

Anderson, Astrid 2011. *Landscapes of Relations and Belonging. Body, Place and Politics in Wogeo, Papua New Guinea (Person, Space and Memory in the Contemporary Pacific Series, Volume 3)*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books. 324 pp. Hb.: \$95.00 / €55.00. ISBN: 9781845457754.

A walk around Wogeo island introduces readers to the important places that recur in daily interactions and myths. The author offers a new perspective on the island's society, relating her Wogeo teachers' ideas about their past in the form of myths and cultural knowledge that have contributed to make their island entity. She not only focuses on place as the essential element in the social relations of belonging, through maintenance of bodies, leadership and house structures; but she also updates Hogbin's ethnographic writings from 50 years earlier on which her own ethnographic overview is based. Her use of a phenomenological approach to social mapping places this ethnography firmly within a new genre of Melanesian ethnography.

Anderson brings to light the world of the Wogeo by focusing on landscape images that they use in ordering the flow of their sociality, both practically and metaphorically. Everyday practices are explained in terms of connections and disconnections between the beings and entities in the world, as well as through myths and important cultural figures. Place is a corollary of belonging. Pathways through the space, both real and metaphorical, lead to further understanding of how the land and sea encompass Wogeo thinking about belonging, and distinguish them from their neighbours. The Wogeo, she suggests, welcome Hogbin's and her writings, which will provide guidance to young people in a changing world of *Kastom*.

The author has sought out the subtleties of her main concepts by considering the channels of relationships between the landscape and social relations. As people move around the island, and as she herself visited villages beyond Dab where she was based, they closely follow cultural prescriptions about maintaining their bodies. They carry "baskets" of knowledge as that indicate different types of knowledge for which each person is respected, some of which indicate leaders (*koakoale*) (p.153) (the author uses the local term throughout for which she gives the gloss 'chief' only in the Glossary). For some, a "true" leader should have the right matrilineal identity, whereas other leadership offices derive their power from bodies of knowledge drawn from the spatial pathways of history, both terrestrial and metaphysical. House structures, particularly the rafters, embody many aspects of belonging to Wogeo society.

Looking after one's body was a subject the author heard referred to frequently, as one pathway of relationships that features in proper adherence to *Kastom*. Direct physical contact between bodies, both human and non-human, may be regarded as "dangerous" with sexual fluids, saliva, smell and "germs", as well as breath and spoken words as part of the flow of substances, some for good, some contributing to negative outcomes, including death (p. 101). The references to disease are closely linked to the power of magic, where failure to follow proper pathways may be used to explain negative outcomes.

Matrilineality that features strongly (as matri-moieties) in Hogbin's earlier analysis of gender in Wogeo, is, for Anderson, only one set of pathways and bodies of knowledge that people utilise all the time, but must be kept hidden from public discourse (p. 10), and thus barely acknowledged to the outsider. Matrilineally transferred essence is associated with the constitution of persons, embodiment, associated with particular knowledge, and named houses.

But matrilineal associations (*tina*) are only one of a ‘multitude of alternatives [...] in relation to other aspects of a person’s identity and history’ (p.10). The use of the term *tina* for a matrilineage as one sub-division of the moieties identifies those of “one body”, that is identifying together, but not to be spoken of openly because of collective ownership of sorcery.

Matrilineages own the named houses on the island that are associated with bodies of knowledge and titles, but the house as built structure does not contain a matrilineage. Ideally people fill the houses primarily according to the history of the places and not because of matrilineal belonging.

This alternative to descent structure theory which dominated anthropology in Hogbin’s era indicates how we have oversimplified social relations by reducing all the variations of relationships to female or male lines of descent. We have used it to encompass affiliation, residence rules, inheritance pathways etc. By unravelling Wogeo knowledge, Anderson has revealed a different base to the intricacy of their social relations. As one outcome, we need to address kin terms more widely to encompass other bodies of knowledge; the concepts of mother and father need expanding from our earlier reductive exercises. The term *tina* for mother has strong resonances of Austronesian kin terms found across Polynesia, not just for its biological filiations, but for the ties to place and key practices of everyday living, as Anderson indicates.

Anderson makes a major clarification of one aspect of matrilineality, namely the complex relations between a house and the people associated with it, that takes us far beyond “residence rules”.

‘The social units that are most relevant and visible in daily life in Wogeo are based on shared belonging to a place, and names, titles, land rights, and certain corpuses of knowledge are conceptualised as belonging to, and embedded in, the place’ (p. 183).

Houses in Wogeo are much more than the actual built structure. The histories of a place are embodied in the rafters of named houses in the villages. Each rafter is connected to certain pieces of land, thereby reflecting the histories of the people who have held rights in them and in the land associated with them. Both the rafters and the land are known as *ro*. Understanding the roof structure of a house thus becomes a way of understanding the utilisation of agricultural land. Many aspects of the social history of belonging are encapsulated in the rafters, particularly naming. The rafters exist as a body of knowledge which Wogeo people use to explain the house and its associations as an integral part of the social landscape.

Anderson has taken us through several “journeys” as we explore the world of the Wogeo. Through her use of place as the anchor point the reader is led to understand how belonging to this society is intimately tied to place, whether village, or house, or Wogeo island as a social landscape. Many “pathways” are involved. Her own use of phenomenology provides one such “way”, an alternative to Hogbin’s, yet building on his cultural knowledge; she indicates throughout the text how her thinking about Wogeo society has been influenced by ideas of anthropologists working in neighbouring Melanesian societies.

The product is a crisp yet complex formulation of her perspective as she strives to stay true to the details that Wogeo advocates shared with her. The responses of those Wogeo and other Pacific peoples who read this ethnography will be watched with interest.

Nancy J. Pollock
Victoria University Wellington (New Zealand)