessarily so. With respect to the first of these axes, *pe-* and *le-* are on the LATENT side of the opposition and *mol-,o-*, and *angaly-* on the MANIFEST. With respect to the second, *le-* and *angayl-* are on the PLACED side of the opposition and *pe-* and *mol-* on the other'. (Rumsey 2002: 195-6)

There are no linguistic markers to distinguish alienable and inalienable possession in Temboka and there do not seem to be any obligatorily possessed nouns that might be interpreted as a form of linguistic coding of an emic concept of inalienable possession with regard to land. However, while he is not currently able to give specific examples, Rumsey (pers com. 28 Sep. 2010) suggests that in the case of a possessive clause with land (*mai*) as the possessed NP, the existential verb *le-* might be used, which is associated with being 'placed' and 'latent' or 'concealed' rather than 'manifest'. While further field research is required to confirm that *le-* is indeed used with land, this would correlate, I suggest, with the idea of people as planted beings,

in or under the ground, and thus a principle of inalienability with regard to land. Perhaps the use of the 'segmentary person' (Merlan and Rumsey 1991; Rumsey 2000) among Temboka speakers can provide further insight into the relationship between people and land.

5. The 'Segmentary Person'

In their public speeches, it is quite common to hear big-men of the Western Highlands using the first person singular in reference to their whole *haus man*, their clan or even their entire tribe and the second person and third person singular when referring to a segmentary group different from their own. Segmentary groups can also be referred to as 'the man' or 'the boy' without the collective postposition *–ma*. Merlan and Rumsey (1991) and Rumsey (2000) argue that this phenomenon is common in oratory used at inter-group events, but I have found this also in ordinary conversation and not only when the speaker in talking in *bo ung* but also in Tok Pisin and in English. During an interview I conducted with a Ganiga man, he used the first person singular in English to refer not to himself as an individual, and not even to the Ganiga as a group, but to the whole tribe of which Ganiga form a segment, the Ulka. In their use of these forms, men (and on occasion today also some women) do not just speak on behalf of the segmentary group but actually project themselves as the group; they personify the segmentary group as a total social entity. A big-man will claim recognition for his own deeds at the same time as representing his segmentary group as a homogeneous entity with its own agency. I have also recorded a Ganiga man using the segmentary person in relation to land ownership. He said, 'I gave my land to Joe Leahy', referring to land associated with his *haus man*. The use of the 'segmentary person' sheds light on the relationship between concepts of being and belonging, personhood and segmentary social organization, the idea of humans as planted beings belonging to segmentary groups that are related offshoots of one another, growing in and of the land. Perhaps it also conceals tensions and

contradictions between the autonomous agency asserted by big-men and the collective agency of segmentary groups in relation to one another (Merlan and Rumsey 1991: 95).

6. The Ganiga and their Neighbour, Joe Leahy

I will now explore the relationship between the Ganiga and Joe Leahy, in order to provide some interpretive leads for a better understanding of changing concepts of possession and ownership in post-independence PNG. There has been increasing conflict over land ownership due to tensions between customary land tenure principles and Western legal concepts favouring individual title deeds. The case study of Joe Leahy is important because it reveals that even in the face of great change, there is also continuity with regard to notions of ownership and of how value in land is measured and realized.

Joe Leahy was born in the late 1930s, the biological son of a Western Highlands woman (of the Jiga tribe, not Ganiga). His father was Michael Leahy, the eldest of the Australian gold prospecting brothers who were among the first Europeans to make contact with the peoples of the Western Highlands. Michael Leahy had two other sons with Highland women, Clem and John. Like his two brothers, Joe was never recognised by Mick Leahy, and when his biological mother died he was adopted and reared by another Highland woman and her husband, who along with many other Highlanders in the area, worked for Daniel Leahy, Mick's brother, at his alluvial gold mine at Kuta. Joe grew up as a Highlander. It was not until he was in his teens that his uncle, Daniel Leahy, recognised him, gave him the Leahy name, sent him briefly to school and then employed him on his coffee plantation in the Nebilyer Valley (Korgua Plantation).

6.1 Becoming a Plantation Owner

Joe worked his way up the ladder at Korgua, learning the coffee business. Eventually he decided he wanted to start his own plantation and acquired Kilima, the plantation featured in the films. In fact, there are two plantations featured in the films - Kilima and Kaugum. Kilima plantation is held by Joe Leahy under 99 year lease from the government. Kaugum, on the other hand, was established as a joint venture between the Joe Leahy and the Ganiga on a 60/40 share basis, with the Ganiga contributing the land and Joe Leahy contributing his expertise and his security as guarantee for a bank loan to develop the plantation. *Joe Leahy's Neighbours* documents the dissatisfaction of some of the Ganiga at this 60/40 arrangement.

The relationship between Joe Leahy and the Ganiga began in the early 1970s when Joe Leahy was working for Dan Leahy at Korgua Plantation. One of his best friends and work mates was Ganiga Korowa Tuga. Joe had made an arrangement with customary landowners near his Uncle's plantation (Korgua) to obtain some land to start his own plantation. He convinced them to sell their land to the State with the idea that he would bid for the lease when it came up for open tender. Uncertain of his chances, Joe asked his uncle, Dan Leahy, to bid on his behalf. However, Dan instead submitted the bid in the name of his own company (Korgua Farming and Trading Co. Pty Ltd). Joe was devastated. I interviewed Ganiga Korowa Tuga about this time and the following is a rough paraphrase in English of his account (spoken in Temboka):

> I cried with Joe and felt sorry for Joe so I went back to my people to see if they might give land to him. I found out that there was some 'fight land' at Kilima, land over which we had fought and which no-one was using. Part of this land belonged to my father Ganiga Aipatul and to Tumul's father, Ganiga Pui. They had recently won it in battle with neighbouring tribes. I approached Tumul and also took five tins of fish to the old men to open negotiations. I told Tumul to come and work at Korgua to meet and get to know Joe. I suggested to Tumul that he and I give the land at Kilima to Joe since it was half mine

> and half his. I persuaded Tumul by saying that Joe was not a white man like Dan, but one of us, that he could speak our language. Before the fortnight was over, Tumul and I went back and informed the four Ganiga house lines that we wanted to give the land to Joe. I talked to all the influential Ganiga leaders. Some were reluctant. Dubai Yok objected because he said that Joe was a white man and would not look after us, but Tumul was determined and they had an argument. Tumul went and 'cooked' his own house [burnt it down to show how strongly he felt]. They had a fight on the ceremonial ground and Dubai was cut with an ax. He gave up his protestations after that.

In saying that the land belonged to his father and to Tumul's father, Korowa meant that the land belonged to the pair of Ganiga segmentary groups (*haus man*) which the old men represented. He used the third person dual ('They had recently won it in battle') to refer not to the men as individuals but as a pair of Ganiga segmentary units (*haus man*).

Some of the Kilima land also belonged to the neighbouring Ulka Kundulge. Korowa and Tumul went to see Ulka Kundulge Manda, who was a big man with his own coffee trees. According to Korowa he said 'What's new? I don't want to sell my land. I've already got a car and coffee'. Manda taunted Korowa and Tumul but this made them all the more determined. They went to see the *kiaps* (government officials) to arrange the deal. Korowa said they knew that by law they could not sell the land directly to Joe but had to sell it to the *kiaps* first. However, they told the *kiaps* that they wanted to sell the land only on the condition that it would be leased to Joe Leahy and not put up for open tender. They sought support from a few Hagen big-men on the provincial government land-board and then went with them, the *kiaps* and the police to negotiate the deal and survey the land. According to Korowa, Manda eventually gave in and agreed to sell the Ulka Kundulge part of the land because 'in those days people were scared

of the *kiaps* and the police'. He said: 'Yes, it was disputed land, and we fought over it even up to the day it was sold to the *kiaps*'.

Some of the younger generation Ganiga that I talked to in January 2000 said they had not been fully aware until recently of the process that had led to Joe's acquisition of the land. They did not realise that the land had actually been alienated to the State. As one man noted (in English):

> Actually we were not selling the land to him, but we asked him to come across and *stay* with us, but Joe being a businessman organised to buy the lease through the government. In fact none of us knew that that was the deal until recently.

I suggest that even for those Ganiga who were aware of the State purchase of the land (such as Korowa), the transaction over the land was simply a necessary means to affect their purpose of making the land available to Joe for coffee. They did not see the transaction as an act of alienation, but just as a necessary initial payment in an intended continuing relationship with Joe, by which they would be able to enhance the wealth and status of their clan.

According to Joe (Jan. 2000) the Kilima land was a source of conflict which Ganiga were glad to get rid of: 'because they know it belongs to everybody so they wanted to get rid of this land…' However, by placing Joe there, I suggest that, in effect, Ganiga were also taking the opportunity to secure rights over the land for themselves which were otherwise tenuous.

6.2 Tribal War

Joe Leahy is one of the few large plantation owners still operating in the Nebilyer Valley. Tribal fighting, which broke out during the filming of "Black Harvest", escalated and continued for the next ten years with many deaths on both sides, until the signing of a peace treaty in January 1996.

However, sporadic fighting has continued throughout this first decade of the 21st century. According to Joe's son, Jim Leahy (Sep. 2009):

> There have been so many peace ceremonies…It is not going to end when some Lutheran peace or some Catholic priest or anyone in the religious society comes down and makes a ceremony…All they are doing is just making temporary peace…It will never end because it's in those systems. Is it ended? No. The last spurt was 2-3 years ago. It's sporadic; it pops up for a couple of months and then it dies down again when they can't afford guns and bullets. That's one of the main things that triggers a peace ceremony, when they can't afford bullets any more. They are paying 25 kina for one bullet. They are buying high powered rifles for between 13 and 16 thousand kina for one rifle…

The film *Black Harvest* filmed during the late 1980s concludes with Joe Leahy leaving the plantation because of the tribal war and applying for Australian residency. However, Joe returned to his plantation a few months later, sat out the war between the Ulka and the Kulka, and lives there to this day. Although his coffee factory and other buildings on the plantation were destroyed, his house remained untouched.

6.3 Becoming Ganiga

Why has Joe managed to maintain Kilima plantation while other plantations in the Nebilyer Valley, and other parts of the Highlands, have been destroyed and/or divided up into small holdings among the customary landowners? For example, Kuk Station, a government owned Agricultural Research Station and tea plantation originally bought from the Kawelka, was 'reclaimed' by them and divided into small holdings for cash-cropping (Strathern and Stewart 1998). Joe's brother, Clem Leahy, also owned a plantation (Malda Plantation) in the Nebilyer Valley but on the enemy (Kulka) side. He had bought this plantation directly from an Australian

planter just before PNG independence. During the period of tribal fighting, Clem found it increasingly impossible to run his plantation. The plantation was eventually repossessed by the bank, which placed its own manager there in a vain attempt to recover its costs. The manager lasted less than a fortnight. He was attacked and barely escaped with his life. According to Clem, the *as ples* (Kulka) overran the plantation, breaking it up into small plots, and he could never safely return.

Joe, on the other hand, remains under the protection of the Ganiga. During my field trip in January 2000, a section of Kilima plantation was pegged (claimed by marking it with stakes) during the night (19 Jan 2000) by some Ulka Kundulge tribesmen (the part of the land that Joe presumes they had considered theirs before sale to the State). Ganiga were up in arms, wanting to take action against the Ulka Kundulge on behalf of Joe. As Joe (Jan. 2000) put it:

> They want to go and fight. They want to go and kill. But I said I don't want anybody to die over the plantation. Because, traditional way, they reckon, these Ganigas, they reckon it's mine now [the plantation].

The marking of the land was one of the main topics of the speeches at a funeral a couple of days later. Significantly, Ganiga speakers at the funeral said they considered Joe to be a Ganiga and listed Joe's lineage among their *haus man*: Yamaga-amp, Ulka–amp, Kundul-amp, Kundulge, Joe-amp (*amp* means woman). Actually, this was not the first time I had heard Joe's line listed as a Ganiga line. A few days earlier, I had asked an old man, named Simeon Dubi, to name the Ganiga house lines and was astounded when he listed Joe-amp as a fifth line. More recently, Jim Leahy (Sep. 2009) confirmed:

> In English they are calling it 'Group 5'. There's four groups that make up the Ganiga and since Joe has been adopted into the tribe they have adopted a new *haus man*…But for me, and my brothers and sisters, if they stayed, we are more part of the Ganiga than Dad will

> ever be, because we're the second generation. We were born there with them. We have grown up with them.

A fundamental principle which enables an individual or group to claim customary rights in land in the Western highlands is their active participation in the creative transformation of land as mere ground or soil into place, that is, into human sociality grounded in exchange relations. Significantly, this principle, I argue, continues to operate even in the context of introduced individual title deeds such as that held by Joe Leahy over Kilima Plantation. Legitimacy of land tenure is linked to the significance of place in human procreation and reproduction, and is tied to concepts of personhood and individual and group identity. Descent is conceived of in terms of the contribution of procreative maternal and paternal substance ('grease' or *gris* in Tok Pisin) to a child. The contribution of 'grease' (*gris*) is a key to kinship. The essential matter of all living things is thought of as 'grease', or 'fat', and the ultimate source of all 'grease' is thought to be the soil. As Merlan and Rumsey (1991: 43) point out 'there is in this view no essential difference between pre-natal and post-natal influences in their power to make us what we are'. According to Weiner (1979:88), most Highland societies 'equate the sharing of food with the sharing of biogenetic substance. In such societies one finds an emphasis on locality or co-residence as a determining factor in the creation of kinship ties, as has been amply documented…people who eat food grown on the same land are considered kinsmen…'. As Jim Leahy (Sep. 2009) put it:

> All the young fellows here, they are all the trouble makers. I grew up with them so I have no problem… I don't feel that I have to fear them because they are part of me and I am part of them…For me, I don't doubt that land is mine. It's mine. I grew up on it.

What I wish to stress here is the significance of 'the cycle of circulation of life principles' (Lemonnier 1991: 14) in the relationship between Joe Leahy and the Ganiga. Joe and his children become part of the Ganiga through partaking in the products of Ganiga land and through being

nurtured of its *gris*. In time, much like an incoming wife, Joe becomes planted. As Marilyn Strathern (1988:256) writes: 'The term that signifies a human being, a planted being (*mbo*), is also the term for a new shoot, a point of growth. Incoming wives give their own clan names to the growing subclans as they differentiate themselves like so many shoots from the homogenous body'.

Chris Gregory (1997: 23) in his book *Savage Money* proposes the term 'reciprocal recognition' (that is, 'reciprocally recognised relations of consanguinity, affinity and contiguity') for the form of consciousness that underlies the values at stake here. Tension between Joe Leahy and the Ganiga erupts, I suggest, because of a Ganiga quest for reciprocal recognition and their evaluation of Joe's actions as inadequate in meeting their expectations. Joe Leahy is a Highlander deeply involved in networks of exchange. Admittedly, he is ambivalent about his obligations to the Ganiga and resists them. However, explanation for this ambivalence should not be reduced to his identity as the son of a white man, but must be understood as part of his identity as a Highlander. Like other Highlanders, Joe is enmeshed in a total web of connections from which he strives free himself. Like other Highlanders he strives, as Weiner (1998:3) puts it, 'to pre-empt the duties of debt and obligation'. An appeal to Western values is a means that many Highlanders today use to attempt to resolve tensions and contradictions between relatedness and individual autonomy.

Conflict between Joe Leahy and the Ganiga erupts over the land because of tensions about the perceived inadequacy of operation of practices of exchange. Joe has to constantly work at maintaining his position and legitimacy in relation to the land, through exchange transactions. Like other Ganiga *haus man* he is expected to contribute to bridewealth payments, to funerary gifts, and compensation payments as well as to 'help' Ganiga in their ventures in the coffee industry.

By stressing the significance of exchange, I do not mean to argue that there is some kind of traditional cultural logic, or an abstract, a-historic principle at work behind all land tenure conflict in the Highlands. What I wish to emphasise is that these principles, or values, are in fact constituted in/through the contemporary politicking of place, or practices of place, such as occur in the case of the Ganiga and Joe Leahy as they negotiate relationships of relatedness and difference, being and belonging.

The relationship between Ganiga and Joe Leahy needs to be understood as a relationship between Highlanders. By this, I do not mean to imply that there has been no impact from global economic forces or the introduction and expansion of cash-cropping, but simply that it is inadequate to reduce the analysis to one in terms of binary opposition between modernity and tradition. Although Joe himself stresses that he is mixed race and that he has 'one foot in each camp', he is still a Highlander. As his son Jim puts it:

> We are not strangers that are going to leave this land. We are part of this land; we were born here. Like they say, people are *underneath* the ground; we are *under* the ground. We are part of it. To be part of it, you have to be here. You cannot just pack up and move to town and not expect someone to come and squat on it. I was shooting birds and catching fish in the river and running around with all these young blokes that now have guns in their hands…Like dad, I never left, you know…Dad has always seen himself as a Western Highlander, a Papua New Guinean *and* a Ganiga…And Dad, the only reason he hasn't left is because in his heart and his mind, he's settled there and he's part of the people.

7. Conclusion

The tensions between the Ganiga and Joe Leahy could be explained in terms of contradictions between state-based legal concepts of land ownership and customary law. Even though Joe holds legal title deeds to Kilima Plantation, under customary law his rights are based on usufruct, where usufruct is not simply the right to use the land but the right to use it based on working relationships of exchange, by which he grows as a Ganiga kinsman, and becomes consubstantial with them. He is made a Ganiga through sharing in the 'fat' (*gris*) of their land, and his continued legitimacy as a landholder is founded on that connection, and on his continuing engagement with Ganiga in terms of gift exchange and a sociality based on nurturance. Joe's rights in land are established, not by being able to trace decent from a Ganiga, but by engaging in the transformation of the land they have provided him with into exchange by which he eventually effects his own transformation.

The relationship between Joe Leahy and the Ganiga reveals contradictions between exclusive and inclusive conceptions of property. Carrier (1998:86) defines an inclusive notion of property as one 'wherein an object is embedded in and reflects durable relationships between those people implicated in its past' and an exclusive notion of property as one wherein the object is 'under the sole control of and associated only with the person who happens to own it at the moment'. On the one hand Joe claims the land on which he established his plantation as exclusive individual property. Yet, in *practice*, his (and his children's) continuing engagement in exchange transactions with the respective customary landowners reinforces the identity of the land as *inclusive* property 'embedded in and expressive of a social relationship' (Carrier 1998: 99). While Joe might hold official title deeds to the land, in practice the land remains inalienable as, through gift transactions, land value is continuously transformed into place value, the value of place as a form of sociality, imbued with social relations.

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