

## Chapter 8

### Adoption and belonging in Wogeo, Papua New Guinea

Astrid Anderson

As is the case many places in Oceania (cf. Brady 1976; Carroll 1970), adoption is common on Wogeo Island in Papua New Guinea.<sup>1</sup> In some villages as many as half of the inhabitants are adopted. Ian Hogbin (1935/36), who conducted anthropological research on the island in 1934 and 1948, accounted for the numerous adoptions by a high degree of infertility and the fact that many young girls had children before marriage. In the 1990s it was still the case that many couples were infertile and many girls had children without being married, but my contention is that adoption in Wogeo is not necessarily, and not even primarily, about childlessness or fatherlessness. Single women and couples with biological children also adopt, and the explanations for these adoptions need to be sought elsewhere. As much as providing children to infertile couples, and parents to children without fathers, adoption is a way of creating continuity and of commemorating historical events. Adoption can secure alliances and ease conflict-ridden relationships; it is a means of concealing a person's matrilineal identity and of manipulating kinship relations in order to gain power and influence.

In Wogeo adoptions are said to follow many 'pathways' (*jala*). In this sense 'pathway' is a metaphor for relations but refers also to actual movements in the landscape. Taking as a point of departure the relational and contextual emphasis that Marilyn Strathern (1988) and others have elicited as characteristic of socialities in the region, I show how people's places in the Wogeo geographical and social landscape are created in various ways, and not necessarily with filiation based on birth as the ideal model of continuity.

Following the trend from kinship studies elsewhere in the region, Hogbin moved from describing Wogeo social organisation in terms of patrilineal clans or descent groups (1935; 1939) to seeing cumulative filiation and kindred as the key organising features (1978). A closer look at relations of adoption supports Hogbin's conclusion that models of descent-based groups and alliance do not give a satisfactory image of Wogeo social organisation. Still, descent is important when it comes to locality and belonging in Wogeo. Filiation, descent, alliances and the history of places can all be seen as 'arguments' that are used to determine a person's place in the world, and adoptions place people in the landscape accordingly. One aspect of descent is particularly important when it comes to adoption: a man cannot adopt his sister's child. I shall discuss why this taboo is made explicit but still broken and how adoption in relation to matrilineal identity is said to be a way to 'hide'. My conclusion is that relations

of adoption in Wogeo do not primarily imitate other more 'authentic' relations, but are themselves essential to the constitution of the social landscape.

### **Differences between adoption in Norway and Wogeo**

In Norway, as in much of the rest of Europe and the US, adoption is primarily motivated by childlessness and a wish to create a family; kinship and family are central values in shaping men and women as social beings (Howell, 2001:73). As in so-called 'house-based societies', adoptees create continuity by carrying on the family name, property and history (cf. Carsten & Hugh-Jones 1995; Lévi-Strauss 1983). Here there is an important similarity between adoption in Norway and in Wogeo, where adoptions also secure the continuation of names and history, but it is the names and histories of places rather than families that are perpetuated.

Most adopted children in Norway are adopted from overseas and the birth parents and the adoptive parents have usually no knowledge of each other. The relations into which a child is born are replaced with a new set of relations and the birth parents lose all rights in the child. When a Wogeo child is adopted, the relations that produced it are not replaced by a new set of relations. Rather we can say that adoption adds relations that become part of the constitution of the child as a social person. Adoption does not necessarily imply a total transfer of care for the child but is always about creating a proper belonging for the child by giving him or her name and rights that are spoken of as belonging to a place. Adoption is as much about where children should belong as about who should raise and nurture them.

Contrary to Hogbin's account (1935/36: 23), people told me that the adoptive mother ideally should take the child just after birth and go through the same ritual cleansings as the birth mother (cf. Hogbin 1970: 91-2). Adoptions should not be spoken of and children should not know that they are adopted. According to people's recollections, people were more successful in keeping adoptions hidden in the past. It is possible that Hogbin was unaware of many adoptions and therefore emphasised childlessness and fatherlessness as motivating factors. These days people know about most adoptions, but in many cases it is still not proper to talk about them, a matter discussed towards the end of the chapter.

Marilyn Strathern has argued that in Melanesia, social persons are conceived 'as the plural and composite site of the relationships that produced them' (1988:13). A child is the product of the relationships that produced it and becomes an objectification of the relation between a man and a woman. From this perspective we can say that when a child is adopted he or she becomes an objectification also of the relationship between the biological parents

and the adoptive parents and between the adoptive parents themselves (cf. Leifsen, this volume). All these relations become parts of the composite person and show which place is the right one for him or her: ‘a white stone belongs in a white place, a black stone in a black place,’ they say in Wogeo.

### **A landscape of people, places and history**

Wogeo is a volcanic island of about thirty kilometres in circumference, situated seventy kilometres off the coast of East Sepik Province. Around one thousand Austronesian-speaking people live in the twenty villages that are scattered along the coastline. The villages are of varying sizes, from four to twenty households. Suitable gardening land near the villages is a limited resource and questions concerning land rights are central in the life of the islanders. A household typically consists of a married couple, children, and often elderly parents and unmarried siblings. Other relatives can stay in a household for months at a time. It is common for children to be sent to live with relatives in other villages in order to get to know places other than their own. At a death close relatives from other places usually stay in the village of the deceased for several months. Married couples often stay for an extended period with the parents of a spouse from a different village, and conflicts can lead people to take up residence elsewhere.

In spite of this mobility, belonging to a place is of crucial importance. What always remains the same, no matter where people reside, is where people ‘have their names’. Names belong to places and when a person is given a name, he or she is also given a ‘*platial*’ identity and rights to cultivate certain plots of land. Since the island is relatively small, it is usually not a problem to cultivate the land one is entitled to, even if living elsewhere, and many people are entitled to cultivate land in several villages. There are a limited number of names in Wogeo and a person can only be given a name that is free.<sup>2</sup> The names can be said to constitute a social landscape that is always larger than the people living. Names are embedded in the geographical landscape like a map of relations into which people are placed. The names and the land rights are associated with the houses in the villages in a particular manner – more specifically, with the sixteen rafters (*ro*) in the ceilings of the house. ‘The rafter is the root, and the land grows from it,’ one of Hogbin’s informants said (1939: 163). When someone is given name and land rights, it is such a rafter he or she is given.

Wogeos often state that a *ro* should be passed on from father to son but this is an ideal representation of continuity and does not necessarily point to actual paths of inheritance. A ‘*patrilineage*’ does not designate a principle of continuity and there is no term for such lines

of succession. In the village where I worked, there were only two out of about ten principal holders of land rights who had inherited from their biological fathers, and two of these ten were women. Patrification – the relation between father and child – is only one among many paths a person can follow to receive the right to a *ro*.

### **‘Adoptions have many pathways’**

Paths are common metaphors for history, continuity and relations in Oceania.<sup>3</sup> In Wogeo, following pathways are first and foremost about repetition, to follow pathways that others have walked before you. As Parmentier commented on Belau:

[P]aths are ... established linkages, relationships, and associations among persons, groups, and political units which were created by some precedent-setting action in the past, and which imply the possibility, as well as the obligation, for following the path in exchange, marriage, cooperation, and competition (1987:109).

A pathway is created by people’s movement in the landscape, between places and people belonging to places, and these movements become a part of the history of the places. History and mythology in Wogeo is closely connected to the landscape, in particular to conspicuous formations in the landscape. Whereas places evoke histories about certain people and events, pathways remind people of relations between people and places. The more a pathway is followed, the clearer the path is and the stronger the relation.

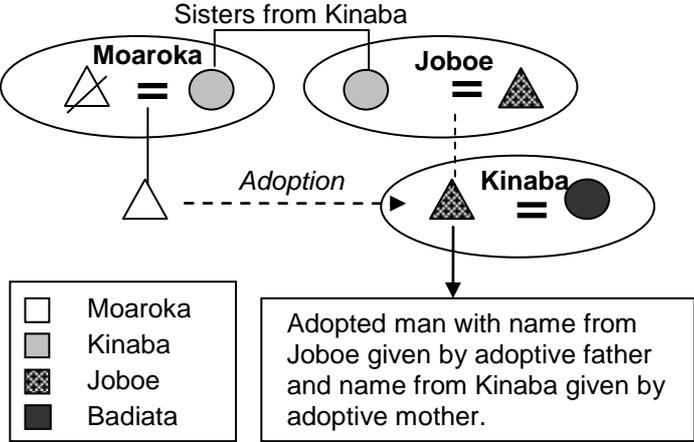
Such pathways can be referred to in order to decide which place people should have in the social and geographical landscape, to which place they should belong and from which *ro* they should cultivate land. If a person initiates a relation with someone from another place, the pathway they follow to each other’s places becomes a conduit for future movement, and to follow this pathway is to continue the relation.

An emphasis on the relational and situational have long been central in anthropological studies of kinship and group formation in Papua New Guinea (e.g. Strathern 1988; Wagner 1974). It might appear as though the model of the Wogeo social landscape that I have presented implies clear-cut criteria for group formation since people are seen to find their place within a pre-structured universe of names and places. This is not the case. The names and the places appear as structured and continuous, but people’s places within this ‘map’ of names, places and pathways are not given from the outset since each person can



It is necessary to distinguish between adoption and fosterage in Wogeo. The Wogeo term for adoption (*oala*) was translated by one man as ‘to take something out of a bundle and add it to another’. For fosterage the term for ‘look after’ is used. Adoption is different from fosterage in that adoptions are always about transfer of names, belonging and rights. If a couple cannot provide a suitable name and place for a child, they can still take care of that child, but this is spoken of as ‘looking after’ the child. Adoption, on the other hand, does not necessarily involve transfer of care or residence from one set of parents to another – it is the name and rights that that are crucial, not necessarily nurture and residence. In some cases the adopted child has as much contact with its biological as with its adoptive parents, whereas in others she or he relates only to the adoptive parents.

A young man provides an interesting example (figure 2).<sup>4</sup> During my fieldwork this man lived in three different villages. In 1993 he was ill and lived in Moaroka with his birth mother. It was not until I learnt that the name he used at that time was from Joboe that I realised that he was adopted, and had his house in Joboe. His brothers by birth said that only his real mother could provide proper care when he was that sick. But when the illness worsened and he had to go to the health centre on the neighbouring island, it was his adoptive parents who accompanied him. When I returned five years later the man was well again, but now lived in Kinaba and used a different name. His adoptive mother, who was the sister of his birth mother and came from Kinaba, had given him this name. He said that he was tired of Joboe and now belonged to Kinaba. His wife was from Badiata, and they had gardens on land belonging to all of these four villages.

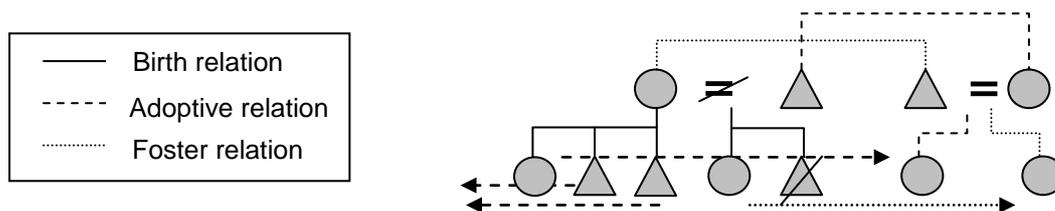


**Figure 2:** Shading indicates village of belonging and the encompassing circles actual residence. Dotted lines indicate relations of adoption.

If someone asks to adopt a child and can point to what one man called a 'logical reason' for the adoption and has a name to offer the child, it is difficult for the birth parents to refuse. One young woman had a daughter out of wedlock. The father of the child came from Koil Island and did not want anything to do with the two of them. A young couple wanted to adopt the baby. They had already given the child a name from their place and told me they wanted a playmate for their daughter by birth. The potential adoptive mother was, like the biological father, from Koil and her movement from Koil to Wogeo constituted a pathway for the adoption to follow. The birth mother was very attached to her daughter and when I tried to discuss the adoption with her she became quiet and uneasy. Eventually she said that the couple might give her daughter a name and that she could play with their daughter, but there was no way she was going to let her live with anyone else. It is unlikely that the couple would force her to give up her daughter but it is difficult, particularly for young single mothers, to refuse someone with a 'logical reason' to adopt a child if there are no other and more obvious pathways for the child to follow. Power and position are important in this respect, something another young woman's story exemplifies.

This woman married the adoptive brother of an older woman with an important position in Wogeo (figure 3). The young woman already had a daughter with another man when she married, and the older woman adopted this girl. This adoption followed a pathway not only because of the marriage of the girl's birth mother with the adoptive mother's brother, but also because the birth mother had been fostered by the adoptive parents of the adoptive father. When the young woman's husband went to work on the mainland, she went to stay in her natal village with a baby girl they had together. She also brought with her the older daughter so that she could help her look after her sister. After some time she gave birth to a son and the oldest daughter was sent back to her adoptive parents. The girl missed her mother and was quite miserable. After a while her birth mother and her newborn son got seriously ill and came to stay with the older woman so that she could look after them. She soon got better but the little boy died. She kept on staying in the village and her oldest daughter was happy to have her mother nearby. The girl was, however, not allowed to call her 'mother' or to spend much time with her.

When I returned to Wogeo five years later, the husband had found a new woman on the mainland. His wife had a new partner and had given birth to twins two years earlier. Both of them were adopted into different families since people thought that there was still a chance that her husband would return. But he did not return, and when I arrived the woman had just given birth to yet another son. She moved to another village with her new partner to avoid the now quite strained relationship with her former husband's sister. Her oldest daughter moved with her because her adoptive mother had tired of the girl's refusal to accept her as her mother. The younger daughter, however, remained with her father's sister, who hoped that eventually the child's father would return.



**Figure 3:** The younger woman of the story is the one to the left in the senior generation in the chart. The children she had outside of marriage are drawn directly underneath her and the two from the marriage beneath the sign indicating marriage. The arrows indicate adoption and fosterage. The youngest son is not included in the diagram.

The situation was thus that the younger woman took care of her oldest daughter who had been given away in adoption to her former sister-in-law, whereas her younger daughter who was still regarded as her own daughter was taken care of by the former sister-in-law. In addition her twin sons lived in two different villages and did not know their birth mother at all. What the woman who had given up so many of her children felt about the situation she would not tell me. As a young woman without many allies and close relatives she did not have much to say and wished to avoid conflict.

Even if adoption is common it does not imply that people find it easy to give away their children. It happens, although not often, that adoptive children are treated less well than biological children and that children move back to their birth parents because they are unhappy staying with their adoptive parents – something that is in stark contrast to the ideal representation of adoption on the island: ‘We love all children the same – mine, yours or your cousin’s – that is why adoption is not a problem in Wogeo,’ a woman who had adopted away five of her six children said. At a church gathering some children performed a play about an adopted child who eventually died from negligence. The audience applauded and those sitting close to me commented how important the moral message of the play was and how you would never find anyone in Wogeo treating an adopted child differently from other children. I

shall not discuss this any further but suffice to note that adoptions are not emotionally uncomplicated even if Wogeos 'love all children the same'.

### **Adoption and rights**

A man who controls large land areas in Dab has eight sons and not enough *ro* to offer them. He has solved this by having three of his sons adopted, although all of them still live with him: 'He loves them too much,' people said. The man's sister and brother-in-law have adopted one of the boys (figure 4) but the adoption is not explained by the siblingship. The man's wife comes from Moaroka, and the brother-in-law (who has his name in Badiata) has inherited rights in a *ro* in Moaroka from his mother's adoptive brother. It is these rights he has given the boy, together with the name of his mother's adoptive brother.

In figure 4 I have indicated the villages of belonging from this example, and it is apparent that there is no unbroken continuity in where the people involved belong over generations. But if we instead follow the movement of the people in question, from Moaroka to Dab and back again, it is here that continuity is created: this is the path that the adoption follows. The boy thus has a 'logical reason' to take the place of the man in Moaroka who previously had his name.

A person can also be adopted as a sibling in Wogeo. The man from the example above had adopted a younger man as a brother because the younger man, according to 'history', had rights in one of the *ro* under his control. The situation was, then, that he had adopted away three of his sons because he did not have enough *ro*, but had himself adopted a brother in order to give him one of the *ro* under his control.

Adoption can be a way of easing conflict-ridden relationships. A woman in Dab had been adopted in this manner. Her birth father from another district was for a long time involved in a conflict with a man in Dab. Eventually a headman suggested that the man should send his child to Dab as soon as it was born. The two parties agreed and the baby girl came to Dab. I knew that the woman had been adopted but she refused to discuss the adoption and got upset when the topic was brought up: she had only one father and he was from Dab. In spite of this, she maintained relations with her birth relatives and had adopted a girl from one of her sisters. The two men were long dead, but people said that relations between the two parties had been good since the adoption. As one man stated: 'If you have something of my body, the two of us cannot be cross.'

### **Kinship, descent and adoption**

There are not many limitations on who can adopt whom as long as the adoptive parents can show a pathway for the adoption to follow. With only around a thousand inhabitants on the island it is not difficult to find such pathways or histories. There is, however, one relation that is tabooed when it comes to adoption: a person cannot call his or her mother's brother 'father'. This touches perhaps the most important reason for why adoption is such a powerful political tool in Wogeo.

All Wogeos belong to one of several named matrilineages. Those who belong to the same matrilineage are spoken of as being of 'one body' or 'one blood'. In the Wogeo tongue a matrilineage is called *tina* ('mother'). Contrary to belonging to places, belonging to matrilineages is unchangeable and given at birth but they are seldom spoken of in public: they are 'something to hide'. Hogbin did not write about the matrilineages, probably because they were hidden more successfully in the 1930s than in the 1990s. I did not become aware of them until my eighth month on the island.<sup>5</sup> The main reason for this secrecy is the alleged ownership of *iaboua* – sorcery used to kill people. Some lineages are said to use *iaboua* more often than others and if one person uses the magic, the whole matrilineage shares the responsibility. People said that through time attempts had been made to eradicate lineages with a reputation for using *iaboua* too often and without good reasons; by the means of magic and remedies for sterilising women or by straightforward killings. Which lineages that are dangerous depend on who one is talking to, and since all the lineages potentially can come into focus, nobody likes to draw attention on their matrilineal identity.

Both adoptions and matrilineal identity are kept outside common discourse and in this way it is possible to hide the matrilineal identity of an adopted child – 'adoption is a way to hide', one man said. Even though it appears impossible to keep kinship relations hidden on such a small island, it is possible to create sufficient uncertainty of an adopted person's (or any person's) matrilineal belonging for a person not to be immediately associated with his or her matrilineage if conflicts arise. When so many people are adopted over generations without this being a topic of everyday conversation, it is difficult to keep in mind the whole picture. People know their own and their closest family's matrilineal identity and the older and most powerful men probably have such knowledge of most people, but my impression was that people in general were unsure about this when moving beyond their own village or district.

Members of a matrilineage seldom arrange to meet on the grounds of their shared identity. The most usual reason is conflicts involving their lineage, but then normally involve only the senior men and the people directly involved. They try to keep a low profile and other people do not interrupt. One of my friends once went to such a meeting on the other side of

the island. I asked her husband why she went, but he said that he had not asked her – it was none of his business. We can say that the matrilineages are embodied parts of every ‘plural and composite person’ that rarely are made evident or manifested as a social group.

If the distribution of names in the landscape constitutes a sort of timeless map that always is larger than the people actually living, in a sense the matrilineages become the opposite. In contrast to clans that can continue to exist without living members in terms of their names, positions and associated knowledge (Harrison 1990), Wogeo matrilineages disappear with their members. Trusted allies of other lineages can guard the knowledge belonging to a family if the eligible heir is too young, but they should not put the knowledge to use unless granted permission. If the matrilineage dies out, the knowledge is buried with the last surviving member in the shape of a plant (*Cordyline*) associated with knowledge and power.

The matrilineages also own the named houses on the island. Such houses exist independent of the built structures and share some common traits with Houses in ‘House based societies’ (Carsten and Hugh Jones 1995) in that they are associated with names, knowledge, qualities and valuables. In this context the *ro* in the ceiling of the house are not parts of the house: they are associated with the place and are the same in all the houses in a village. The rights to a *ro* should not be given on the basis of people’s matrilineal identity. Still I have heard people claim rights to land with reference to the house of their matrilineage and here lies a great potential for conflict.

Since a daughter usually moves out of a house when she marries, a house seldom contains people of the same matrilineage over more than a generation. Even though it is desirable for a matrilineage to fill their house with their own, the houses usually contain people who live there due to their platial belonging. It is disadvantageous for the people living in a house because of their affiliation to the place if the matrilineage gets too much power in the place, and here is a reason for the explicit taboo on a man adopting his sister’s children. If a man adopts a child from his own matrilineage, the rights to the land remains within the lineage over two and even three generations. If a man who lives in the house of his own matrilineage adopts from his own matrilineage, the influence of his lineage in questions concerning the place increases and the balance between the matrilineal families and the people of the place is disturbed. I know of several such adoptions but these are never discussed openly. Powerful matrilineal families easily become the object of suspicion and gossip, particularly concerning the use of *iaboua*, something that makes it difficult and undesirable to openly maintain such a position over time.

### **Consensus and belonging**

As Wogeos create and maintain social relations, they move along pathways between places that become conduits for 'the best way to go' (Tilley 1994). People's histories in the shape of these movements show people their proper places. The matrilineages are enduring categories in the social universe but are seldom visualised and not localised as social groups. They do, however, play a significant part in deciding where people should belong. During my last fieldwork I learnt of more and more adoptions that were about sending people to places in which their matrilineages claim to have rights. At times it seemed as though the complex web of pathways and histories leading people to their places, often spoken of in terms of patrification, was a sort of smokescreen for the fact that it all was about matrilineages. But here I should take care not to construct a system where there is none. Wogeo social organisation cannot be adequately described through models of descent groups that possess rights to land and form alliances with other groups. If we again look at one of the examples of adoption presented above (figure 4) it should be easy to see if matrilineal descent creates continuity over generations in terms of place belonging. In figure 5 I have replaced the shading indicating village of belonging with shading indicating matrilineal belonging. It becomes apparent that matrilineal descent does not create any continuity in terms of place belonging and does in this case not provide a better explanation for the adoption than the movement between places.

Rather than focusing on either of the two as more 'real' or 'authentic' than the other I shall elaborate upon the reality that is continuously created and recreated in social life. As products of the relationships that produced them, all Wogeos belong both to places and matrilineages. To understand the processes of establishing people's social identities it is more beneficial to see 'place' and 'mother' as parts of each and every person rather than as groups in relation to each other. To maintain a balance between these, often contradictory, forms of belonging is a huge and endless work. Since everyone belongs to a place and usually emphasises principles of patrilineal inheritance, it does not benefit anyone if the matrilineages become too powerful. On the other hand, people wish to maintain a certain degree of control over the house of their matrilineage and the place to which it belongs. But even if matrilineal belonging can be the incentive for following certain pathways, this was seldom emphasised when explaining a person's place in a village. Adoption is an important means of keeping the balance between the two sides, both by keeping the matrilineages in their houses and by

maintaining and strengthening the continuity and history of the people belonging to the places.

A person's platial belonging can easily become the topic for gossip and discussions. I seldom got the same version of a person's kinship history from different people. Even if the person in question was not adopted, usually at least one of the parents or grandparents was. There was general agreement about only a few people and these were all highly respected individuals who had managed to avoid becoming the objects of gossip and criticism. The various notions of how continuity is created – patrification, matrilineality, alliances, histories and pathways – can be seen as arguments that are used to define a person's place in the social and geographical landscape. When rights to a *ro* are transferred it is said that at least three or more men from different places should agree that the person has followed a proper history for that *ro*. Such an agreement is, however, fragile and the problem is to maintain a general consensus about a certain history over time. Only in that manner can a secure position in the village be preserved, and gossip concerning sorcery and matrilineal identity avoided. Successful adoptions are important in securing such positions.

Adoptions distribute people in the landscape according to the histories that are infused in it. This does not mean that adoption is about such a distribution alone. People adopt for many reasons and none of these, such as the continuation of descent lines, can be given more salience than others. Adoption is also about other forms about continuity, about place and land rights or, as in Norway, about wanting a child. Adoptions in Wogeo have in common with Norwegian adoptions that they create relations that are modelled upon relations between parents and birth children. The most conspicuous difference is that, rather than being substitutes for other, more 'authentic', kinship relations, relations of adoption in Wogeo are sought because in their own capacity they are important constituents of the social landscape. Relations of adoption must therefore have a central place in the analyses of Wogeo social organisation as something more than an add-on to a focus on kinship and family life.

## References

- Anderson, Astrid, 1996, Men Play Flutes, Women Bear Children. Sharing Places and Sharing Blood: Concepts of Belonging, Growth and Fertility in Wogeo, Papua New Guinea. [Unpubl. Cand. Polit. thesis, University of Oslo].
- 2001 Adopsjon og tilhørighet på Wogeo, Papua Ny-Guinea. *Norsk Antropologisk Tidsskrift* 9(1): 21-33.

- 2003a Landscapes of Sociality: Paths, Places and Belonging in Wogeo Island, Papua New Guinea. In: Ingjerd Hoëm & Sidsel Roalkvam (eds.), *Oceanic Socialities and Cultural Forms*, Oxford: Berghahn.
  - 2003b Wogeo Landscapes: Place, Movement and the Politics of Belonging. [Unpubl. Dr. Polit. dissertation, University of Oslo].
- Brady, Ivan, 1976 *Transactions in Kinship*, Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii.
- Carroll, Vern (ed.) 1970 *Adoption in Eastern Oceania*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Carsten, Janet and Stephen Hugh-Jones (eds.) 1995, *About the House*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Harrison, Simon, 1990, *Stealing People's Names*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hoëm, Ingjerd, and Sidsel Roalkvam (eds.), 2003 *Oceanic Socialities and Cultural Forms*, Oxford: Berghahn.
- Hogbin, H. Ian, 1935, Native Culture of Wogeo. *Oceania* 5: 308-337.
- 1935/36 Adoption in Wogeo, New Guinea. *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 44,45(4,1): 208-215, 17-38.
  - 1939 Native Land Tenure in New Guinea. *Oceania* 10(2): 113-165.
  - 1970 *The Island of Menstruating Men: Religion in Wogeo, New Guinea*. Scranton: Chandler.
  - 1978 *The Leaders and the Led*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.
- Howell, Signe, 2001 «En Vanlig Familie»: Utenlandsadopsjon I Norge, Et Stadig Voksende Fenomen. In: Howell, Signe and Marit Melhuus (eds.), *Blod - Tykkere Enn Vann?* pp. 73-98. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.
- Hviding, Edvard, 1996 *Guardians of Marovo Lagoon*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Keesing, Roger M., 1993 "Earth" and "Path" as Complex Categories: Semantics and Symbolism in Kwaio Culture. In: Boyer, Pascal (ed.), *Cognitive Aspects of Religious Symbolism*, pp. 93-110. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude, 1983 The Social Organization of the Kwakiutl, *The Way of the Masks*, pp. 163-187. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Lindstrom, Lamont, 1984 Doctor, lawyer, wise man, priest: Big-Men and knowledge in Melanesia. *Man* 19: 291-309.
- Parmentier, Richard J. 1987 *The Sacred Remains*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Roalkvam, Sidsel, 1997 Pathways to Hardness: Values of Body, Gender and Place in Onotoan Social Life. [Unpubl. Dr. Polit. dissertation, University of Oslo].
- Strathern, Marilyn, 1988 *Gender of the Gift*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Tilley, Christopher, 1994 *A Phenomenology of Landscape*, Oxford: Berg.

Wagner, Roy, 1974 Are There Social Groups in the New Guinea Highlands? In: Leaf, Murray J. (ed.), *Frontiers of Anthropology*, pp. 95-122. New York: D. van Nostrand.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Wogeo (Vokeo) belongs to the Schouten Islands, East Sepik Province. Research in Wogeo was carried out in 1993-4, 1998 and 1999. The chapter is based on a paper first given at a seminar at the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Oslo, Spring 1999. A Norwegian version of the text has been published in the journal of the Norwegian Anthropological Association (*Norsk Antropologisk Tidsskrift* 12(3): 175-188, 2001). Acknowledgements for valuable comments should be given to the participants in the seminar, to two anonymous reviewers for *Norsk Antropologisk Tidsskrift* and to Signe Howell, the journal's editor.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Lindstrom 1984: 293.

<sup>3</sup> See e.g. Hoëm and Roalkvam (2003), Hviding (1996), Keesing (1993), Roalkvam (1997), Tilley (1994).

<sup>4</sup> I mostly avoid using personal names as adoption, land rights and kinship are sensitive topics. Since most Wogeos' see my work as 'writing Wogeo history', descriptions with pseudonyms are not an option.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Howell (1995) about the silent existence of matrilineages among the Lio.