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Western Highlands of Papua New Guinea

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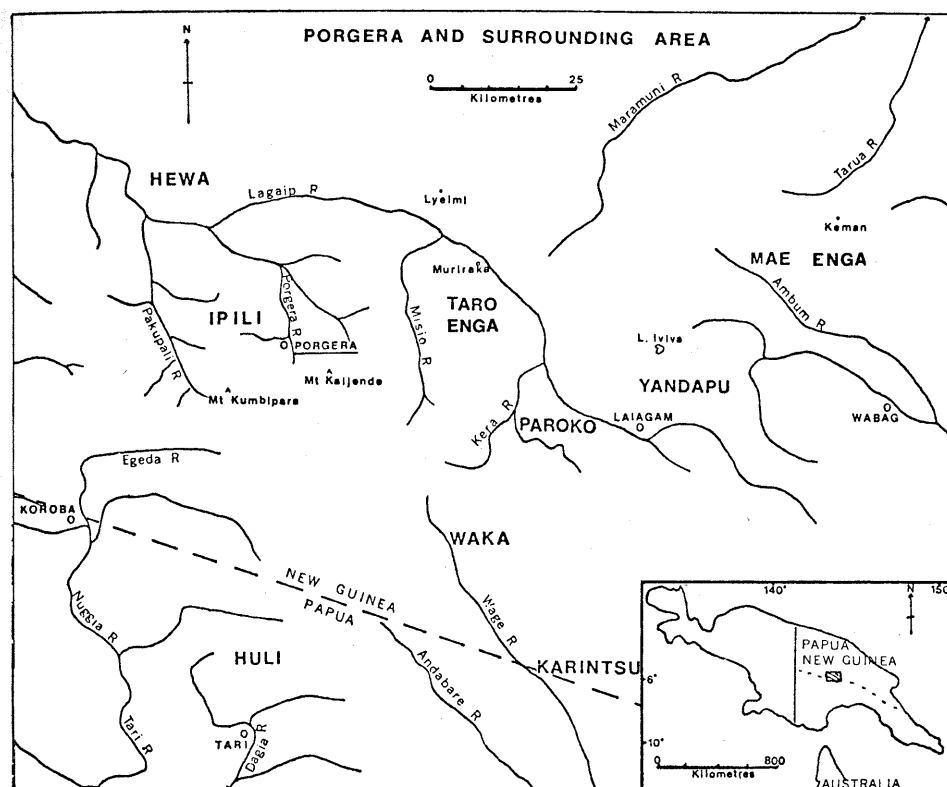
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1. Introduction

The *yupini* fertility figure has been described and illustrated twice previously in this journal (BLANK 1963, RAICH 1967). It has now been recognized as having such great importance that recently the New Zealand National Museum returned a figure in its possession to the Papua New Guinea Public Museum¹. It is estimated that there are no more than fifteen such figures in existence. Both BLANK and RAICH noted that the *yupini* was used in traditional religious rites, but they were able to give few details. R. NEICH has given a comprehensive description of the figures along with their distribution, but has given only limited information on the ritual associated with them (1975: 40-61). I wish to give a descriptive account of the now abandoned

* In 1973-74 I spent six months among the Enga, and nine months among the Ipili speakers of the Porgera and Paiela Valleys. During that time I worked for the Catholic Mission and did research on Ipili religion. The main results of the research appear in my thesis, "Ipili Religion Past and Present", presented for a Diploma in Anthropology at the University of Sydney, 1975. I would like to thank my Ipili helpers and all those who encouraged me, especially Fr. Tony Somhorst, S.V.D. and Professor P. Lawrence of the University of Sydney.

¹ See "Homecoming for Yupin", *Pacific Islands Monthly*, June 1975, p. 35.



kepele ritual in which the *yupini* played an important part. My informant was Koipanda, from the Pulumani clan in Porgera. Koipanda is recognized as the leading *kepele* spellman among the Ipili people.

The 7500 Ipili people live in the Porgera and Paiela Valleys of the Enga Province (Western Highlands) of Papua New Guinea. They have long been pig-herders, horticulturalists and hunters. The area is rugged and relatively isolated. The people clear patches of forest to make gardens and to build their low, split-log dwellings at between 1500 and 2300 meters above sea level, on mountains which rise steeply to at least 3600 meters ².

The Ipili were first contacted by the Hagen-Sepik patrol of 1938–1939. The next visit by outsiders was in 1946 when three men came to establish alluvial gold-mining in the area. Several Christian missions entered the area around 1961 after the government built a permanent patrol post in the Porgera Valley. Since then there has been quite rapid development, due to mission education, government efforts and to the effect of the commercial gold-mining operations.

The principal rituals in traditional Ipili religion are directed at averting death and misfortune. Illness and misfortune is thought to be caused by

² For further ethnographic details, see M. J. MEGGITT 1957–58. See also GIBBS 1977.

talepa: the malicious spirits of dead relatives (ghosts), or *yama*: spirit-beings such as ancestral spirits and bush demons. The purpose of most rituals is to influence spirit-beings by means of coercion, bargaining or propitiation, though in some magical rites the power is attributed to the ritual itself rather than to any spirit-being. Most ritual offerings involve the killing of pigs and the cooking of pork so that the ghost or spirit-being thought to be causing the misfortune can "eat" the smell, be satisfied, and so cease its trouble-making.

2. Preparation for the Rite

The *kepele* ritual is the largest and most important clan ritual performed by the Ipili³. It is performed when the leaders feel that there are too many misfortunes affecting the clan. Occasions mentioned to me were when landslides occur frequently, when an abnormally large number of persons are sick, when many children are dying or when the crops are "dry" and do not grow well. A diviner is consulted and if *kepele* is named as a cure for their trouble, they send word to neighboring clans that there should be peace and that everyone should gather food and hunt possums and other wild animals so that there can be a big celebration.

When the people arrive the food is bought from them by the host clan. Everyone decorates himself and a large ceremony begins which continues for several days. The neighboring clans contribute materially to the occasion but people come from a wide area and several houses for singing (*tawanda*) are constructed⁴.

Six houses are built at the site where *kepele* is to be performed. The *toliname* is a small open-sided house where one pig is cooked. The *kuakulianda* is a large two roomed structure with one of the rooms being used by the spellmen as general living quarters and to cook food. Evidently possums are cooked there because the name means "house of the possum bones" (*kua* = possum, *kulini* = bone, *anda* = house). The *okoaimanda* is similar to the *kuakulianda*. The *palipali* is a large main ceremonial house. The *kepele* stone is buried there during the ceremonies. The *umane* is a low house where the *yupini* basket-work figure is kept. During part of the ceremony the walls are lined with bark paintings. The *oko* is a tall structure used as an oven house and club house for the men, though women are permitted inside at the commencement of the ceremonies. There is a seventh "house" called the *ewanda* which is not really a house at all, but rather a hole surrounded by cordyline shrubs and

³ My account of the ritual is recorded in the present, though it is now said to be a thing of the past.

⁴ Not every clan possessed a *yupini* fertility figure. The information given me supports that of Bowdidge in NEICH's work; that among the Ipili, a *yupini* figure was connected with a geographical area rather than with a particular clan territory. This is fitting, as the Ipili have a more complex system of descent than the Enga, a system which relies more upon exchange relations than territorial occupation.

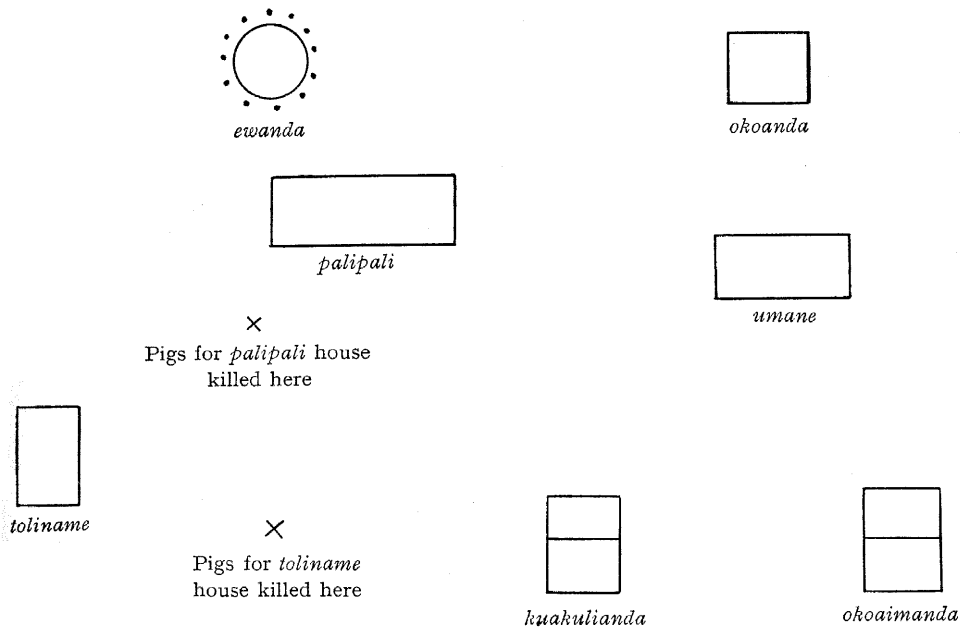


Figure 1: Lay-out of houses on *kepele* ceremonial ground

containing a sacred stone. The "*ewa*" could refer either to the sun or to the Hewa people. The spirits of the dead are said to have gone "down to where the Hewa live"⁵. A fence is constructed around the whole complex (see Figure 1).

It is difficult to define what *kepele* itself really is. The name is used to refer to the whole ceremony, but *kepele* is also classed as a *yama* or one of the spirit-beings. NEICH refers to the "obscure relation between *Yupin* as individual being and *Yupin* as a generalised fertility spirit" (NEICH 1975: 61).

There is a myth which helps explain this. I was told it with some reluctance so I think considerable importance is attached to it.

A very long time ago there were two men, Langua and Ambua. Both had four children, all sons. The two fathers became very hungry and decided to eat their children. They ate the children of Ambua first. When it came time to eat the children of Langua he changed his mind and sent his children away. In running away they formed the four main rivers which lead away from Mt Lapuape (situated somewhere in the McNicoll Mountains between Porgera and Tari). The Porgera river flows into Porgera. The Pakupali river flows into Paiela. The Kera river flows into Laiagam and the Andabari flows into the Wage Valley. Langua remained as Mt Lapuape, and Ambua became

⁵ The Hewa are a much feared and seldom contacted group of neighbors in the lower reaches of the Lagaip Valley. They are a Sepik-hills people and are unrelated to the Ipili Highlanders.

very angry and went away and now remains as a mountain in the Hewa region. (Fitting; the Hewa have a reputation among the Ipili for being cannibals.) Lapua (= Langua) is thought of as an ancestor, the father of all known peoples, though no direct connection is traced. The main ritual stone (*kepele koulini*) used in the *kepele* ritual must be taken from one of the four rivers flowing from Mt Lapuape. As the name suggests (*koulini* = bone) the stone is thought of as the "bone" of the ancestor Lapua. *Kepele*, they say, is really another name for Lapua.

Palipali, *toliname* and *okoaima*, which give names to three of the houses, are also said to be *yama* or spirit ancestors, though none can tell me anything about them.

3. The Rite Itself ⁶

Once the ceremonial dancing has been going for several days and everyone is in a fit state of mind, a leader calls all together and they dance up to and around the *oko* house. The young people go inside and continue to sing and dance while the men go and kill the pigs which have been brought. Anything between ten and thirty pigs are killed, depending on the wealth and influence of the clan. Meanwhile the "men of prayer" (*kepelekali*) along with the main ritual expert retire to the *kuakulianda* where they cook and eat possums which have been given to them. Afterwards the bones of the possums are collected and burnt in the fire. Other men cook taro and sweet potato in an adjoining room. After eating the possums, the *kepelekali* place a pile of pig's entrails inside a pit (*makaba*), put belly fat from the pig on top, and pour tree oil (*bowe*) over this. Then a fire for heating the oven stones is kindled over the entrails and fat using sticks from the bower of the *lipaiye* (bower bird) ⁷.

The pigs are butchered and some of the choice pieces from inside the belly and chest cavity are brought into the *kuakulianda* and roasted on sticks over the fire. As the smell of the roasting flesh fills the house, the men recite a spell, inviting the ancestors to come and eat (see *kamo* 1, p. 442).

One pig is cooked in the *palipali* house and the men go over to this house when it is done. While removing the pig from the ground oven the leader recites a spell (*kamo* 2) and then calls on all the "men of prayer" and distributes cooked pork to them. Other people are then given pork from the *kuakulianda* ground oven. After this the young men are led to the *okoaimanda* house where they are instructed by the older men on the meaning of the ceremonies.

⁶ M. J. MEGGITT (1956-57: 115-6) gives a brief description of a similar ceremony performed in the neighboring Wage Valley. My notes were gathered before I had access to MEGGITT's work.

⁷ In many of the major ritual offerings (*kepele*, one, *litu*), the wood to start the fire of offering has to be brought from the bower of the *lipaiye*. I have not been able to determine why.

That night the leaders sleep inside the *palipali* house. All the heads of the pigs killed that day are lined along a shelf inside. The leaders will eat these later. During the night, while the others are asleep, the leading ritual expert takes some belly fat and cooks it in the ground oven. At first light he takes, with a senior member of the clan, this fat to the *ewanda*, the pit containing the *ewa* stone. The round black stone, about 10 cm. in diameter, is said to be the "head" of their first ancestor. This ceremony must be performed at first light before the stone "wake up". "*Nogut em i opim ai bilong em.*" (Neo-melanesian: "He must not open his eyes.") The stone is buried with the fat. Soft cordyline leaves of *mawana*, *tandali* and *ititi* are placed at the bottom of the pit, fat and green ferns over these, and then the stone. More fat is placed on top. Then the ends of the long cordyline leaves are drawn up around and tied at the top with vine so as to form a neat bundle. While performing this operation the leader recites another spell (*kamo* 3). The stone is to "sleep" and leave people alone.

The spellmen go to the *okoaimanda* where some pork is roasted and eaten. *Kamo* 1 from the previous day is recited again. They then go to the *umane* house where the *yupini* has been placed. The *yupini* is normally kept inside the men's house of one of the spellmen. The *yupini* basketwork figure stands some 70–100 cm. high. The body is built up by a coiling technique using stiff cane. Most have facial features including a nose, eyes and mouth. It has male genitalia, fashioned from woven cane or from wood, and male decorations such as a feather headdress and a woven fibre apron (see Pl., a). A man carries the *yupini* and dances around the ceremonial ground, shaking the figure up and down to show its genitalia. Women and young men can watch this dance from behind the fence (but they cannot watch any of the stone ritual). The *yupini* is taken to the *palipali* house and placed on a platform at the rear of the house. The spellmen rub pig fat on its mouth and then lay it down, while reciting another spell (*kamo* 4) telling it to rest. Later it is made to "dance" again. The figure is shaken about and another spell chanted (*kamo* 5). It is "fed" again with pig fat, accompanied by *kamo* 6.

The *kepele* stone, a large white vulva shaped stone is uncovered at the back of the *palipali* house and the *yupini* is made to "kiss" with this stone (simulated intercourse).

The ceremony of giving food to the *yupini*, making it dance and the simulated intercourse with the *kepele koulini* is performed on four consecutive afternoons. Each day the *kepele* stone is buried with leaves and pig fat. Every night an elderly man sleeps next to the platform where the *yupini* lies, so as to "keep the *yupini* company."

On the fifth day the *yupini* is returned to the men's house and the *kepele koulini* is buried in the *ewanda*, accompanied by *kamo* 7. This is the most elaborate burial ceremony because it is important that the *kepele koulini* should "sleep well". They say that if the stone is comfortable, then good times will come, but if the stone is not covered properly with fat, or if the fat is too old and dry, then good times will not eventuate. The test is whether things improve. If there is no change then the stone might have to be buried again

properly, or else they will seek another diviner and another *yama* might be chosen as the source of their troubles.

The materials used in burying the *kepele koulini* are as follows: the soft leaves of *tandali*, *ititi*, *mawana*, *wano*, *sanga* and *kengali*; some taro leaves and pig fat; the stone and more fat. Tree oil is poured over this. Some more cordyline plants are placed on top and the ends are pulled up and secured to form a tight bundle.

A ceremony is performed at the *toliname* house, but I am not sure when. A pig is ritually killed and the blood dripped onto a sacred stone. I was told there is no associated *kamo*.

On the sixth and last day the men move to the *umane* house which has been decorated with ferns. Here they cook two sides of pork. *Kamo* 1 is chanted again, and when taking the pork from the ground oven there is a further chant (*kamo* 8). People dance to the house carrying large pieces of bark from the *ipiliaka* tree. The men carry these inside and set them up around the walls of the *umane* house and paint figures on them using red, blue, yellow, orange and white paints mixed from clay, and black paint made from ashes⁸. The main figures portrayed are a woman, two men, the sun, the moon, a cassowary bird and a snake (see Figure 2). I do not know the identity of the woman portrayed but the two men are supposed to be Leya and Kimala. There is a myth about these two. They were two earthly men who one day during a *kepele* offering climbed to the top of the *oko* house and disappeared into the sky never to be seen again. The snake is said to be the same as the rainbow. People could not tell me why they made these paintings. Afterwards they are left to rot, along with the house.

Finally, led by the leading spellman, the people assemble and dance and tear down the *oko* house.

The leading ritual expert is well paid for his services, with several pigs and other valuables such as pearl shell. There are no taboo regulations pertaining to food, but intercourse is forbidden during and for a few weeks after the ceremony. They say that if a man did have intercourse during the time of the ceremony he would swell up and die.

⁸ I am not certain, but it is likely that these painted bark plaques are similar to the Enga *kaima* paintings (see MEGGITT 1965b: 119, and NEICH 1975: 36).

⁹ The figures reproduced here were not taken from a *umane* house as these are no longer in existence. I provided two of the ritual experts with large pieces of paper and asked them to draw figures similar to those they had drawn previously on the bark plaques of the *umane* house.

PHILIP J. GIBBS, The *Kepele* Ritual of the Western Highlands of Papua New Guinea



- a) Man holding a recently made *yupini* figure and a stone which he claimed had been used for ritual purposes.
- b) *yupini* basketwork figure (Wabag Museum, Papua New Guinea).
- c) The *oko* house at the remains of a ceremonial ground built for the *kepele* ritual (taken at Takopa in the Paiela Valley by Rev. R. Holst, c. 1964).
- d) Four different stones which people claimed had been used for ritual purposes. The stone on the left is a fossil. The one second from left is a carved stone with eyes and a mouth visible in its "head".

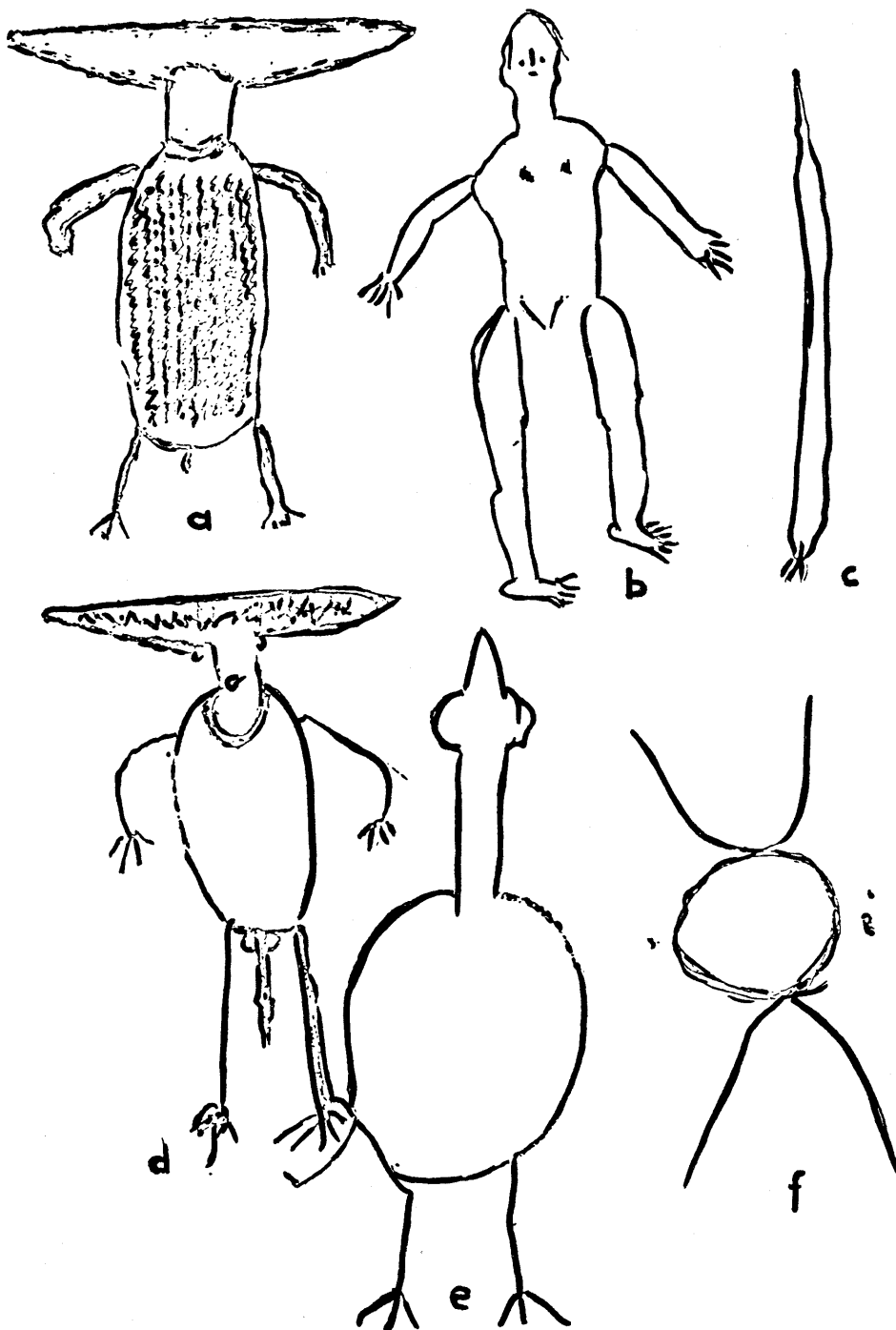


Figure 2: Figures painted inside the *umane* house⁹:

a) the ancestor 'Leya', b) a woman (unidentified), c) a snake, d) the mythical hero Kimala, e) a cassowary, f) the moon with stars on either side.

4. *Kepele* Spells

The following are transcriptions of *kepele* spells, followed by a free translation ¹⁰.

Kamo 1 ¹¹

*Kobo kobo Ligi lalu Waligi kobo kobo,
kobo kobo Yapai lalu Kedoname kobo kobo,
kobo kobo Eno lalu Petaka kobo kobo.*

*Waba liama epea guluma yu kapu toko leamo kobo,
ene liama epea guluma yu nalitapa leamo kobo.*

*Kobo kobo kobo,
kobo, kobo, kobo.
Supa lalu Lasupa kobo kobo,
Supa lalu Lasupa kobo kobo,
Yoko lalu Waiyoko kobo kobo.*

*Waba liama epea guluma yu kapu toko leamo kobo,
ene liama epea guluma yu nalitapa leamo kobo.*

*Waigi lalu Lapato kobo kobo,
Waigi lalu Lapato kobo kobo,
Kapu lalu Kado kobo.*

*Waba liama epea guluma yu kapu toko leamo kobo,
ene liama epea guluma yu nalitapa leamo kobo.*

*Kuli lalu Yadu kobo kobo,
Kuli lalu Yadu kobo kobo.*

*Waba liama epea guluma yu kapu toko leamo kobo,
ene liama epea guluma yu nalitapa leamo kobo.*

*Mena wane lapo kobo,
ee ada lapo kobo,
di Tobeneme lapo kobo,
Abupati ita putuputu lebene ita pelo alo ita.*

Free translation:

Kobo kobo I call Mount Ligi or Waligi *kobo kobo*,
kobo kobo I call the mountains Yapai and Kedoname *kobo kobo*,
kobo kobo I call Mount Eno or Petaka *kobo kobo*.

¹⁰ The Ipiḷi language belongs to the New Guinea Highlands Language Stock. Voiced stops are prenasalized. All words end in a vowel, though often the final vowel is voiceless. There may be two tones in Ipiḷi but this has not been properly analyzed.

¹¹ The meaning of *kamo* is similar to the English "spell", though such a word does not translate it fully. A *kamo* is a set of words, but it is more than a set of words because the words possess a certain power, and the man who buys or inherits the words, buys or inherits the power also. A *kamo* might be said, or chanted; by an individual, or a group.

Before the bird danced and the ground was churned up *kobo*,
 Later the bird will come again bringing scraps of wood *kobo*.

Kobo kobo kobo,
kobo kobo kobo,
 I call Mount Supa or Lasupa *kobo kobo*,
 I call Mount Supa or Lasupa *kobo kobo*,
 I call Mount Yoko or Waiyoko *kobo kobo*.

Before the bird danced and the ground was churned up *kobo*,
 Later the bird will come again bringing scraps of wood *kobo*.

I call Mount Waigi or Lapato *kobo kobo*,
 I call Mount Waigi or Lapato *kobo kobo*,
 I call Mount Kapu or Kado *kobo*.

Before the bird danced and the ground was churned up *kobo*,
 Later the bird will come again bringing scraps of wood *kobo*.

I call Mount Kuli or Yadu *kobo kobo*,
 I call Mount Kuli or Yadu *kobo kobo*.

Before the bird danced and the ground was churned up *kobo*,
 Later the bird will come again bringing scraps of wood *kobo*.

Both pigs and children *kobo*,
 both gardens and houses *kobo*,
 both ropes and the Tobena clan *kobo*,
 touch a piece of *abupati* tree and *lebene* and burn them together.

Explanation:

There are two main themes running through this *kamo*: the calling to mountains around the Porgera area ¹² and reference to the bowerbird and its dance. The word *kobo* which I am unable to translate satisfactorily seems to be the connection. Most people said they did not know what the word meant and the few experts offered different explanations. One said it was a term for the act of rubbing pig fat onto a sacred stone (a variation on the word *kamo* – to say a spell?). The explanation that I favor is that *kobo* is the act of a bowerbird adding sticks to its bower as it hops around it. The wood used to start the fire over which this spell is chanted was from such a bower. There is reference to this in the last line; *abupati* and *lebene* are the principal woods used.

Calling the names of mountains is used frequently in Ipili ritual. The tops of mountains are known as the resting places of ancestral spirits. In this *kamo* the most distant mountain is called first; Mount Ligi, which is far away in the vicinity of the Lagaip River. Then mountains near Laiagam are named and finally ones near Porgera, as though one was gazing around from the perspective of somewhere near the Porgera patrol post. The bowerbird must have a meaning which I do not know.

¹² Mountains may be referred to by many different names. F. INGEMANN has written on the Ipili practice of poetic substitution of names in Ipili songs (see INGEMANN 1968).

Kamo 2

*Uli ada aiyakame o,
 Yo ada aiyakame o.
 Napia weyo, ipiti weyo o,
 bala kuleape, bala kuleape.
 Titakai leape. Tutuku leape.
 Pulu tibo o, ipulu tibo o,
 pulu mati o, ipulu mati o.*

Free translation:

Small woman's house,
 small woman's house.
 He takes the pig from the ground oven,
 he removes it, he removes it.
 Turn the piece of *titakai* wood. Turn the piece of *tutuku* wood.
 It comes here, it goes there,
 it comes and gives, it goes and gives.

Explanation:

It is difficult to understand the symbolic nature of this chant. When asked for an explanation, the usual answer given was, "I don't know, I merely follow what was taught me by my father." Only men are allowed inside the *palipali* house where this *kamo* is chanted. The house is probably referred to as a woman's house because it contains the female *kepele* stone. I do not know the significance of the *tutuku* or *titakai* trees.

Kamo 3

*Au yapu yape, tidi Poteke yape,
 au yapu yape, tidi Poteke yape.
 Wainanaga ai lolako ale olene,
 yia tolae lolako ale olene,
 yia tolae lolako ale olene,
 wadakali ai lolako ale olene,
 wainanaga ai lolako ale olene,
 wadakali pi lolako ale olene.
 au yapu yape, tidi Poteke yape,
 Kagapu ipi yape, Kagapu auwai yape.*

Free translation:

Stay hidden here and be snug like the *poteke*,
 stay hidden here and be snug like the *poteke*.
 You must not hear the children crying,
 you must not hear the noise of the pigs,
 you must not hear the noise of the pigs,
 you must not hear the cries of the men and women,
 you must not hear the cries of the children,

you must not hear the talk of the men and women.
 Stay hidden here and be snug like the *poteke*,
 stay hidden like the *kagapu*, away like the *kagapu*.

Explanation:

In this spell the spirit of the *ewa* stone is given pig fat in a propitiatory offering. The spirit is to "sleep" and leave people alone. The reference to animals or trees with desired qualities is a common feature of Ipili *kamo*. The *poteke* is a possum which sleeps in holes under tree trunks. The *kagapu* is a black grub with many legs, which is found in soft ground.

Kamo 4 (While the *yupini* is fed and then laid to rest)

Tikale akali yupini nege toto kabu toto,
nege toto kabu toto.
Wi tuki la, ne tuki la,
wi tuki la, ne tuki la,
wi tuki la.

Free translation:

You are a good man *yupini*. Teeth are hot, mouth is hot,
 teeth are hot, mouth is hot.
 Penis is soft, teeth are soft,
 penis is soft, teeth are soft,
 penis is soft.

Kamo 5 (While making the *yupini* dance)

Awe awe kana midi pupulupa lo awe awe,
awe awe kana midi ipataipata lo awe awe,
awe awe kana midi pulupulu lo awe awe.

Free translation:

Later later a stone will go later later,
 later later a stone will come later later,
 later later a stone will go later later.

Kamo 6 (While feeding the *yupini* again)

Tikale akali yupini wi tui la,
na tuku la, ne molo la.
Tikale akali yupini wi tui la, ne tuku la,
wi tui la, ne molo la, ne molo la,
ne mo la.

Free translation:

You are a good man *yupini*. Penis is erect,
 teeth are on edge, make the teeth work.
 You are a good man *yupini*. Penis is erect, teeth are on edge,
 penis is erect, make the teeth work, make the teeth work,
 the teeth work well.

Explanation:

The three spells above are made before the *yupini* copulates with the female stone. The meaning of the words is fairly obvious.

Kamo 7

*Tada ititso matitso,
tada ititso matitso,
ititso matitso.
Moana ititso matitso,
Saggai ititso,
Sagamulum ititso matitso,
Itito ali ititso matitso,
Maluboali teso matitso.*

*Kepaludunpali, paludone palipe, paludone palipe.
Ita keala tenisipe.
Wanela tenesipe.*

Free translation:

I am readying the leaves for a ground oven,
I am readying the leaves for a ground oven,
readying them.
I prepare the *moana* leaf,
the *saggai* leaf,
I prepare the *sagamulum* leaf,
I prepare the *itito* plant,
I prepare the *maluboali* leaves.

Sleep well, do not get up, do not get up.
Do not hear the burning trees.
Do not hear the children's cries.

Explanation:

This *kamo* has a similar meaning to that of *kamo 3*. The *moana* leaf is a soft cordyline leaf used in ground ovens. The *saggai*, *sagamulum* and *maluboali* are grasses with fleshy leaves. The *itito* is a small plant which bears red flowers. The reference to trees burning is to the cutting of new gardens from the forest.

Kamo 8

*Uli adaiakame,
Yowai adaiakame.
Naidupio, ipidupio, kolautupie.
Owaulape tidaka ulape, pidu ulape.
Kabuli ulape.
Pulitibo, ipulutibo.
Pulutumaio, ipulutimaio.
Puluato, ipulato.*

Free translation:

This house stands,
 green food is here.
 I give, you give, all must give.
 Greens, wild *korokas* and cordyline shrubs grow well.
 Everything grows well.
 The *puli* tree grows well, come see it.
 The *puli* tree is well, come and see.
 I go to get good things, you follow.

Explanation:

The *puli* tree is strong and will not break easily. The term is sometimes used to refer to the sky when it will not rain: the clouds will not break. It is a symbol of strength.

5. Concluding Note

Today most Ipili are adherents of one of the Christian missions and many of the traditional rituals, especially the larger clan rituals such as the *kepele* have been abandoned. I was told that the last time the *kepele* was performed was ten or fifteen years ago. It is unlikely that it will be performed again. I think there are two reasons for this. Firstly, most of the *yupini* figures known to exist and many of the stones, have been presented to missionaries as a sign of the people's desire to abandon their traditional religious practices. *Yupini* figures have been exhibited in public at the Mount Hagen Show indicating that they have lost much of the sacredness which was attributed to them. Secondly, the conditions of sickness and socio-economic insecurity which were reasons for performing the ritual are far less acute today, with modern medicines, trade-store goods, and the availability of relief if a serious famine should occur ¹³.

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¹³ The Ipili know that food relief was made readily available in 1972-73 when the nearby Enga people suffered a severe famine after frost killed their crops.

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