

Conception and Birth: Beliefs and Rituals of the Makru-Mansuka

Introduction

In this preliminary study of conception/fertility and birth,¹ I have tried to enter into the personal experience of a Makru-Mansuku woman in the delivery of her first child taking into account the Melanesian framework of life-fertility relationships and community-individual relationships. Of special significance in these relationships are the basic expectations of both families: if this couple is to be identified as part of the fully functioning community group, the marriage must be fruitful. My approach to the subject is both descriptive and empathetic. My aim is to describe clearly the practices and rituals involved and to convey as far as possible some of the feelings and aspirations of those who participate.

The area under consideration is around Wati in the West Sepik Province, 160 miles from Wewak and in the foothills of the Torecelli Mountains. The Makru speakers (approximately 3,000), are divided into 6 village groups—the Mansuku² being the village group on whose ground the mission station is built, and who are our neighbours. Wati was the first mission station in the area, founded about 20 years ago. As a consequence of this, and because of the proximity of Nuku administration post, the Mansuku (along with the Nuku) are the group most exposed to cultural diffusion.

Conception, Fertility and Life Processes

Preparation for Conception

A child is born within the world-view and life experience of its people. To appreciate the significance of this birth, we will explore some of the child's "pre-history", i.e., the customs, beliefs and active preparations which called this child into being.

Love Magic

Love Magic is commonly employed by men, young and old, to secure the affections and loyalty of the desired woman. It is often used before marriage and sometimes afterwards. Aid is sought from either Maure Feldeafo, Maure Feldemanwi or Maure Nekwa, the three local spirits responsible for love magic and the fertility of gardens.

When a man desires a certain woman who does not return his love, he consults with one of the bigmen who has the power to perform love magic. There are quite a variety of rituals, the following being one example.

The bigman gives instructions to collect certain leaves. The two men hold the small branch together, the bigman thus making his power available to the future husband. The man calls out the name of the woman, both together chant the words of the singing.

“Your thoughts must be for me only now.
Come to me quickly.
The lion ant will strike you with his power.
And you will not delay in coming to me.
You belong to me now.
Soon you will run to me.”

The lover then spits on the leaves and goes to hide in the bushes on the road he knows the woman will take to collect water. As she comes he throws the leaves, striking her on the chest. She is not aware of what is going on. After she has passed by, the man picks up the leaves, and with a winnowing motion intices her spirit or soul, captive now, back to his house. During the night, the woman dreams of this man and calls out his name. Her thoughts are for him now. Soon after she runs away and marries this man.

The Man

In earlier times it was customary for the newly married male to reside in the men's house for at least one month (sometimes 1-2 years were required). During this period of separation he was instructed in married life and, of special importance, given time for the power or “hot” within his body to become “cold”.³ This “hot” power is intimately connected with magical rites (e.g. hunting, sorcery). These magical powers were directly related to the male genitals, and if a man approached his wife and had intercourse with her before this process was complete, the power of “hot” within him would interfere with conception and a weak child would be born. He would also endanger his own health and his hunting or gardening skills. His wife, too, would become ill.

The Woman

For the wife herself, there was and is no special preparation for conception in normal circumstances. Her fertility is “on trial” and it

is only when, after a suitable period of time, she has not conceived that special rituals are introduced.

Conception Beliefs

Conception takes place when the "water" of the man mixes well with the blood of the woman. The woman herself, apart from her blood, does not actively contribute towards the formation of the child. The frequency of intercourse is influenced by this idea, and also by the belief that repeated acts of intercourse are necessary as the father "works" or forms each part of the baby. If it is the first child more frequent intercourse over a longer period is required because the womb, the "road", has not previously been opened. In this case intercourse would take place daily for 4 to 5 weeks, while with the subsequent children daily for 2 to 3 weeks. Following the cessation of menstruation, intercourse will continue until foetal movements are felt. At this time it is considered that the baby is formed (the woman is now pregnant) and intercourse is forbidden.⁴ Twins occur when this taboo is not observed. In the past it was generally believed that certain spirits could also father a child, though this belief is not common among the Mansuku today.

The locality where intercourse takes place influences the outcome. Good locations are the family house in the village, a bush house which is not in the garden, or a bush area where there are no harmful spirits. The garden is strictly taboo, because the sexual act itself will interfere with the fertility of the garden. The crops will fail and be of poor quality; pigs will break into the garden and destroy what food is present.

The act of intercourse has a power, a *smel*⁵ or "spirit", which in certain circumstances can interfere with the well-being of both partners, crops, hunting, the outcome of war, or the tone and strength of the log-drums. For this reason, sexual taboos relating to the above are observed today and have been since the time of the ancestors.

Infertility

Within Mansuku experience, there is only one possible explanation for infertility. Either the girl herself, or one of her female relatives, has performed some form of magical rite which has in effect "closed the road of her womb". There is now a barrier within the woman which prevents the proper mixing of the "water" and blood.

Should infertility become apparent, the husband and his family become angry at being deprived of rightful children. If possible the person responsible must be identified and steps taken to reverse the process. The husband himself may perform fertility rites to redeem the situation or he may have recourse to one of the bigmen⁶ who has the appropriate power.

Human Participation in the Life-Processes

Life processes flow within and around human beings. They are aware of and are in touch with them, and strive to keep a harmonious balance between them for the well-being of the community. In talking together and trying to understand the relationship of life-forces between humans and the natural environment (in which the spiritual life-powers reside), the following hierarchy and classification became evident:

Plants, trees, waterways (both still and running), insect and animal life:

Each species has a "life" peculiar to it. Of those significant to humans some have a man's life and well-being. These significant vehicles of life are both named and well categorised. However, not all trees, rivers, etc., have power, and/or spirits.

Pig

In the time of the ancestors this creature's "life" quality was considered something akin to that of human beings. This was a belief common to the whole language group, and which appeared to have a broader dimension than that of a totemic figure. This concept appears to be changing.

Human

i The Male

To Makru speakers the male is seen to have a power connected with the begetting of life, involving both the conception of a child, and the planting and harvesting of crops. This power is peculiar to him, not shared by the woman, and in part handed on through special rituals from father to son. This power appears to be intrinsically connected with blood, which is considered as a power-filled channel of life.

Conception—the blood of the father contained in the "water" is the source of the child's life—its origin. This is associated with the myth of a cassowary *masalai* or spirit, who took form from the spilt blood of a man while performing a garden fertility rite.

Delivery—wherein the flowing of the father's blood effects the passage of the child to new life. Stagnation of the father's blood within his body is a recognised cause of obstructed labour.

ii The Female

The female role within the balance of life-powers is generally subsidiary to the male, though there are instances where the woman has direct power to block male "life-forces". Examples of this would be magical rites of contraception, or having intercourse prior to war and hunting, thereby diminishing the male life-force and rendering him vulnerable to attack. The blood of the female is considered dangerous, especially menstrual blood and that lost in delivery. The seriousness with which the breathlessness and debility resulting

from contamination are regarded follows from the concept of breath as a highly significant life-force.

iii Breath

Breath has "life". By it is gauged the strength of the life-force within a man. Anything which diminishes breath, diminishes the life-force and is regarded with dread.

The breath not only has life, it also has power. If it enters deep within the body to the area of the psyche, it creates "hot", and is accompanied by physical disease—sluggish black blood. To be healthy in body and mind, the breath must flow out freely, it is also the vehicle for dispelling anger, ill-will, evil spirits.

iv The Sorcerer

The sorcerer receives a life-force from the a *masalai* which is not shared by other men. The process by which this power is attained is directly related to the development of a *personal spirit*, which is not the "soul" with which a child is born and which leaves the body at death. In the case of the sorcerer, the personal spirit is evil. The formation of a sorcerer takes place over a period of years with a gradual deepening of intensity, to the time when the sorcerer is in direct communication with the *masalai*.

At this state:

- he deliberately seeks power, "hot" from the *masalai*.
- he goes to the place inhabited by the *masalai*, and touches objects directly connected with it.
- the *masalai* enters the man, moves within him, influences his mind, gives him power.
- the man is now heavily influenced by the *masalai*, and works with him for the destruction of others.

The Dead

The recent dead are considered dangerous. Their life-powers are in the process of change, and at this time they are able to work havoc in the living community. The dead gradually forget their past life-style, a major change occurring in the mind, which now follows other paths. Not only life-style but life-power undergoes change, becoming more powerful. This power touches the living community in that relationships from this life are carried over, and friendship and enmity are forcefully expressed in all areas of life.

These powers of the dead are limited by the inter-personal relationships of the dead themselves e.g., intended evil can be circumvented by the well-intentioned dead. There seems to be a progressive change in life-powers from recent to remote dead, some of whom are eventually recognised as *masalais*.

In the above it is clear that the religious dimension permeates the natural environment. And yet from my personal observation in daily situations, and in discussion, life as a common denominator in these categories is not apparently considered sacred.

Birth as Rite of Passage

During pregnancy food taboos come into effect so that meat, snake, certain lizards, etc., are forbidden. These are presumed to be either detrimental to maternal health, or potential obstacles to quick safe delivery. There is no immediate preparation prior to labour. The husband's parents will tell the husband when to start building the birth hut; timing is based on physical observation of the expectant mother.

Separation

At the commencement of labour the young woman is led to the birth hut where she will remain for one month after the delivery of her child. There are two reasons for this separation. The first is the fear of sickness on the part of the relatives, especially men. The blood, liquor, placenta have a power to produce respiratory disease and generalised weakness. The second reason is for the protection of mother and child who at this time are especially vulnerable to the power of evil spirits and sorcerers.

The birth hut, *haus karim* or *haus blut*,⁷ is either a separate little house close to the family house in the village, a special room attached to the house, or a detached section of the family house. Most build a little house—either separate or semi-detached.

This house, the bed, baby basket, etc., are not destroyed but left to rot; thereafter the women throw the debris away in the bush. The men do not touch anything which may be contaminated. The ground on which it is built is kept for a further delivery and is never used for the family house. The men will not stand on the ground for at least four months after the house has been removed and the ground exposed to the weather.

When a woman goes into labour and is brought to the birth hut, and thus separated from the community, she is not outcast, isolated or alienated. Her separation takes place within the community's expression of solidarity and responsibility for the mother and her child.⁸

Threshold or Transition

This care and concern is made clear in the custom of *te nanglu tonquo*,⁹ (literally, "to hold the *nanglu* leaves for her") a significant practice which commences the threshold period. The husband's father begins the ritual. He holds the bunch of leaves in both hands and publicly states any anger or ill-will he may have towards the woman in labour. He then blows into the leaves (transmitting his feelings to it), encircles his head and throws his arm out strongly at

shoulder height saying, "You must have the baby quickly;". The gesture of encircling his head and the movement of the arm symbolize the completeness with which he casts out his anger. The arm movement is also a non-verbal message or command to deliver quickly. The leaves are then passed from hand to hand, to each member of the man's family. When this is done, they are carried to the birth hut where one of the women takes them, brushes them on the woman's body and calls the name of each person who has held the *nanglu*.

The men say that in doing this they have only one desire, namely, to terminate all anger or fights, so that an environment of good will, love and care will surround the mother. Any disharmony in relationships may seriously interfere with the safe delivery of the child.

If any delay in delivery occurs, the same process is repeated with the woman's family. The *nanglu* is held in the birth hut until after the delivery.

Proximity and Participation

The proximity of those present at the birth is directly related to their participation roles in the event.

Within the hut itself are the married women who assist in the care of mother and child.

In the immediate surrounds outside the hut are the two prospective grandmothers who are strictly taboo within the hut; young women ready to be married who may witness the birth; young girls who may help with food and water, but who may not witness the birth; and lastly children who will be around during the whole proceedings but who may not witness the birth. If they do, they will have impaired growth.

At a distance are the male relatives who usually sit around outside the other houses. They are in verbal contact with the woman and are kept informed of progress. The taboo of the men coming within the birth hut or witnessing birth is perhaps the strongest taboo during the threshold period. There is a palpable fear expressed by the men as to the power of the woman's *doti*,¹⁰ in this case her blood, liquor and placenta, which are thought to cause serious respiratory disease and generalized weakness. The strictness of the separation springs principally from this fear and any means such as food or water by which the contamination may be transmitted to the men are therefore carefully avoided.

Duties of the Village Midwives

These are a special group of about five or more fine women, relatives and neighbours who come when labour commences and stay until well after the delivery. They sit around quietly, *stori*,¹¹ and give continuous support and encouragement to the young mother.

It is they who by naming the family well-wishers bring the community concern into the birth hut. Early in the labour they cook *apika*¹² leaves and give them to the mother to eat. *Apika* when cooked is very slippery or greasy, and this "oil" mixes with the baby aiding an easy delivery.

Pain relief is achieved by the use of stinging nettles as a counter irritant and by rubbing the smoked leaves of the wild taro plant on the abdomen.

When labour is well established limbum bark is placed under the mother who squats on a log, and holds herself in this position by hanging onto a bush rope or vine suspended from the ceiling. The women help by massaging her back, holding the abdomen and straightening the baby during contractions. The mother is now not allowed to lie down on her back or side. If she does so it is believed the baby will go to sleep and will not deliver quickly, and or, will deliver from the rectum.

Complications—The Father's Involvement

If things seem to be going abnormally, the father becomes very involved. He is expected to ascertain the cause and rectify it. This is expressed as *mekim kol*.¹³

One or several of the following rituals will be performed, depending on the decided cause and the success or failure of previous ritual.

Father's blood

Sometimes there is a fear that the husband's blood may have been harmful to his wife. If this is felt to be so, he goes to the bush close to a stream, cuts himself, and allows a little blood to be carried away by the running water. He collects some water in a small container, mixes blood with it, and brings it back to his wife. The women then rub the mixture on the skin of the woman.

Spirits

Safungro is the spirit of this group who is able to cause harm. He can take hold of the spirit of the child in the womb and prevent delivery. This will happen if the woman had been to the *Ples Masalai*¹⁴ during pregnancy. If she had tried to see this spirit in the pool, or if she had urinated, defecated, or spat in that area, the spirit would use these things as vehicles to take hold of the baby. If the woman admits to this, her husband goes down to the pool, collects the water, and has it thrown over her. Through this action the process is reversed and the baby freed.

Pools

Another cause of obstructed labour is that during pregnancy the woman drank water from a pool that had no outlet. The husband must now go back to this pool and make a channel for the water to escape. The thinking is that if the water cannot flow, the baby cannot

be delivered; if the water is freed the baby will be freed to be delivered.

There are no accompanying incantations to the above three rituals.

If the father fails in the above rituals, he goes to one of the bigmen who has power from Safungro and who will then perform three rituals:

Cooking and drinking of the *apika*;

Singsing malio—ritual incantation to a very slippery fish;

Singsing rat—ritual incantation to the mulumbena rat, which runs very fast.

If all the above fail, two rather involved rituals will be performed during the night to discover who is subjecting the woman to the power of sorcery. The first involves a *mambu* (bamboo pole) and the spirits of the ancestors, the second a stone. The Pidgin term for the first ritual is *holim mambu*, literally, to hold the *mambu*.

Prior to the arrival of the bigman, a food offering is prepared for him, e.g., fish or rat, in payment for successful services. At sunset, preparations begin. The teeth of a dog or pig are hung inside a special shell, which is then attached to the end of a bamboo pole. It acts as a bell and makes a loud noise. The bigman who has the power makes his incantation to the spirits and attaches the shell. One end of the bamboo pole is then placed inside the house of another bigman above ground level. No one is present inside the house. Several men, including the specialist, hold the outside end of the pole and begin to call out the names of villages where it is possible the sorcerer lives. Following this, individual names are called. If one of the group present is suspect, actual names are not mentioned but a type of parable is substituted. When the name of the guilty man is called, the spirits take hold of the bamboo and pull it furiously, sufficient force being exerted to break the arm of a man. The bell rings loudly.

It is now clear who has engaged in sorcery, and the man must be induced to give up the object on which the ritual has been worked and reverse its power. The woman will then deliver quickly.

The Stone Ritual follows the same principle. A small stone is placed above certain leaves and sticks, and is gently tapped during the calling of villages and names. The stone turns in the sight of all when the guilty person is named.

Prayer to the Ancestors

Prior to this time, when everything is going well, the ancestors are not involved. With delay in delivery, however, ancestors of both recent and remote dead are invoked.

The spirits of the ancestors themselves do not cause harm to the woman in labour. Any harm done is by people living now. The ancestors will prepare to receive the woman and child if the evil

power overcomes them and death occurs. The whole family will pray, including everyone present who is related to the mother.

Delivery

When the child is delivered a "no touch" technique is demanded. The baby literally falls on its head onto the *limbum*. No one touches it. It begins to cry. The midwives now watch anxiously for the delivery of the afterbirth. The umbilical cord may not be cut until after the delivery of the placenta. The "no touch" technique is for the safety of the women attending; they too would contract respiratory disease if they touched the child. If the cord is cut prior to the delivery of the placenta, it will not deliver but will decay within the mother who will then die.

The Cord, Placenta

For a male child a special incantation is made over a spear-sharp *mambu* (bamboo knife) which is obligatory for cutting the cord of a male child. The father makes a singing or incantation to Safungro saying the words:

"You (baby) must be strong, stand up beside me in time of war and fights.
You must be stubborn and strong willed."

The *mambu* is passed in to the women through a hole made in the wall. This "breaking of the house" is a symbolic action which is intended to influence the child to war-like qualities. The *mambu* may not be passed in through the door. After the cutting of the cord it is then buried under the bed so that these thoughts will pass into the mind of the child.

For a female child *mambu* is not obligatory and sharp *pungal* (outside covering of sago palm fronds) may be used. There is no incantation.

The placenta, blood and any contaminated materials are buried quickly either within the birth hut, or close by. This custom originated from the fear of enemies using them to harm mother and child. The placenta is disposed of by women, many men never having seen one.

After Care

The mother is now washed, given a drink and something to eat and settled down for a sleep. Later, the maternal grandmother brings a special preparation of food and the sap of the *kapiak* (bread fruit) tree, which the mother must eat. This is to ensure a good milk supply for the baby. Exactly the same preparation was given to this young woman at her first menstruation.

The new mother may not put the baby to the breast immediately. Leaves are heated over the fire and she must express

the colostrum. This is seen as part of the *doti* and will make the baby sick.

The baby is now washed. A special yellow flower is crushed in the water which is used to wash the baby's hair. This will help the child to sleep well and not cry. New-born babies are placed in a specially woven leaf basket.

Name Giving

Name giving takes place on the day of birth. If a boy, the male relatives on the woman's side give the name. If a girl the female relatives on the man's side give the name.

There is a special relationship between the giver of the name and the child. A boy would be expected to take the jaw of the first pig he kills to his "one name", the man who gave the boy his name. There is no special ritual at the actual name giving.

Cause To Celebrate

With the safe delivery of the child there is much relief and great happiness. If it is a boy there is cause for special rejoicing. The family line will be strengthened. Continuity of land ownership is assured. The father's place will not be left vacant and the sago and betelnut trees will not be lost. Another man to stand with the men in time of fighting has joined the clan.

Girls too are happily received, even if with less enthusiasm than boys. They will be helpful to their parents, work in the garden and provide food. When they marry, everyone will be happy. At the same time there is a sense in which the girl-child does not belong in the same way; she is already seen as moving off to another man's ground and family.

Taboos during the Threshold Period

Following the birth of the child several taboos must be observed by both the mother and father.

The new mother must remain within the birth hut day and night. Food taboos carried through from pregnancy are continued, especially with fresh meat, the blood of which has the strength to harm both mother and child. *Tu lip*¹⁵ for the first baby, betel nut, smoking, sago salt, and cold water are also taboo. The drinking of cold water will result in the early occurrence of menstruation.

The father may not enter the birth hut at any stage as contamination is still a possibility. He may not hold his baby during this time as the whiteness of the skin is seen as part of the *doti* of the mother. Also the father is dangerous to the child if he has been engaged in magical rites for hunting or in worship of the spirits. He may not cut down big trees or large vines; if he does the spirits of the trees and vines will frighten the baby who will then cry a lot. Also he may not have intercourse with another woman during this time; if he does his child will be weak and sickly.

Family Responsibility

During this month the family has a special responsibility to protect the woman and child from Safungro and from sorcerers. One way of doing this is that the door to the birth hut is made very small, and if the woman is left alone in the village during the day, her relatives “lock” her in. A very strong “door” is built and strong taboo signs placed outside it.

Safungro is able to leave his pool and travel as a star to find the woman and child. He has the ability only if the father has eaten new and old yams at the same time. The spirit “smells” the food and comes with the sound of a bird ... burr ... burr. When the woman sees Safungro coming she screams. The people are able to hear him. The husband immediately takes a mouthful of cold water, spits it out and shouts:

“Leave her! I ate new and old yams and you have smelt it and come. Leave her!”

Then the spirit loses his power and goes back to his pool, but he may come again. The sorcerer is able to “smell” the woman’s *doti* when nearby. In these days it is said that Satan enters his mind, gives him power and changes his appearance. He becomes grotesque—his face, ears, hands, legs, teeth and tongue become long. He calls out to the woman who opens the door. She is terrified, but has no strength to rid herself of him. He goes inside and takes something that has her blood on it and goes away. He has the power to make her forget he has come. She does not tell her husband. Two or three days later she becomes sick. When she is nearly dead she will remember and tell her husband about the sorcerer.

This possibility makes the small door with the woman locked inside so important. For the sorcerer comes when everyone is away or in the night. She will hear him trying to get in, get up, light a fire and call to her relatives.

Reincorporation

At the end of the month the process of reincorporation into the community begins. It takes place in several stages.

The *first washing* takes place. Three special sweet-smelling leaves are tied with a vine and boiled in cold water. The woman then washes herself and her child in this water.

Immediately afterwards, the maternal grandmother prepares a mixture of leaves, food and insects in cold water. Her daughter and child then stand outside the birth hut and she throws the water over both of them, encircling their heads with the leaves. This too is described as *mekim kol*.

The mother and baby now go to sleep in the *family house*. The maternal grandmother then prepares mami, sago salt,

bettlenut, and gives it to her daughter to eat. The baby must go to the breast immediately after this ritual. With subsequent children the food taboos which include these, remain.

The next month is a time of rest, of gaining strength. The taboos observed in the previous month continue with the slight variation that the mother may move freely about the village but may not go to the garden. She is also forbidden to cook for her family. At this stage contamination of the food is still not only possible but quite probable.

The taboos for the father remain the same as the previous month. When the baby's skin changes colour he may hold it.

At the end of this month the husband now prepares a special formula, and gives the water to his wife who then performs a further *washing*, which includes herself and child. The paternal grandmother now sets the day, and calls her daughter-in-law to bring the baby and 'go to the garden.' On this day the woman may not work or carry fire wood.

In the garden she herself finds some leaves and boils them. Standing the saucepan on the ground she then 'steps over' them twice. This is the sign to those present—whoever likes may come—that her *doti* is now finished. She is no longer dangerous to the health of the community.

The new mother now prepares the *birth announcement*. All members of the family know the sex of the child, but to those outside it has been kept secret. The mother now makes a small package and places it close to a main road so that all who pass by will know the sex of the child. It also clearly states that the mother has finished her period of separation from the community.

Boy Child. A small bow and arrow, sago leaf and greens are tied up in a bundle. Those who see it will know that when he grows up he will be a good hunter.

Girl Child. Fire wood, sago leaf, rope used for carrying things and seeds for the garden are also made into a little bundle and those passing will know and expect that she will be strong in work.

This is a time of special happiness for the young couple. The woman herself has new status within the community. The man is happy that his wife is fruitful and that they will be able to strengthen the family lines.

Religious Significance

The following are my personal reflections which have emerged from my discussions with the Makru-Mansuku people. My hope is that in time the Mansuku themselves, on reflecting upon what I have recorded and gropingly tried to understand, will themselves make clear for us the richness of their religious philosophy and ritual.

Generation, sustaining and bringing forth of human life, is a risky, uncertain, and somewhat dangerous happening, and thus is surrounded by appropriate ritual. Once the child has undergone its first incorporation into the community and survived, however, the value placed upon the child appears to be expressed in the following ambivalent attitudes:

- the pragmatic socio-economic, expectation of returns;
- to adulthood the need of the child to fulfill these expectations;
- the personal, child-parent relationship of loving and cherishing.

The handling of spiritual, life powers and/or participation in the life processes requires asceticism and self-discipline on the part of those involved. Examples of this would be the abstinence from various foods, smoking and intercourse; the blood-letting required of the men for hunting, sorcery or the reversal of evil powers.

In the community's responsibility to the woman, who, in this situation, is both dangerous and life-giving:

- New life equals new power, that is, children are power to the clan-community.
- Personal wrong-doing is recognised as having powerful social effects which include not only other individuals, but the good of the whole clan.
- The pre-requisite for rendering impotent any evil power personally released, is the public confession of guilt and the ritual removal of any interior ill will.
- There is a unifying inter-relatedness of the physical spiritual and social world for the Mansuku. The cosmos is one—humans have their roots in the earth surrounded by the mystery of the invisible “in touch” with the visible.

I would like to thank the following Makru speakers who wrote this paper with me: Ambrose Numbanoko, Wase, Adam Auklia, Dennis Sulkra, Yakobus Yakawo, Maria Aflongo, Teresia Nemnakra, Rosa Ambafle, Anastasia Wanaku, Kolet Owem, Maria Sirongo, Bernadine Wanagu, Gerenice Namnaka, Edwara Sogi, Mina Kebr.an, Sufali, Nantume, Kebra.an, Awangre.