Reite Plants: An Ethnobotanical Study in Tok Pisin and English
Asia-Pacific Environment Monograph 4

Reite Plants:
An Ethnobotanical Study in
Tok Pisin and English

Porer Nombo and James Leach
# Ol samting i stap long buk

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This book is the product of an extended collaboration between Porer Nombo and James Leach which took place during 1995, 1999 and 2004. It contains information provided by Porer on the uses of certain plants from the hinterland of the Rai Coast in Papua New Guinea (PNG), particularly the area between the Seng and Yakai rivers in the Mot 1 District where speakers of the Nekgini language reside (Figure 1). Nekgini people and their ancestors gathered this knowledge and have used plants in the way we describe here. Porer explained that this knowledge has been handed down through the generations and is still used today.

1. Mipela yusim 'plant' long Tok Pisin long dispela buk tasol trutru nogat dispela wot long Tok Pisin. Planti save pinis long mining bilong en, olsem em save karapim olgeta samting em save kamap long graun, wara na diwai nabaut.
Porer chose the plants to be included in the book based on his thoughts about which plants are most significant for Nekgini ‘customary’ uses. ‘Customary’ in this context (as translated from the Tok Pisin ‘kastom’) indicates processes and procedures which are deemed to be both specifically local in origin and application, and which harness powers and forces to the end of achieving viable and valuable forms of social life and person, as understood by Nekgini speakers. Many of these uses may seem esoteric or magical to English readers. It will be as well for readers to keep in mind that Nekgini distinctions between humans and environment, and between the practical and the decorative, for example, are different to those which underpin western scientific investigation and the technologies which emerge from it. This issue is discussed at some length, albeit in relation to the narrower issue of intellectual property, in Appendices 1 and 2.

Many plants which Nekgini speakers use for quotidian purposes such as house construction and basketry have been omitted. We decided that as the use of such plants and materials is widely known and practiced in contemporary PNG, they could be left out of this record.
There are two reasons we decided to publish this book. Firstly, for many years, Porer and others in Reite have been concerned that new lifestyles based on business and the cash economy have resulted in a loss of interest in practices and knowledge from the past. Porer asked James to write a book which would preserve ancestral knowledge of plants for future generations. Secondly, the work demonstrates the deep and complex knowledge of just one language group in PNG in relation to plants. This knowledge is part of a wider whole known as ‘kastom’. Papua New Guineans can and should be proud of their kastom. We hope to strengthen the use of such knowledge, and show that such understandings and practices should be treasured and utilised. There is a rich diversity of customs and knowledge in PNG, and we intend with this publication to generate interest in that diversity by documenting the practices of a particular place in some detail. A clear antecedent and inspiration are the two books published by Ian Saem Majnep and Ralph Bulmer: *Birds of my Kalam country/Mnmon Yad Kalam Yakt* (1977) and *Animals the Ancestors Hunted: An Account of the Wild Animals of the Kalam Area, Papua New Guinea* (2007).
James Leach took the photos and co-authored the text with James Leach. James has lived for more than two years in Reite village and has written anthropological texts about Nekgini speakers’ kinship, social organisation, ownership practices, arts and ritual. A full list of his writing on Reite to date is presented in the ‘Select bibliography of writings on Reite by James Leach’, at the end of the book.

The chapter divisions emerged from Porer’s discovery of plants as we walked in the forest together, and his way of introducing the use of the particular plant by saying things such as: “this is for hunting birds” or “this is to make sickness cold”. James suggested the collation of information on material culture, gardening, and spirits and love magic, into single chapters. Although the text is presented in both Tok Pisin and English, there are places where direct, word for word, translation has been eschewed in favour of a more readable text in one or the other language. The Tok Pisin spelling and orthography is based on F. Mihailic’s 1971, Dictionary and Grammar of Melanesian Pidgin, to give a standardised form for the written language. The authors are aware that at times this preference makes for a slightly outdated rendition of the language. There are also places where current Rai Coast convention has deliberately been used in the text.

As a consequence, the word ‘plant’ has been used in the Tok Pisin translated from English. Despite ‘plant’ not being a Tok Pisin word, familiarity with the term by Tok Pisin speakers is widespread and understood to be a general term for all things that grow on the earth, in water and on other plants.
Long painim nem long s.aiens bilong ol plant, James bin kisim planti gutpela helpim long ol man i gat save long dispela wok. Nem bilong ol i stap bihain. Tasol, James em i no save long dispela wok long painim ol nem long s.aiens. Em i wanpela storimasta (nau ol save tok anthropologist) na ol narapela man bin lukim poto tasol bilong painim nem bilong ol plant long s.aiens. Mipela no bin kisim ol koleksen bilong plant bilong painim nem; ol man wok long poto tasol. Em inap osem long kain buk na stadi mipela laik wokim.

Mipela tok tenkyu long ol lain husat bin givim sampela helpim long sapotim stadi bilong James. Dispela ol lain i stap osem: Economic and Social Research Council United Kingdom (UK) (1995 na 1999); King’s College Cambridge (2004); Leverhulme Trust (1999 na 2004); Marilyn Strathern na Alan MacFarlane wantaim Department of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge, UK.

As for the scientific identification of the plants, we have received excellent assistance from a number of experts who are gratefully acknowledged. It is important to make clear here that James is not trained in botany. As an anthropologist, ethnobotany has never been his primary interest, and botanical experts have had to work mainly from photographs when suggesting identifications. A full collection of botanical specimens has not been made as part of this study. Even what we have achieved in the way of identification has been very time-consuming and has had to suffice for the present purpose.

James was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, United Kingdom (UK) during 1995 and 1999 and by King’s College Cambridge in 2004. He also gratefully acknowledges the support of the Leverhulme Trust through both a Special Research Fellowship in 1999, and The Philip Leverhulme Prize in 2004. Support also came from the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Cambridge during 1999 and 2000 when parts of the book were prepared. Thanks are also due to Alan MacFarlane for financial support, and to Marilyn Strathern.
In addition, we received invaluable assistance from the following people. On the Rai Coast, Yamui and Sangumae Nombo, Katak Pulumamie, Pupiyana De’anae, Palota Konga, Takarok Yamui and Pinbin Sisau. In Port Moresby, Justin Tkachenko assisted with the initial identification of some plants. Wayne Takeuchi from the Forest Research Institute in Lae was generous with his time providing scientific identification for many of the plants.

In the UK, Paul Sillitoe and Christin Kocher Schmid looked at some of the photographs; Stephen Hugh-Jones, Francoise Barbira-Freedman and Tim Bayliss-Smith advised James on what an economic botany of this kind might look like, and Tim Whitmore provided many scientific identifications. Robin Hide made many useful suggestions and encouraged the publication when it was likely to fall by the wayside. Bruce Godfrey in the University Printing Service at Cambridge has been very helpful, both with advice and time. Katharina Schneider and Katie Segal organised, designed, and edited the text at various stages. From the Resource Management in Asia-Pacific Program at The Australian National University, John Burton has assisted with Tok Pisin spelling and usage, and Mary Walta has edited the manuscript and organised its final production. Fleur Rodgers and Rikrikiang supported and encouraged us throughout the work.

We would like to thank all these people very much.
**Location of Nekgini lands**

The hamlets that make up Reite lie between 146°12’ and 146°17’ east longitude and 5°38’ and 5°42’ south latitude (Figure 1). They range from 300–700 m above sea level. Here on the northern foothills of the Finisterre Mountains (Plate 1) there are two pronounced seasons. The wet season lasts from November until April and the dry season is between May and October.

![Map of Papua New Guinea showing the Rai Coast area of collection.](image_url)

**Figure 1:** Mep i soim Papua Niugini na Raikos.
Map of Papua New Guinea showing the Rai Coast area of collection.
Porer Nombo is Local Government representative (Komiti) for the villages of Reite, Sarangama and Marpungae in Ward 16 of Mot 1 District on the Rai Coast of Papua New Guinea, a position he has been asked to occupy since the early 1980s. Growing up in the village in the 1950s and 60s, he never learned to read or write but was educated about plants and healing, among other things, by his elders, and is recognised as the leading local authority on kastom. In 2000, he gave a presentation to the Motupore Island Seminar on Intellectual and Cultural Property in Port Moresby organised by the University of Papua New Guinea, and in 2009 he visited the UK at the request of the British Museum to assist them in their work.

James Leach is Senior Lecturer and Head of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Aberdeen. He has undertaken long-term field research in Madang Province, Papua New Guinea, and in the UK with people utilising new technologies for collaborative knowledge production. His publications include: Creative Land: Place and Procreation on the Rai Coast of Papua New Guinea (2003) and Rationales of Ownership: Transactions and Claims to Ownership in Contemporary Papua New Guinea (2004).
Plate 2: James Leach na Porer Nombo, Reite Yasing, Desemba 2008 (poto Rohan Jackson kisim).
James Leach and Porer Nombo, Reite Yasing, December 2008 (photo by Rohan Jackson).
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Chapter One

Manufacture of traditional material culture

The first white explorers arrived on the Rai Coast in 1885 and a Rhenish (Lutheran) mission station was established there in 1923. However, no representatives of either mission or Government came to Reite village itself until 1936. Some of the steel axe heads brought by the Germans still exist in Reite and we know they arrived around the turn of the twentieth century. At this time in our history, the white man’s technologies had not come to Reite.

In ancestral times, we had to make everything we needed. All things such as clothing, tools, implements for cultivating, cooking and serving food, ceremonial items, and musical instruments, we made ourselves or traded with our neighbours. Everything we used and made came from the bush or the ground.
Making bark loin-cloths and blankets

Remove bark strips from the *Ficus robusta* tree (Plate 1-1, 1-2), shave off the outer fibres, and pound the inner bark layer. The bark is strong enough to resist splitting or falling apart during this process. After pounding, leave the bark to dry. The inner fibre layer is left white and the outside is painted with red ochre. *Ficus robusta* bark is also used for making blankets (Plate 1-3), as is its brother species, the *Bukuw* tree.

Long ago, our ancestors used loin-cloths as trousers (Plate 1-4) and the *bukuw* as our blanket. These days, loin-cloths and blankets made from this bark are not used in daily life. Now we only use them for dancing and ceremonies.

Another use of the loin-cloth is in traditional exchange practices. Loin-cloths are given as one of the elements making up bride compensation and initiation payments. Other items in such exchange practices include dogs’ teeth, shells, salt-wood, clay cooking pots, and carved wooden bowls. We still use loin-cloths for such practices. We do not use the *bukuw* as a blanket any more; therefore we do not use it in exchange today.

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1. *Ficus robusta* Corner (Moraceae).
2. Mipela save kolim ‘malo’ long Tok Pisin [olsem mal], na long Tokples Nekgini, mipela kolim *maal*. 
Plate 1-1: *Kumbarr (Ficus robusta)*

Plate 1-2: *Kumbarr (Ficus robusta)*
Sangumae Nombo shows the inner fibres of *Ficus robusta* bark (left), stone anvil for beating the bark (middle), and finished loin-cloth with paint (right).

Sangumae Nombo beating the pith of *Ficus robusta* bark to make a blanket.
**Abroma augusta**

3

**Making bark-string skirts**

After removing strips of *Abroma augusta* bark (Plate 1-5, 1-6), soak them in water for about a week. When the bark starts to decay and smell, strip away the outer bark and leave to dry in the sun. The sun will bleach the bark completely white. After splitting and rolling the fibres into string, the women dye the string using ritual methods (Plate 1-7). There are special ways used to make different style skirts and we have patterns peculiar to kin groups and places (Plate 1-8, 1-9).

In the past, string skirts were common dress for women, but we have never included them in the items given in exchange (unlike loin-cloths). When a woman was brought to her husband’s hamlet in marriage, she would bring several skirts of this kind to wear and use during festivals and traditional ceremonies. These practices still exist.

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Plate 1-5: *Naie* (*Abroma augusta*)

Plate 1-6: *Naie* (*Abroma augusta*)
Plate 1-7: Wokim rop (piksa Fleur Rodgers droim).
Rolling vine fibres to make string (illustration by Fleur Rodgers).

Plate 1-8: Purpur let. String belt.


Reite Plants

**Kako’ping**

**Ingredient for red dye**

_Bilong bilasim purpur Naie_

*Kako’ping* em i wanpela diwai (Plate 1-10, 1-11). Skin bilong dispela diwai em bilong wokim retpela pen bilong bilasim purpur *Naie*. Ol meri save kukim skin diwai bilong *Kako’ping* wantaim plaua bilong *Ataki’taki* (Plate 1-12, 1-13), na skin diwai bilong *Ropie* (Plate 1-14) bilong wokim retpela rop bilong purpur.


Ol meri bai taitim dispela retpela rop wantaim sampela waitpela rop bilong wokim kala na bilas bilong purpur.

**Decorating Abroma augusta skirts**

This unidentified tree is known as *Kako’ping* in Nekgini (Plate 1-10, 1-11). The bark is used to boil the red dye for decorating the string skirts made from the *Abroma augusta* vine. Women boil the bark with a red flower called *Ataki’taki* (Plate 1-12, 1-13) as well as the bark of the *Ropie* tree (Plate 1-14) to make the dye.

Women have a particular way of making the dye. They get up before dawn and collect the ingredients together and take them to a secluded space in the forest. They must not eat or drink, or chew betel nut or smoke. They must keep out of the sight of men on the way. If they eat first, or are seen by a man, the dye will not be bright and will not dye the string correctly. They boil this bark with the other bark and flowers and the string they have prepared from the *Abroma augusta* vine (Plate 1-5, 1-6). The dye must begin to boil as the sun rises and cook until noon. When the sun is directly overhead, the dye is removed from the fire. Women say that the bright red colour of the string is drawn into the fibres by the sun as it rises to the zenith.

Once dyed red, the string is tied along with un-dyed white string to generate different patterns.
Plate 1-10: *Kako’ping* (ingredient for red dye)

Plate 1-11: *Kako’ping* (ingredient for red dye)
**Ataki’taki**

Bilong bilasim purpur *Naie*

*Ataki’taki* em i wanpela plaua (Plate 1-12, 1-13). Em save kamap arere long wara. Taim ol meri save wokim pen bilong purpur *Naie* (Plate 1-5, 1-6), ol bai kisim retpela plaua bilong en, na bungim wantaim skin diwai bilong *Kako’ping* (Plate 1-10, 1-11) na *Ropie* (Plate 1-14) bilong kukim retpela pen.

**Ropie**

Bilong bilasim purpur *Naie*

*Ropie* em i wanpela diwai (Plate 1-14). Sapim skin bilong en, na bungim skin diwai wantaim *Kako’ping* (Plate 1-10, 1-11) na *Ataki’taki* (Plate 1-12, 1-13) bilong kukim retpela pen bilong purpur *Naie* (Plate 1-9).

**Ingredient for red dye**

Decorating *Abroma augusta* skirts

The unidentified species (Plate 1-12, 1-13), called *Ataki’taki* in Nekgini, is a flowering shrub that grows by streams and rivers. When women make dye for string skirts (*Abroma augusta* Plate 1-5, 1-6) they gather the red flowers of this shrub and boil them with the bark of *Kako’ping* (Plate 1-10, 1-11) and *Ropie* (Plate 1-14) to make the red dye.

**Ingredient for red dye**

Decorating *Abroma augusta* skirts

The unidentified species known as *Ropie* in Nekgini, is a tree (Plate 1-14). Shave the bark of this tree and mix the bark with *Kako’ping* (Plate 1-10, 1-11) and *Ataki’taki* (Plate 1-12, 1-13) and boil together to make the red dye for women's skirts (Plate 1-9).
Plate 1-12: *Ataki’taki* (ingredient for red dye)

Plate 1-13: *Ataki’taki* (ingredient for red dye)

Plate 1-14: *Ropie* (ingredient for red dye)
**Kananba**

**Rop bilong wokim bilum**

Taim yu wokim rop bilong Kananba pinis, bai yu kolim ‘yaaki’. Na taim yu painim long bus (Plate 1-15), bai yu tok, ‘mi painim yaaki’. Bipo yet ol i save yusim dispela, na i kam long nau yet, planti ol meri i save wokim.

I gat faivpela kain bilum (au) long dispela hap long Raikos.

1. **Ausakwing** em ‘bikpela bilum’ (Plate 1-16). Em bilong pulimapim kaikai, palawut na ol kain samting, olsem kain kain wok bilong bikpela bilum. Em bilong karim long het.

2. **Aupatuking** em ‘liklik bilum’ (Plate 1-17). Em bilong yusim taim i go painim liklik kaikai, olsem kumu nabaut, na pulimapim. Man bai karim long sol na meri bai karim long het yet.

3. **Autandang** em ‘liklik bilum bilong karim ol samting bilong wan wan’ (Plate 1-18). Em bilong pulimapim ol buai, daka, kambang mambu, smok nabaut, na ol narapela liklik samting. Olgeta taim bai stap long sol bilong man na long meri bai stap long het. I go we, olgeta taim bai lukautim dispela ol samting bilong wan wan (tandang).

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**Pueraria pulcherrima**

**Vine for making string bags**

After rolling the *Pueraria pulcherrima* vine fibres into string, the string is called ‘yaaki’. And when looking for this vine in the bush (Plate 1-15), one says, ‘I am looking for yaaki’. For a long time we have used this vine, and even now, many women make the string and weave the string bags.

There are five types of string bag in this part of the Rai Coast.

1. **Ausakwing** is a ‘big string bag’ (Plate 1-16). It is used for carrying garden produce, firewood and other sorts of things carried in a large string bag. It is carried with the strap across the forehead and the bag itself is slung over the back.

2. **Aupatuking** is a ‘small string bag’ (Plate 1-17). It is used when collecting small amounts of garden produce, such as leafy vegetables. Men carry them over the shoulder, hanging at the side, and women carry them across the head.

3. **Autandang** is a ‘small string bag for personal items’ (Plate 1-18). This small string bag is used to carry betel nut, betel pepper, lime container, tobacco and other small things. At all times men carry an autandang over the shoulder. Women also carry them. Where ever one goes, this bag keeps personal belongings close by.

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5. **Nek’au** em ‘bilum bilong pikinini’ (Plate 1-20). I no inap long pulimapim ol kaikai o paiawut o wanem; em bilong bebi stret. Nupela pikinini kamap, ol i bai kisim butoma bilong en na hangamapim long maus bilong bilum. Butoma long maus bilong bilum em makim olsem dispela bilum em bilong pikinini stret na noken pulimapim narapela samting (Plate 1-21).

4. **Aukekeri** is a ‘string bag with a special design’ (Plate 1-19). It is given to newly initiated men as part of their decoration on emergence from seclusion with the spirits. This string bag has a particular pattern called **artikukung** (elbow design). The design represents the wild spirit men of the higher forest who have bandy legs and bent knees, and that is why we call the design by this name. Initiated boys must carry the mark of these wild men when they emerge from their initiation to show they have been hidden away with wild spirits. During traditional ceremonies, women can carry these string bags when they sing and dance. And women can make them for themselves and may carry these string bags for personal items. But their main use is for decorating initiated boys. All boys who are initiated together must carry the same design.

5. **Nek’au** is a ‘baby’s string bag’ (Plate 1-20). It is not to be used for carrying food or firewood, or anything else; it is dedicated and made for carrying a particular baby. When a baby is born, the umbilical cord of the newborn is tied to the mouth of the string bag. The presence of the umbilical cord shows its purpose and prevents any other use (Plate 1-21).
Plate 1-15: *Kananba* (*Pueraria pulcherrima*)
Plate 1-16: Ausakwing. Big string bag.

Plate 1-17: Aupatuking. Small string bag.

Plate 1-18: Autandang. Small string bag for personal items.

Plate 1-19: Aukekeri. String bag (bilum) with pattern/design and typical small shell decoration. Above the finished bag is a half finished aukekeri to illustrate the process of looping using cut leaf batons as guides.
Plate 1-20: Nek’au. String bag used for carrying a baby.

Plate 1-21: Butoma i stap long maus bilong Nek’au. Umbilical cord attached to the baby’s string bag.
Kaatiping

Leaf for green dye

Bilong wokim kala long bilum

Ol meri save yusim lip bilong Kaatiping (Plate 1-22) long putim kala long rop bilong bilum (Plate 1-23). Taim ol wokim aukekeri (Plate 1-19), ol bai rabim Kaatiping long sampela rop. Ol wokim pinis (yaaki) na em bai kamap na stap grin moa (Plate 1-24).

Dye used in string bag designs

Women use leaves of this unidentified species, we call Kaatiping (Plate 1-22), to dye the string used for string bag making (Plate 1-23). When they make string bags with designs (Plate 1-19), they rub the finished string with this plant, which stains it with a long lasting green colour (Plate 1-24).
Plate 1-23: Rabim lip bilong *Kaatiping* long rop bilong givim kala long en. The sap found in the leaves of this unidentified species is used to dye the string.

Plate 1-24: *Yaaki* wantaim kala bilong *Kaatiping*. String coloured with *Kaatiping* dye.
For making slit-gong drums

*Elmerrillia tsiampaca* wood (Plate 1-25, 1-26) is used to make slit-gong drums. The slit-gong drum is a large idiophone used to communicate between hamlets using a series of coded beats (Plate 1-27). They are still used daily for this purpose. They are also used to accompany spirit voices when spirits are enclosed in the men's house, and to announce the kinds and amount of foods such as meat piled up for others to receive in exchange at the time of these ceremonies.

This wood is also good for making wooden bowls and plates. The method for making these wooden dishes is as described for *Nauclea* sp. (Chapter 1).
Nauclea sp. or Neonauclea sp. (Rubiaceae).

Plate 1-26: Giramung (Elmerrillia tsiampaca)


Suarkung

Bilong wokim plet diwai

Suarkung (Plate 1-28, 1-29). Plet diwai, i gat tripela kain. Mipela save yusim wanpela kain planti. Dispela em raunpela plet, na mipela save kolim maibang utung (Plate 1-30). Dispela kain plet i save kam long san i kamap, na mipela makim long nem bilong ples long hap, Maibang.

Nauclea sp. 7

For making wooden plates and bowls

Nauclea sp. (Plate 1-28, 1-29). There are three kinds of wooden plate here. We use one particular kind everyday. This plate is round and shallow and we call this plate maibang utung (Plate 1-30). This style of plate comes from the east and in the past we traded to get these plates with people from Maibang.

7. Nauclea sp. or Neonauclea sp. (Rubiaceae).


Ol tumbuna save kaikai long dispela plet. Nau plet bilong ol waitman i kam, tasol mipela save yusim plet diwai yet. Ol man long ples yet, na longwe wantaim, ol laikim na ol save kam baim dispela ol plet long mipela.

A second kind is called *sisak utung*. It looks like a canoe. Coastal people and people from the Siassi Islands (Figure 1) used to make these. Now, sometimes we make them.

The other kind of bowl came to us from the south, from higher in the Finisterre Mountain Ranges (Figure 1) where people speak the N’dau language. The N’dau call them *tundung kondong* which means ‘mortar bowl’. This bowl is used for pounding tubers and nuts into a paste. It is round and very deep.

In the past we traded to get wooden plates (*utung* in Nekgini) from people to the west and higher in the mountains. We started to carve them ourselves around the time of Porer’s grandfather, around the turn of the twentieth century. We use them along with other ancestral wealth to make payments for wives and children.

Our ancestors ate from this plate. Even now the white man’s plates are here, we still use our wooden plates. They are very popular and people travel long distances to trade with us for them, as well as buy them for money.

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Plate 1-28: *Suarkung* (*Nauclea* sp.)

Plate 1-29: *Suarkung* (*Nauclea* sp.)

Plate 1-30: Porer bilasim nupela raunpela plet diwai (*maibang utung*).
Porer decorating a new round plate.
Pterocarpus indicus

For making hourglass drums

We use Pterocarpus indicus (Plate 1-31, 1-32) for the body of the drum and the sap is used as glue to fasten the drum skin around the closed end of the drum (Plate 1-33). The hourglass drum is used for dancing and singing with the spirits (Plate 1-34). People also enjoy drumming inside their houses, but is strictly forbidden when anyone in the area is in mourning. Nowadays, many people throughout PNG buy our drums.

Gnarr

Bilong wokim kundu

Blut bilong Gnarr (Plate 1-31, 1-32) mipela save kisim na taim skin bilong palai (Plate 1-33). Em olsem glu. Kundu (Plate 1-34) em bikpela insait long singsing tambaran bilong mipela. Yu ken sindaun long haus na paitim long hamamasim yu yet, tasol taim bilong man i dai, em bai nogat tru. Nau planti man long PNG ol i save laikim kain kundu olsem, na ol i save baim long mipela.

Plate 1-31: Gnarr (Pterocarpus indicus)

9. Pterocarpus indicus (Leguminosae), rosewood.
Reite Plants

Plate 1-33: Mipela save yusim blut bilong *Gnarr* long pasim skin palai bilong kundu. *Pterocarpus indicus* sap is used as glue to attach the lizard skin membrane to the hourglass drum.

Plate 1-32: *Gnarr* (*Pterocarpus indicus*)

Plate 1-34: Kundu wantaim skin palai. Hourglass drum with lizard skin membrane.
Varnish for bowls and drums

This is black paint from the time of our ancestors. Sap from the *Glochidion submolle* tree (Plate 1-35, 1-36) is used for varnishing bowls and drums and other things that need a black colour. To obtain the sap from this tree: get the bark, pound it until softened, and add a little water and the sap will be released when you squeeze it (Plate 1-37). Get the ashes from burnt *Trichospermum tripixis* wood (Plate 1-38), then mix them with the sap, paint the surface coat, and the paint will not rub off.

We burn the solidified sap from another tree, *Kangarang’aring*, like the chestnut tree (*Canarium polyphyllum*) found in the bush, to generate a black, resinous smoke to seal the painted surface. Paint the whole object again with *Glochidion submolle* sap, and the paint will last for many years. Designs are carved in the surface after the paint is dry.
Plate 1-35: *Riking* (*Glochidion submolle*)

Plate 1-36: *Riking* (*Glochidion submolle*)

Plate 1-37: *Rausim* blut bilong *Riking*.
Squeezing varnish from *Glochidion submolle* bark.

Plate 1-38: Penim plet diawai wantaim blut bilong *Riking*.
Painting a wooden plate with *Glochidion submolle* varnish.
Morakung

Bilong givim blakpela kala long pen

Blakpela sit bilong diwai Morakung paia em bilong putim kala long pen. Dispela Morakung (Plate 1-39, 1-40) mipela yusim long wokim blakpela pen wantaim blut bilong diwai Riking (Plate 1-37, 1-38) olsem long penim ol samting em mas gat blakpela kala long en (Plate 1-41).

Trichospermum tripixis

For making varnish black

Charcoal of Trichospermum tripixis wood fire gives the paint a very black colour. The procedure using Trichospermum tripixis (Plate 1-39, 1-40) to make wood paint is described in more detail under Glochidion submolle (Plate 1-37, 1-38) and can be seen being applied to a wooden plate in Plate 1-41.

Plate 1-39: Morakung (Trichospermum tripixis)

Plate 1-40: Morakung (Trichospermum tripixis)

Reite Plants

Plate 1-41: Penim plet wantaim sit bilong Morakung diwai na blut bilong Riking. *Trichospermum tripixis* charcoal rubbed into the surface of a wooden plate with *Glochidion submolle* varnish.

**Oiyowi**

Bilong wokim ‘wail stik’ bilong paitim garamut


**Ficus sp.**

For making temporary ‘wild’ slit-gong beaters

From the *Ficus* tree (Plate 1-42, 1-43). When the wild spirits have hollowed the *Elmerrillia tsiampacea* slit-gong logs (Plate 1-27), get a *Ficus* sp. stick and beat them with the rhythm called ‘wild stick’. Beat them in order from the base of the slit-gong tree to its top. At the top of the tree, throw the stick into the forest. The assembled men all shout together. Throwing this stick away will make the sound of the slit-gongs clear. If the stick is not thrown away the bad beat will remain. We do this when we make slit-gong drums.

12. *Ficus* sp. (Moraceae).
Plate 1-42: *Oiyowi* (*Ficus* sp.)

Plate 1-43: *Oiyowi* (*Ficus* sp.)
Reite Plants

**Dracaena angustifolia**

For making permanent slit-gong beaters: ‘village/tame’ stick

‘Tame stick’. Good stick for beating the slit-gong and sound of the beat is clear. Sticks of the *Dracaena angustifolia* wood are strong (Plate 1-44, 1-45), but not too hard. It will not damage the slit-gong. When the spirits have done their work to make the drum, this is the only stick that can be used to beat it, and when the drum appears in the village, no marks will be found on the slit-gongs (Plate 1-46). It is used after ‘wild stick’ has been thrown away.

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For uses of *Dracaena* sp. see Chapter 6.
Plate 1-44: *Rongoman* (Dracaena angustifolia)

Plate 1-45: *Rongoman* (Dracaena angustifolia)

Sapta Tu

Wokim samting bilong tambaran, bilong rausim tewel, na bilong marila

Chapter Two

Working with spirits and love magic

Mipela long Reite save long planti ol samting bilong pasin kastom na wok wantaim ol masalai na tewel.

Reite em i gat wanpela tambaran bilong ol man. Em i haiptela samting. Mipela save kolim tambaran, Kaapu, long Tokples Nekgini. Ol pikinini na meri no inap save long tambaran na ol i no inap lukim ol samting bilong tambaran. Em i tambu tru. Olsem i no olgeta manmeri save long ol dispela we bilong yusim ol plant.


Here in Reite, we hold strong to our customs and ways, and we know of many plants to assist in working with spirits and ancestors.

Reite has a male cult. The activities of the cult are secret and shared only by initiated men. Women and children are strictly prohibited from seeing the objects of the cult and the spirits. These restrictions mean knowledge of the uses of the following plants are not publicly known. The spirit cult in the Nekgini language is called Kaapu.

Some of the plants described in this chapter are central to our way of life. *Etlingera amomum* is very important to us and used for everything. It protects people and other plants from the power of spirits and makes malevolent power ineffective. The aromatic ginger, *Manieng*, is also very important. It is called ‘aromatic ginger’ because its pungent musty smell draws spirits close. We use it for many things where the aid of spirits is required.
There is a kind of decoration we make for the male cult house at ceremonial times. It is called ‘tse’tsopung’. We have ways of decorating tse’tsopung so it contains spiritual power. That work depends on certain plants. When the post is installed in the cult house, people must treat it with respect as if it were a person. James has put a picture of tse’tsopung with the information about Tapeinochilos piniformis in this chapter, so people can see one of the things we make for ceremonies.

In the village, we know that a woman would never marry a man without love magic (see Leach 2003: 70–1). However, this practice does have some drawbacks as when one of our kinswomen falls in love, her brothers tend to react with anger at the imposition on her. James has written a lot about this custom and how it fits into kinship and our wider culture. Each area and even individuals have different ways of performing love magic and use many different plants. These plants will not work as love magic without the correct spells. A few examples of how plants are used in love magic are presented here.
Luhu

**Etlingera amomum**

For making peace

Our ancestors used *Etlingera amomum* (Plate 2-1, 2-2) to calm people and spirits, to stop fights and arguments, and counteract the power of sorcery. It is planted in gardens to discourage pests.

Our first ancestor, Patuki decreed that there would be a ‘Luhu man’ in every place who stops sorcery and fighting. In situations where spirits or sicknesses cause a maleficent influence on a person, *Etlingera amomum* can be used to free them from that influence. It has the power to stop the causes of sickness and anger.
Em save mekim samting kol, na em save stopim samting; pinisim pawa bilong samting. Taim man i dai na yu kam ausait long haus, ol lain bilong en bai go namel long gorgor. Ol tewel bai no inap bihainim ol o givim sik long ol. Yu ken tokim man i gat kros long tingim gorgor, na em bai lusim kros bilong en. Olsem planim yam, taro, o wanem samting, olgeta i mas i gat gorgor tasol.

This ginger has the strength to counteract any adverse power. The family of a recently deceased person passes through a split *Etlingera amomum* stem when they come out of mourning. *Etlingera amomum* is essential in all ritual work, such as that in a garden to protect the practitioner and placate the spirits.
Aromatic ginger

To attract spirits of all kinds

This unidentified aromatic ginger (Plate 2-3, 2-4) attracts the spirits of yam and taro, the spirits that assist with hunting, ghosts, and spirits of growth and change; all respond to Manieng. When one chews a piece of this ginger and then spits it in a spray, the spirits will draw near. We have a saying that, ‘the smell of Manieng attracts the spirits’.

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2. Unidentified species, smel kawawar, aromatic ginger.
Kuping

Skin diwai bilong rausim tewel

Skin bilong dispela Kuping (Plate 2-5, 2-6) em i hat moa. Man sik long yam o taro, wokim hap tok bilong yam, na spetim Kuping, na sik bai pinis. Sapos wansema tewel wok long kam long haus bilong yu, pairwise long nait nabaum o kain olsem, o sapos brata bilong yu i dai, o yu kaikai buai long han bilong ol husat i bagarapim em; em bai kam long haus na yu ken kisim Kuping na spetim wantaim nem bilong waildok, na tewel bai lusim yu. Em i hatpela samting, na smel bilong en em i kik moa. Ol tewel bai ranawe long en. Sapos pikinini bilong yu krai krai, yu ken kolim nem bilong wanem man i gat kros wantaim yu, na tewel bilong en bai lusim yu. O masalai bihainim yu, na mekim pikinini krai, yu ken kolim nem bilong waildok, na spetim.

Wara tasol bai nogat. Taim wara kisim tewel bilong yu, yu mas pulim wara wantaim gorgor, na bringim tewel i kam bek long wara (lukim Luhu, Sapta 2).

Cinnamomum sp.³

Bark for banishing spirits

The taste of this Cinnamomum sp. (Plate 2-5, 2-6) bark is very hot. When a person is sick due to yam or taro spirits, he calls the spirit’s name and spits out the Cinnamomum sp. bark in a spray. The strong, hot smell will deter the spirit causing the sickness. This bark works in the same way for the spirits of recently deceased people who may be loitering and disturbing you. It is often used in conjunction with a spell in the name of a wild dog to chase spirits away. This also works if someone is cross with you, and your child is restive and unhappy because that person’s spirit is close to them.

The only spirits that Cinnamomum sp. bark will not deter are the spirits of springs and streams. When water takes your spirit, it will require treatment with ginger to return your spirit (see Etlingera amomum, Chapter 2).

³. Cinnamomum sp. (Lauraceae).
**Sisak warau**

Bilong rausim ol tewel na doti


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**Pandanus sp.**

To remove spirits attached to the body

This wild *Pandanus* sp. (Plate 2-7, 2-8) grows in the bush. *Warau* refers to the large leaved variety. The edible form of wild pandanus is different and is called *misi* in Tokples Nekgini. *Pandanus* sp. works to free the body of spirits and pollution, especially those attached through sexual intercourse, sorcery or poisoning. To remove such spirits, one must break the leaf lengthways and step through it.

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4. *Pandanus* sp. (Pandanaceae), wail marita, wild pandanus.
When our ancestors made bush huts for hunting expeditions and to trap animals, the shoots of this *Pandanus* sp. were boiled and eaten with sweet potato prior to hunting. Any spirits or devils caused by the polluting influences of women, food or poison were thereby countered prior to hunting expeditions.
Endospermum labios

To elevate oneself

Endospermum labios (Plate 2-9, 2-10) suppresses the growth of any other plants, such as grasses and shrubs that grow around its base. This tree is considered dry and it eliminates everything that hampers its growth. We say it is for making your skin hot.

When boys are initiated they climb this tree and the black ants that live in it bite them and they remove them carefully. The ants transfer Endospermum labios sap through the skin which makes the boys hot. When we prepare boys for the ritual to make them grow during initiation, they give up drinking water and their skin becomes dry. We give them Endospermum labios sap with the milk of a young coconut to drink to make them grow like the Endospermum labios, displacing those around them. Just as this tree ‘burns’ the ground around it, the boys will have a similar effect and women will fall in love with them over other men.

This species is also used when visiting trade partners to encourage their generosity. A customary practice of eliciting valuables from such partners is called *yallo*. In this practice, one takes some meat or some other good thing and gives it to a friend. They will see what you have brought and be moved to give you something valuable in return. If you pass a cordyline (*Cordyline fruticosa*, see Plate 3-4) leaf around your offering and tie the leaf to an *Endospermum labios* branch, your friend will like the look of your present enough to give you something very valuable.

Similarly, when going to the market, women pass cordyline leaves around their produce and then tie them in the branches of an *Endospermum labios* tree, people are attracted and are keen to buy their produce.


Wankain, taim ol meri i laik go maket, ol ken raunim samting wantaim tanget na pasim long han bilong dispela diwai. Ol man kamap na lukim samting bilong ol, ol bai laikim, na pinisim hariap.

Plate 2-9: *Kunung* *(Endospermum labios)*

Plate 2-10: *Kunung* *(Endospermum labios)*
**Piraaking**

Pinisim tambu long wara

Taim lusim wara, o planim ai bilong taro, na wok pinis, bai yu spetim dispela *Piraaking* (Plate 2-11, 2-12), na pawa bilong tambu bai no inap go aut. Kaikai bun bilong en namel long ol lip, na spetim, na tambu bai pinis, tasol pawa bai stap. Wokim olsem, na pawa bilong tambu bai no inap go aut taim yu kaikai nabaut gen.

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**Pennisetum macrostachyum**

For ending a time of being tabooed from water

*Pennisetum macrostachyum* (Plate 2-11, 2-12) is used for when one gives up water (for ritual ‘heat’), planting taro buds, or finishing other ritual work. One must spit the *Pennisetum macrostachyum* before breaking taboos observed. When the stem is chewed and then spat out after planting taro, the power of the ritual preparations of the taro will remain even though you eat from many hands again, and do not observe the taboos any more.

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*Pennisetum macrostachyum* (Gramineae). Alternative identification: (Poaceae).
**Reite Plants**

**Saari**

**Bilong sanda**


**Schismatoglottis calyptrata**

**For decorating items of the male cult**

The small flower of *Schismatoglottis calyptrata* (Plate 2-14, 2-15) grows close to streams and pools. It is used together with other plants such as, wild taro, *Codiaeum variegatum* (Plate 5-3), *Cordyline fruticosa* (Plate 3-24). Ol man tu save bilas wantaim ol dispela ol plaua.

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7. Unidentified species (Zingiberaceae), smel gorgor, aromatic ginger.

Plate 2-13: *Saari* (perfumed leaf)

Plate 2-14: *Sirisir/Mambumaambu* (*Schismatoglottis calyptrata*)

Plate 2-15: *Sirisir/Mambumaambu* (*Schismatoglottis calyptrata*)
Kisse’ea

Bilong bilasim haus tambaran wantaim tse’tsopung¹⁰


Tapeinochilos piniformis⁹

Making decorated poles for the spirit house

Tapeinochilos piniformis (Plate 2-16, 2-17) is used to decorate the tse’tsopung (Plate 2-18, 2-19), made by the spirit cult in seclusion, and then used to decorate the spirit house at ceremonial times. Our ancestors dried the stems of this bamboo, before setting them alight and scorching the skin of the bamboo pole. This ensures the pole takes on the look of Tapeinochilos piniformis, some species of which carry their dramatic flowers high above the ground in the same way as we decorate the flowers on top of the tse’tsopung pole. Using Tapeinochilos piniformis for tse’tsopung associates the carving with the flower and makes it look good.

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⁹. Tapeinochilos piniformis Warb. (Costaceae).

¹⁰. Tse’tsopung em i wanpela mambu mipela save wokim wantaim tambaran na putim long haus tambaran long taim bilong singsing tambaran long wokim pati kaikai (Plate 2-18, 2-19).
Plate 2-16: *Kisse’ea* *(Tapeinochilos piniformis)*

Plate 2-17: *Kisse’ea* *(Tapeinochilos piniformis)*

Plate 2-18: *Tse’sopung* *(Sarangama hamlet, 1995)*.

Plate 2-19: *Tse’sopung* *(Ririnibung hamlet, 2006)*.
Reite Plants

**Alu karowung**

Rop bilong mekim marila


**Mikung**

Marila

Rop bilong *Mikung* (Plate 2-21), mipela yusim long wokim marila. Nogat bikpela stori bilong dispela rop tasol bai yu kisim rop bilong en, kolim meri na kamautim, na tanim wantaim sampela narapela rop na putim long wel.

**Piper sp.**

Love charm vine

This *Piper* sp. vine (Plate 2-20) is very yellow. While pulling at an exposed root, you say the name of your intended conquest. If the root comes away whole, you will be able to seduce her; if it breaks, you will not. Also, you can scrape the bark of the root into the perfumed parcel for your decorative dancing armband and make one the same for the girl if you know her well enough that she will accept this! This *Piper* sp. root can also be made into oil and rubbed on the skin.

**Vine for love magic**

Love magic

This unidentified vine (Plate 2-21) is used in love magic but has no real story attached to its use. The vine is uprooted while thinking of the woman’s name. It is then mixed with other vines and put in oil.

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11. *Piper* sp. (Piperaceae).
12. Unidentified species (Menispermaceae).
Plate 2-20: *Alu karowung* (*Piper* sp.)

Plate 2-21: *Mikung* (vine for love magic)
Chapter Three
Medicinal plants

In the past, our ancestors understood that all illness came from the ill will of other people, or from spirits of ancestors or places, and the only known method of causing sickness here was through ‘poison’. Every place (*palem*) had a poison man for their protection from others. This was not direct chemical poisoning, but involved placing some substance from the person to be poisoned in a bamboo tube. We do not know about or practice these things any more. Our fathers and grandfathers gave them up during the time when Yali [Singina, 1912–75] was influential on the Rai Coast.

There was only one thing that could cure ‘poison’, a kind of ginger called *Kusin tong*. Our ancestors said this ginger was to ‘break the bamboo’. After eating this ginger, you would not die of poisoning. It is said that the ginger ‘broke the bamboo tube’ that contained the poison substances.
In this chapter, there are other plants said to ‘make sickness cold’. To the west, they have sorcery practices of other kinds and sorcerers. Ill health as a result of sorcery comes from the west. In the past, when those in the west sent a sorcerer to harm people in this area, they would tell any relatives they had that live here that if they were affected by ill health, they must use certain plants to counteract the sorcery. Now we know many of these plants well.

There are a few other plants we know about which slow the flow of blood and so forth, and we have included them in this chapter.

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**Wariwi mapoming**/ **Kusin tong**

**Brukim mambu:** *Kusing tong*

Sapos yu gat posin sik, kaikai dispela *Wariwi mapoming* (Plate 3-1) na bai yu pekpek wara. Em olsem yu rausim sik. Tu, yu ken kisim lip, na rabim long skin, na pen bilong yu bai pinis. ‘Brukim mambu’, olsem mipela tok: ‘*Kusing tong*; bilong brukim posin mambu’.

**Potent medicinal ginger**¹

**Counteract poison**

This unidentified ginger (Plate 3-1) is used to counter the effect of poisoning. When eaten, it causes diarrhoea which is said to remove the illness. Leaves can also be rubbed over skin in the areas of the body that aches. *Kusing tong* means ‘break the bamboo’ [containing the poison substances and material from the victim].

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¹ Unidentified species (Zingiberaceae), kol kawawar.
Plate 3-1: *Wariwi mapoming/Kusin tong* (potent medicinal ginger)
Reite Plants

**Sowa so**

Kolim posin

Dispela diwai Sowa so (Plate 3-2), inap long mekim kol ol sik bilong sanguma na posin. Em i ken daunim pawa bilong marila tu; em kol samting. Taim yu laik wokim long sik yu ken kisim lip o kru, na tu, sikrapim skin wantaim. Em i orait long pneumonia tu; holim long ples we pen i stap wantaim Kakau (Plate 3-6).

**Pisonia longirostris**

Counteract poison

Pisonia longirostris (Plate 3-2) works to counter illness caused by sorcery and love-spells. It is a powerful agent. To treat for illness due to such sorcery; leaves or shoots can be taken or rubbed over the skin. Also, making a poultice with Crinum asiaticum (Plate 3-6) applied to affected areas is effective for pneumonia.

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Popitung

Kolim posin

Dispela Popitung (Plate 3-3, 3-4), wankain Sowa so (Plate 3-2), em bilong daunim ol sanguma na posin. Em bai kolim kambang nogut ol save wokabaut wantaim taim sanguma kisim yu. Na tu, em bilong givim long ol yangpela meri. Mipela wokim wel wantaim ol rop bilong Popitung, na marila bai no inap kisim ol. Taim ol kaikai nabaut, ol mas smelim dispela, na marila bai kol.

Angiopteris evecta

Counteract poison

Angiopteris evecta (Plate 3-3, 3-4), works as antidote to the effects of the lime powder that sorcerers use; similar to Pisonia longirostris (Plate 3-2). Also, we make an oil from the Angiopteris evecta leaf midribs, for unmarried women. When young women have eaten from the hands of someone performing love magic on them, smelling this oil will nullify its effect.

Plate 3-3: Popitung (Angiopteris evecta)
Plate 3-4: Popitung (Angiopteris evecta)

3. Angiopteris evecta (Marattiaceae), turnip fern.
**Makama kung**

Kolim posin

*Makama kung* (Plate 3-5) mipela save yusim wantaim ol narapela samting, olsem, *Sowa so* (Plate 3-2) na *Popitun* (Plate 3-3, 3-4), bilong mekim kol ol sik bilong sanguma. Olsem mipela bungim wantaim ol yangpela rop na kru bilong *Makama kung*, na kaikai.

**Holochlamys beccarii**

Counteract poison

*Holochlamys beccarii* (Plate 3-5) is used in conjunction with *Pisonia longirostris* (Plate 3-2) and *Angiopteris evecta* (Plate 3-3, 3-4) to counter the impact of sorcery. The young roots and shoots are chewed.

**Kakau**

Kolim posin

*Kakau* (Plate 3-6) mipela yusim long kolim sik bilong posin wantaim *Sowa so* (Plate 3-2). Mipela paitim ol lip na bun bilong en, na holim long hap pen i kirap.

**Crinum asiaticum**

Counteract poison

*Crinum asiaticum* (Plate 3-6) has already been mentioned as used with *Pisonia longirostris* (Plate 3-2) in conjunction with counteracting the effect of poisoning. The midrib of the leaf or young stems are pounded to a pulp and held against the painful area.

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5. *Crinum asiaticum* (Amaryllidaceae or Liliaceae).
Plate 3-5: Makama kung (*Holochlamys beccarii*)

Plate 3-6: Kakau (*Crinum asiaticum*)
**Musiresan**

‘Tumora o hap tumora’: sanguma


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**Rungia sp.**

‘Tomorrow or the next day’: sorcery

This *Rungia* sp. is used in cases of poisoning and sorcery. When a sorcerer decides to kill you, they will delay using the expression: ‘Tomorrow or the next day’. This gives time for other ‘cold’ plants (Plate 3-7) to be administered to counter the sorcerer’s spell.

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**Sasaneng**

Painim sanguma


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**Curcuma cf. australasica**

Discover source of attack

Small nodules attached to the roots of *Curcuma cf. australasica* (Plate 3-8) are eaten, and in dreams that follow, you will see visions of the place that sent sorcery to kill you. If you have no vision, your sickness is not caused by sorcery. It can also counteract the illness. We also call *Sasaneng, ‘tupongneng’* which means ‘water’s mother’.

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Illness, initiation and ritual

When someone is suffering an illness due to sorcery, a ritual prayer is spoken to the *Dioscorea merrillii* vine (Plate 3-9) to counteract the spell. Other plants which are also able to counteract sorcery are placed into a bamboo tube. The *Dioscorea merrillii* sap is poured in, and this is given to the sick person to drink.

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*Sisela*

Bilong daunim sik, haitim man long bus na wokim ofa


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8. *Dioscorea merrillii* Prain & Burkill (Dioscoreae).

Taim mipela kaikai ol nupela samting, mipela save givim ofa long dispela samting. Long dispela ofa mipela bai kisim kukamba, bin (Puti Plate 7-9), smel purpur (Asarsing Plate 5-4), kain lip taro em gat smel bilong en (Wikiwiki Plate 5-18), na smel gorgor (Saari Plate 2-13). Mipela putim dispela ol ofa long as bilong Sisela rop na wokim hap toktok olsem beten long Patuki; olsem, alulik ya’ketem, em minim, mi givim kaikai long yu nau. Sapos i gat liklik klaut pairap o ren, mipela tok: ‘Em kisim ofa bilong en’. Sapos em bai nogat pairap, Patuki em i no kisim. Sapos mipela strong na bai yu lukim ren, yu bai tok: ‘Dispela pawa i wok liklik’.

**Gastonia spectabilis**

**General tonic**

Squeeze the juice from the *Gastonia spectabilis* (Plate 3-10) stem and drink the sap to cure sickness. The young shoots can be given to children to eat. They will grow well without sickness or sores, just as the *Gastonia spectabilis* tree grows; upright and strong.
Plate 3-9: *Sisela* (*Dioscorea merrillii*)

Plate 3-10: *Poing ging* (*Gastonia spectabilis*)
**Alalau**

Bilong stopim blut

*Alalau* (Plate 3-11, 3-12) nogat blut long bun bilong en, olsem mipela save kisim bilong stopim blut i ran ausait long bodi. Sapos yu kisim bikpela sua long skin, yu ken kisim bun insait long graun bilong *Alalau*, na kaikai.

**Spathiostemon sp.**

Enlarged spleen and jaundice

New shoots of *Spathiostemon* sp. (Plate 3-13, 3-14) are used for the treatment of an enlarged spleen or jaundice. The shoots are wrapped in leaves and heated on a fire to release the sap from the shoots. The sap is given to babies by placing it on the mother’s nipple and adults take it by spoon. This treatment causes the substances causing illness to be excreted with the faeces. In Nekgini, *anangi* means liver and *sowung* means leaf.

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11. *Spathiostemon* sp. (Euphorbiaceae).
Plate 3-11: Alalau (Sphaerostephanos sp.)

Plate 3-12: Alalau (Sphaerostephanos sp.)

Plate 3-13: Anangisowung (Spathiostemon sp.)

Plate 3-14: Anangisowung (Spathiostemon sp.)
Uncaria cf. lanosa

Medicine used to treat colds

Sap of the Uncaria cf. lanosa vine (Plate 3-15, 3-16) is used to treat colds and ‘flu. Drinking the bitter juice of Uncaria cf. lanosa loosens phlegm.

Upi tapoli

Plant for spiritual poisoning

Induce vomiting

Since the time of our ancestors we have used this unidentified plant (Plate 3-17, 3-18) to remove the cause of sickness by vomiting. It is mixed with banana or ‘galip’ nuts and eaten. Yellow or black colour vomit is confirmation of spiritual poisoning.

Sauce’a

Plant for determining illness

Induce vomiting

This unidentified plant (Plate 3-19, 3-20) is used to induce vomiting and discover the cause of illness. The milky sap is mixed with coconut milk and drunk. Wingbean (Plate 7-9) and salt-wood with ginger is then administered as antidote to stop the vomiting.
Plate 3-15: *Kinga‘lau*  
(*Uncaria* cf. *lanosa*)

Plate 3-16: *Kinga‘lau*  
(*Uncaria* cf. *lanosa*)

Plate 3-17: *Upi tapoli*  
(plant for spiritual poisoning)

Plate 3-18: *Upi tapoli*  
(plant for spiritual poisoning)

Plate 3-19: *Sauce’a*  
(plant for determining illness)

Plate 3-20: *Sauce’a*  
(plant for determining illness)
Reite Plants

**Samandewung**

Mekim traut

Mipela yusim Samandewung (Plate 3-21) long mekim man traut bilong painim sik. Boilim Samandewung na kisim wara bilong en na dring. Taim yu traut, ol bai givim yu Puti (Plate 7-9), sol diwai (paap) wantaim kawawar, na em bai stopim dispela traut.

**Dysoxylum cf. mollissimum**

Induce vomiting

*Dysoxylum cf. mollissimum* (Plate 3-21) is used as an alternative to Sauce’a (Plate 3-19, 3-20) to induce vomiting and discover the cause of illnesses. The *Dysoxylum cf. mollissimum* is boiled and the liquid drunk. To stop the vomiting, a mixture of wingbean (Plate 7-9) and salt-wood with ginger is then administered as antidote.

Plate 3-21: Samandewung (*Dysoxylum cf. mollissimum*)

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**Saping**

Mekim sua drai

Dispela Saping (Plate 3-22, 3-23) mipela yusim long mekim sua drai. Kisim kaikai bilong Saping na brukim long ai bilong sua. Susu bilong en bai kamap, na tanim yelo.

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**Ficus botryocarpa**

Miq. var. *subalbidoramea*¹⁴

Treat sores

*Ficus botryocarpa* Miq. var. *subalbidoramea* (Plate 3-22, 3-23) is used to draw out and heal sores. This is done by painting the milky yellow discharge of the seeds over the effected area.

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¹⁴. *Ficus botryocarpa* Miq. var. *subalbidoramea* (Elm.) Corner (Moraceae).
**Masau**

**Mekim sua drai**


Sapos i gat ol liklik mak i kamap long skin na i sikrap, mipela save kolim *gninsi gninsing*. Taim i gat olsem, yu kisim retpela kaikai bilong pikinini bilong *Masau* na rabim wara bilong en long skin. Olgeta liklik mak bai bruk bruk na pinis.

**Kartiping sangomar**

**Pekpek wara**

Lip bilong *Kartiping sangomar* (Plate 3-25) mipela save yusim bilong pasim pekpek wara. Olsem, kisim lip na tanim wara bilong en i go daun long spun, na dring. Em bai mekim bel bilong yu strong na pinisim pekpek wara.

**Cordyline fruticosa**

**Treat sores**

*Cordyline fruticosa* (Plate 3-24) is also used to treat sores. Young leaves and shoots are covered in leaves and heated over the fire. The hot sap is squeezed over the sore which will swell and become red.

For little pimples as occurs with a rash, cover the effected area with sap from the red seeds. After rubbing the sap onto the skin, the sores will break and gradually the skin will heal.

**Desmodium ormocarpoides**

**Diarrhoea**

The *Desmodium ormocarpoides* leaves (Plate 3-25) are used to make a preparation to relieve diarrhoea. The juice of the leaves is extracted and drunk by the patient. The juice congeals the contents of the bowel and relieves diarrhoea.

15. *Cordyline fruticosa* (Laxmanniaceae), tanget.
Plate 3-24: Masau (*Cordyline fruticosa*)

Plate 3-25: Kartiping sangomar (*Desmodium ormocarpoides*)
Bun na skru pen

*Uli tokai* (Plate 3-26) mipela save yusim long taim yu gat sik long baksait o join i lus. Kukim skin bilong yu wantaim dispela retpela lip salat. Em bai solap liklik na skin o bun pen bai pinis.

Mosong rop, *Yuyung* (Plate 4-7, 4-8), kukim yu, yu ken rabim dispela salat mipela kolim, *Uli tokai*, na em bai pinis.

Bone and joint pain

*Laportea decumana* (Plate 3-26) is a stinging nettle used for joint or back pain. The affected area is rubbed with this red-leaved nettle. The skin will swell as a result of the nettle but the joint or bone pain will disappear.

When the stinging vine *Pueraria lobata* (Plate 4-7, 4-8) scratches your skin, the *Laportea decumana* nettle soothes it.

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17. *Laportea decumana* (Urticaceae), salat, nettle.
Laportea cf. interrupta

Mend broken bones

The Laportea cf. interrupta nettle (Plate 3-27) is used in Reite for joining broken bones. There is a spell that is associated with this treatment using the nettle. Heat the area of the break and cover it with this Laportea cf. interrupta leaf. Place a split bamboo around the leaves to hold the bone in place. It can stay there for a month or more.
**Malaap/Anang barar**

Skin i solap

Sapos yu pundaun na skin i no bruk tasol hap i solap bìkpela na pen i stap, ol save kisim namel bilong Malaap (Plate 3-28, 3-29), na kukim long paia. Ol tekewe skin, na tanim, bìkpela wara i go pinis, ol bai kisim wara streit bilong en na rabim long skin bilong yu.

**Musa sp.**

Skin swelling

This Musa sp. (Plate 3-28, 3-29) is used for swellings without broken skin. The Musa sp. stem is heated over a fire and the bark removed. The first water is allowed to run off and then the remaining sap is squeezed over the effected area.

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19. Musa sp. (Musaceae), cultivated banana.
Chapter Four

Preparations for initiation and coming of age

At initiation for boys and first menses for girls, neophytes are secluded in the men’s house or in the bush (boys) or a village house (girls). Plants are used to ensure their correct development during this period and their subsequent growth. At the time of their emergence from this seclusion, plants are used to ensure that their skin is smooth and shiny, and that their appearance is attractive and impressive.

Sapta Foa

Wokim ol samting bilong haitim man o meri long bus

Taim ol boi save hait long bus na lukim tambaran, na taim ol meri save kalapim skin bilong ol, i gat ol we bilong wokim senis bilong ol mas kamap gut. Taim bilong ol lusim haus o kamap long ai bilong ol man, i gat we bilong mekim ol mas skin tait na lait na lukluk bilong ol mas kamap gutpela.

Kandang dau

Bilong wasim ol manki na bilasim ol

Mipela save yusim dispela Kandang dau (Plate 4-1) bilong wasim ol manki taim ol i go long bus long lukim tambaran. Taim bilong ol i kamap, mipela save paitim rop bilong Kandang dau, bihain karamapim, na kukim long paia. Taim em i kuk pinis mipela wasim ol manki wantaim na bihain putim pen long skin bilong ol. Em bai mekim olsem nogat doti kamap long skin bilong ol manki (lukim Kapuipui, Sapta 5).

Curcuma longa

Initiation and decoration

Before the emergence of young boys from the bush during the initiation process, they are washed with Curcuma longa (Plate 4-1) to clean their skin before red paint is applied. The turmeric root is pounded, wrapped in leaves and put into the fire. The cooked paste is used to wash the skin (see Coleus blumei, Chapter 5)

1. Curcuma longa (Zingiberaceae), turmeric.
Curcuma longa is also used in the preparation of the decorated house poles called tse’ sopung (Plate 2-18, 2-19). The turmeric is beaten to a pulp and its sap rubbed over the skin of the bamboo which makes the surface easy to carve. The skin remains green and the carved areas reveal the inner white woody tissue (Plate 4-2).

Narapela wok bilong Kandang dau em bilong wasim dispela mambu long wokim tse’ sopung (Plate 2-18, 2-19). Mipela paitim rop bilong Kandang dau bilong kisim wara bilong en (tupooning), na wasim skin bilong mambu wantaim dispela wara em bai kamap isi na slek. Dispela mekim isi long wokim malen long en. Skin bilong mambu bai stap grin, na ples yu sapim bilong malen em bai wait (Plate 4-2).

Plate 4-1: Kandang dau (Curcuma longa)

Plate 4-2: Wasim tse’ sopung pinis wantaim Kandang dau.
Decorative bamboo pole made by the male cult (tse’ sopung) after washing with Curcuma longa.

2. Tetrastigma cf. lauterbachianum (Vitaceae).
Maybolol

Wasim ol manki

Rop bilong Maybolol (Plate 4-3) mipela yusim long mekim pes bilong ol manki retpela olsem blut, long taim bilong ol i kamap long ai bilong ol man. Em bai luk olsem blut i stap long pes na em bai ret olgeta. Mipela save brukim rop bilong Maybolol namel na putim ol manki i go insait na kamap long hap sait. Yu ken givim ol long dring tu. Tasol taim yu putim ol manki insait yu no ken katim dispela rop, yu mas painim narapela bilong givim ol manki dring. Rop em i gat retpela skin.

Tetrastigma cf. lauterbachianum

Washing initiates

The Tetrastigma cf. lauterbachianum vine (Plate 4-3) is used to redden the faces of initiates so that the skin appears plump, red and shiny. Young boys are passed through the split trunk of the vine, which is tied up again. The vine must not be cut subsequently or the child will not grow. The juice from Tetrastigma cf. lauterbachianum is sometimes drunk in different rites to make boys grow, but the specific vine a boy has passed through must never be cut for juice. This is a vine with red bark.

**Mucuna novoguineensis**

Cleansing initiates’ skin

*Mucuna novoguineensis* is a red vine with red flowers (Plate 4-4). We give its juice to boys to make them grow. The boys do not drink any water for two or three days prior to drinking the juice of this vine. The juice is mixed with the juice of other vines and drunk in green coconut water. These coconuts must be taken from the palm tree, those that have fallen to the ground must not be used, nor must the green coconuts be knocked to the ground when they are collected for this use. If fallen coconuts are used, the spirit of the coconut will leave them (*kaaping popawe*) and the boys will not grow. After this rite the young boys must avoid contact with women for several days or weeks.

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*Plate 4-4: Raning (Mucuna novoguineensis)*
**Gnorunggnorung**

**Bilong hatim skin**

Dispela *Gnorunggnorung* (Plate 4-5, 4-6) yu ken wasim han long en, o smelim na hatim nus bilong yu. Sapos yu kisim taim yu laik painim abus yu ken kisim dispela na wasim han, o sapos marila i no wok, yu ken lusim wara na go kisim lip na smelim, na bai yu hat gen.

**Smilax sp.**

**To make you hot**

Rubbing *Smilax* sp. leaves (Plate 4-5, 4-6) in between the hands or inhaling the smell will restore spiritual power. If you have trouble with hunting, or your love magic is not working, then you can use this to wash your hands and you will be hot again.

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4. *Smilax* sp. (Smilacaceae).
Reite Plants

**Yuyung**

Bilong strongim ol pawa

Wanem samting mipela traim, oseml ston bilong wokim haus pisin, na i no wok; mipela kisim dispela Yuyung lip (Plate 4-7, 4-8) na bungim wantaim Gnorunggnorung (Plate 4-5, 4-6) na ol narapela hatpela samting, na em bai kamap hat ken.

**Namung mileeting**

Traim ol man na meri

Bipo, ol tumbuna bin yusim Namung mileeting (Plate 4-9, 4-10) bilong traim man bilong posin. Ol bin kukim hap sospen graun long paia pastaim. Bihain putim tupela hap lip bilong Namung mileeting bilong karamapim dispela ol hap sospen na kukim han bilong manki wantaim lip. Sapos skin paia, ol save man no inap long wokim posin.

Taim yangpela meri i stap long haus long taim em kalapim skin, ol meri inap wokim wankain. Kukim han wantaim Namung mileeting bilong ol mas kukim kaikai em mas hat na switpela. Tumbuna nogat sol bilong mekim kaikai swit, oseml ol save wokim kain samting oseml.

**Pueraria lobata**

Restoring spiritual power

Pueraria lobata (Plate 4-7, 4-8) is used to restore the power of objects used in magic and hunting. When constructing things like a bird hunting hide, we use certain stones to draw birds to the hide. To make the stones powerful, we put them in the fire with *Pueraria lobata* and Smilax sp. leaves (Plate 4-5, 4-6) to ensure their power will be strong.

**Hoya sp.**

Initiate’s test

The *Hoya* sp. leaves (Plate 4-9, 4-10) were used by our ancestors to see if a newly initiated boy had the power of sorcery. Shards of clay pot were heated in a fire and then the thick *Hoya* sp. leaves were placed on the shards to heat up. The leaves were then laid on the open palm of the initiate. If the skin did not burn, they were judged a suitable candidate.

Women also burn their hands like this in initiation to encourage heat and therefore sweet tasting food when they cook. Ancestors did not have salt to make food taste savoury, so they employed techniques such as this instead.

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4. *Pueraria lobata* (Leguminosae/Papilionatae), mosong rop.
5. *Hoya* sp. (Asclepiadaceae).
Plate 4-7: Yuyung (*Pueraria lobata*)

Plate 4-8: Yuyung (*Pueraria lobata*)

Plate 4-9: Namung mileeting (*Hoya sp.*)

Plate 4-10: Namung mileeting (*Hoya sp.*)
Chapter Five
Preparations for garden rituals


In Reite, all taro gardens are planted with a central ritual planting (lit. ‘garden’s shoot’). The form of this planting is specific to Reite, and it was specified by the Taro deities (Pel Patuki) in the two origin myths of taro: Samat Matakaring Patuki and Mai’anderei Patuki. These are the plants that mythic ancestors (Patuki) designated as essential to the growth of the particular taro varieties they revealed to Reite people. Taro ‘kapa’ (Plate 7-1) is the original strain of taro given to Reite people by Patuki.

When taro from these gardens is ready for harvest, a similar planting is made on the path that leads to and from the garden. This prevents the spirit of the taro from leaving the garden of its own will, and means the garden will have tubers in the ground for many months. This planting is called ‘closing the road of the taro’.
Kapuipui

Cleaning faces

When young girls experience their first menses (seclusion/initiation), their faces are washed with Coleus blumei (Plate 5-1, 5-2) to make their skin look tight and fresh. Young men too, before they appear from their initiation seclusion, wash with Curcuma longa (Chapter 4, Plate 4-1) and wash their face with Coleus blumei, giving the face a yellow hue. This makes young men look good when they emerge from seclusion to face the village community in the early morning.

Coleus blumei is also planted in the eye/shoot of the garden for decorative purposes.

Turik upitapoli

Ritual planting

Codiaeum variegatum (Plate 5-3) is planted as part of the ritual establishing of the ‘eye’ or centre of the garden as Patuki decreed. We still follow the procedure handed down by Patuki, who planted this in the ‘eye’ of the garden.

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1. Coleus blumei or Coleus amboinicus (Lamiaceae).
2. Codiaeum variegatum (Euphorbiaceae), purpur, croton.
Plate 5-1: Kapuipui (Coleus blumei)

Plate 5-2: Kapuipui (Coleus blumei)

Plate 5-3: Turik upitapoli (Codiaeum variegatum)
Reite Plants

Asarsing/Narengding

**Euodia hortensis**

To promote growth

We use the aromatic herb *Euodia hortensis* (Plate 5-4) to keep the garden cool so the sun does not burn the young taro shoots. When you work, you will sweat, but the shoots will stay fresh.

We also use *Euodia hortensis* for washing new born babies (see Appendix 2). As part of this ritual we cover a wooden plate with this aromatic herb and place the new born on top of the *Euodia hortensis* leaves. The baby is then handed on this plate out of the house through a new opening in the rear wall to their maternal kin for their first washing.

*Euodia hortensis* is also placed in bird hides and the aromatic smell attracts birds to the tree. Another use of *Euodia hortensis* is in sacrificial offerings to the bones of ancestors or to particular vines for weather magic. The fragrance makes the area cool, encouraging rain to come.

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**Tawau**

Kamapim taro


**Hibiscus manihot**

Helping taro grow

*Hibiscus manihot* (Plate 5-5) has plenty of glutinous sap and planting it makes the garden soil friable. It is also a fast growing plant that encourages the taro plants to grow in a similar manner. There is a spell for this planting. We call the name of the last star in the sky before dawn. This encourages the dew to gather in the garden and water the taro. The star and the aibika are friends and performing this ritual ensures it will water the garden with dew.
Reite Plants

Plate 5-5: Tawau (*Hibiscus manihot*)

**Siwinsing**

Smel kunai

*Siwinsing*, em i wanpela kunai i gat smel olsem muli (Plate 5-6). Em bai givim gutpela smel long gaden, na taro bai swit.

**Cymbopogon citratus**

Aromatic grass

*Cymbopogon citratus* is a lemon scented grass (Plate 5-6). When planted, it makes the garden smell nice and the taro taste sweet.

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4. *Hibiscus manihot* (Malvaceae), aibika.
5. *Cymbopogon citratus* (Poaceae), smel kunai, lemon grass.
Usau anang

San banana

Bipo tru, taim fers man bilong mipela kisim taro long Patuki, em yet bin planim wantaim Usau anang (Plate 5-7). Mipela no inap kisim narapela banana na planim long ai bilong gaden.

Musa sp.\(^6\)

Sun banana

The taro deity gave our ancestors this Musa sp. (Plate 5-7) to plant alongside taro in their gardens. It is this species that we plant with taro to this day.

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\(^6\) Musa sp. (Musaceae), san banana, sun banana.
**Blumea riparia**

**Growing taro**

We plant *Blumea riparia* (Plate 5-8, 5-9) with the variety of taro called ‘kapa’ (Plate 7-1). A young shoot of *Blumea riparia* is planted with the taro. It is a fast growing vine which encourages the taro to grow in a similar manner.

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**Murraya sp.**

**Closing the road of the taro**

For plantings to block the path out of the garden we plant a border of *Murraya sp.* (Plate 5-10). This makes the taro tubers firm, so they are not soft and watery when cooked.

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8. *Murraya sp.* (Rutaceae), mock orange.
Plate 5-8: Saapung teti
(Blumea riparia)

Plate 5-9: Saapung teti
(Blumea riparia)

Plate 5-10: Serung (Murraya sp.)
**Reite Plants**

### Alucaru’ung

**Bilong pasim rot bilong taro**

Mipela save kisim lip bilong *Alucaru’ung* (Plate 5-11, 5-12) na pasim rot bilong taro wantaim. Em i strongpela rop, na em bai mekim kaikai bilong taro strong.

### Dichapetalum sp.⁹

**Closing the road of the taro**

We use the leaves of the *Dichapetalum* sp. (Plate 5-11, 5-12) when we block the road of the taro. It is a tough vine which makes the taro tubers firm.

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9. *Dichapetalum* sp. (Dichapetalaceae).
**Su alu**

Bilong pasim rot bilong taro

*Su alu* (Plate 5-13, 5-14) em wanpela strongpela rop mipela save yusim long pasim rot bilong taro. Mipela save kisim lip bilong en, na bungim wantaim ol narapela rop, na pasim rot bilong taro.

---

**Smilax sp.**

Closing the road of the taro

*Smilax sp.* (Plate 5-13, 5-14) is a very strong vine used in the planting that closes the road of the taro. We use it together with other vines for securing the taro in the garden.

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10. *Smilax* sp. (*Smilacaceae*).
Kamma

Kamapim taro


Litsea sp.12

Making taro fragrant

This *Litsea* sp. (Plate 5-16) is a tree that has highly aromatic leaves. We plant it in the garden so as to give a good aroma to the taro.

We also use it in making sacrifices to make rain.

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11. *Heliconia papuana* (Heliconiaceae), wail banana, wild banana.
12. *Litsea* sp. (Lauraceae).
Intsia bijuga

Intsia bijuga is a hardwood species (Plate 5-17). We bury its leaves in the eye of the garden to make the taro strong.

**Ponung**

Strongim taro

*Ponung* em wanpela strongpela diwai (Plate 5-17) na mipela kisim lip bilong en na planim wantaim taro na em bai mekim taro strong.

**Intsia bijuga**

Making taro strong

*Intsia bijuga* is a hardwood species (Plate 5-17). We bury its leaves in the eye of the garden to make the taro strong.

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13. *Intsia bijuga* (Leguminosae), kwila, ironwood.
Making taro fragrant and attracting birds

We use *Proiphys amboinensis* (Plate 5-18) to make the garden smell good and to give a good aroma to the taro. It is also used to attract birds to a tree with a hunting hide in it. This species makes the smell of the fruits permeate a long way and attract birds.

Also *Proiphys amboinensis* can be used in sacrifices to make rain.

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14. *Proiphys amboinensis* (Liliaceae or Amaryllidaceae).


Dispela hap sapta i gat ol plants mipela save yusim long mekim ol pik kamap bikpela hariap, na sampela bilong mekim ol kala kala, o kain olsem.

The ritual followed to promote yam growth includes mixing the species noted in this chapter together, hiding the mixture at the head of the yam vine once the vine is established and has ‘made its house’ (as we say of the foliage it creates on its vine). The mixture is placed in the earth with the growing yam plant as a spell containing the name of the yam Patuki is recited.

Pigs are very important in Papua New Guinea. The magistrate from this area is always reminding us that we need pigs for everything we do! So we work hard at pig husbandry. In this area, we do not have a lot of pigs like in some other places where they kill many pigs for every celebration. Usually for a large obligation and ceremony such as when an important person dies, we make do with eight or ten pigs, and for bride wealth, we usually need about four or five to fulfill all the obligations we have. It is usual to give only one live pig as part of a bride wealth.

This chapter includes plants we use to make pigs grow quickly and some we use to make their skin colour change and so on.
Tepung

Kamapim planti han long yam


Asplenium nidus var. nidus²

Promoting growth of single tuber yams

Promotes tuber length. Another epiphyte, Asplenium nidus var. nidus (Plate 6-2), has elongated leaves without the hand-like feature of the Platycerium wandaes (Plate 6-1). Asplenium nidus var. nidus as part of the offering is to help make the yams grow single, straight tubers.

1. Platycerium wandaes (Polypodiaceae), staghorn fern.

2. Asplenium nidus var. nidus (Pteridophyta).
Blechnum orientalis

Promote strong skin

We bury *Blechnum orientalis* (Plate 6-3, 6-4) at the head of the yam because it has a strong stem and skin. Doing so makes the skin of the tuber strong so it can be baked on the fire without breaking.

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Plate 6-3: Sanahu (*Blechnum orientalis*)

Plate 6-4: Sanahu (*Blechnum orientalis*)
Sapta Sikis | Chapter Six

Sapo

Kamapim gris bilong yam na mekim gris bilong pik kamap


Dispela Sapo mipela yusim long kamapim gris bilong yam olsem mekim gris bilong pik kamap. Bai yu putim liklik long kaikai bilong pik na pik bai kamap pat.

Alstonia scholaris

Promote smooth texture in yams and fattening pigs

We use Alstonia scholaris (Plate 6-5) because it ensures the yam will have a smooth texture and be white. The sap of the Alstonia scholaris leaves is white which will make the starch of the tuber white, not red.

We also add Alstonia scholaris to pig’s food to promote pigs to grow fat with plenty of lard.

Plant for pig’s growth

Promoting pig’s growth

The leaves of this unidentified tree (Plate 6-6) fall soon after appearing, and then regrow again quickly. When given to a pig, it will lose its hair quickly and grow in size. The ritual we have for feeding the pig is to call the name of the pig while hitting the tree trunk with a stone. The bark is then mixed with the pig’s food.

Mipela save yusim Mandalee (Plate 6-8) long givim long pik meri. Mandalee diwai i gat braunpela grile long skin bilong en. Sapos yu putim skin diwai

Plate 6-5: *Sapo* (*Alstonia scholaris*)

Plate 6-6: *Tsulung* (plant for pig’s growth)

**Teleparting**

**Mekim pik kamap**

Moning yet bai yu kolim nem bilong pik, na kurungutim as bilong dispela *Teleparting* diwai (Plate 6-7). Kisim hap skin diwai bilong *Teleparting* na putim long kaikai bilong dispela pik. *Teleparting* save bikpela hariap, na pik bai bihainim olsem.

**Hibiscus sp.**\(^5\)

**Promoting pigs’ growth**

The ritual followed when using this *Hibiscus* sp. (Plate 6-7) involves stepping over the roots of this tree at first light and calling out the name of the pig. The bark is given to the pig, mixed in with its food. This *Hibiscus* sp. tree grows rapidly and the pig will also grow fast when given the bark to eat.

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\(^5\) *Hibiscus* sp. (Malvaceae).
**Mandalee**

Senisim kala bilong skin bilong pik

Mipela save yusim Mandalee (Plate 6-8) long givim long pik meri. Mandalee diwai i gat braunpela grile long skin bilong en. Sapos yu putim skin diwai bilong Mandalee long kaikai bilong pik meri taim em i gat bel, em bai senisim kala long skin bilong pikinini pik.

---

**Actephila lindleyi**

Changing pig’s skin colour

We feed Actephila lindleyi bark to pregnant sows to change the skin colour of the offspring. The bark of the Actephila lindleyi shrub (Plate 6-8) is scaly and brown in colour. When the bark is mixed with a sow’s food, her offspring will have a different skin colour.

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Rongoman

Bilong daunim narapela man

Kru bilong Rongoman (Plate 6-9) mipela putim long kaikak bilong pik long wokim pasin kastom. Bai yu wokim long wanpela pik yu laik givim long wanpela man yu gat kros wantaim. Em bai no inap tingting long bekim dispela pik. I gat hap tok bilong en, na spirit bilong dispela diwai bai mekim man longlong long bekim. (Lukim narapela wok bilong Rongoman long Sapta 1, Plate 1-46).

Dracaena angustifolia

For shaming your exchange partner

The Dracaena angustifolia (Plate 6-9, 6-10) shoot is mixed with the food of a pig that you intend to give to someone with whom you are angry. Performing this ritual will ensure the recipient will not manage to achieve a reciprocal exchange. The spell so created means the spirit of the Dracaena angustifolia will make the recipient thoughtless about making a return payment. (See other use of Dracaena angustifolia in Chapter 1, Plate 1-44, 1-45).

7. Dracaena angustifolia (Dracaenaceae).
Chapter Seven

Planting and preparation of traditional foods

We say that we live in an in-between place. Not the coast and not the high mountains. In between these two, there are lots of things we can grow and also find in the bush. Our staple is taro, and taro gardens are very important to us. There are many other foods which we plant alongside taro in the garden. There are also foods in the bush, some which we plant and tend, and some which are wild. It was these foods which our ancestors ate in times of famine or war. We still add these to our diet of garden foods. This chapter records some of the things that our ancestors used to cultivate in gardens or collect in the forest to eat. We now have new types of food such as Chinese taro and sweet potato, but many foods recorded here are still important to us today.
**Pel kapa**

Taro


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**Colocasia esculenta var. antiquorum**

Taro

*Colocasia esculenta var. antiquorum* (Plate 7-1) was the first taro discovered on Reite lands. *Patuki*, the first man of this land, gave it to the Reite ancestors. We have preserved it by looking after it well until now. Always plant the taro in the ‘eye’ or ‘shoot’ of the garden (*wating*, see Chapter 5).

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1. *Colocasia esculenta var. antiquorum* (Araceae), taro kanaka, taro.
Pangium edule²

Sis: seeds for roasting

Boil the *Pangium edule* (Plate 7-2, 7-3) with the husk, then break open and take out the flesh. Put the flesh in a basket and leave in the stream for two days. After removing it from the stream, cook it in bamboo containers over the fire. It has a chemical which makes you vomit if this procedure is not followed.

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2. *Pangium edule* (Flacourtiaceae), sis.
Reite Plants

**Wiynu**

Yam

Namba wan yam kamap long Reite ples, em Wiynu tasol (Plate 7-4, 7-5). Wanpela Patuki man bin tanim olsem yam i stap, na meri wantaim pikenini kam katim em nubaut na blut kamap. Man tanim olsem ston, na em tok: ‘Yu mas kisim yam tru bilong kaikai, na noken kaikai man tru’.

**Dioscorea sp.**

Yam

The first yam discovered in Reite is this Dioscorea sp. (Plate 7-4, 7-5). A mythic figure, Patuki, turned into a yam and his wife and children came and picked bits off him to eat and he bled. He turned to stone, and said, ‘From now on you can eat my body [yams]’.

**Malapa**

Yam

Namba wan gaden yu wokim, bai yu planim dispela Malapa yam (Plate 7-6, 7-7) long en, na bai yu kaikai wantaim ol nupela kaikai long wan wan yia (masaalu) long nambawan o nambatu mun.

**Dioscorea sp.**

Yam

The first garden of the year is planted with Dioscorea sp. yams (Plate 7-6, 7-7). They are eaten with the new harvest of beans and cucumbers in January and February.

**Meki**

Yam

Meki yam (Plate 7-8) bilong muhurung, olsem namba wan gaden ol meri save planim. Bilong kaikai ol nupela kaikai, ol meri save kisim dispela yam na kukim wantaim ol nupela kaikai.

**Dioscorea sp.**

Yam

This Dioscorea sp. (Plate 7-8) yam is planted by women in the first garden of the year. It is the first yam of the season and the women are responsible for their harvest and preparation.

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3. Dioscorea sp. (Dioscoreae), yam bilong diwai, yam.
4. Dioscorea sp. (Dioscoreae), yam bilong stik, yam.
5. Dioscorea sp. (Dioscoreae), yam.
Plate 7-4: *Winyu* (*Dioscorea* sp.)

Plate 7-5: Takarok wantaim yam *Winyu* (*Dioscorea* sp.) yam. Takarok with mature harvested *Winyu* (*Dioscorea* sp.) yam.

Plate 7-6: *Malapa* (*Dioscorea* sp.)

Plate 7-7: *Malapa* (*Dioscorea* sp.)
Puti

Bin bilong taro *kapa*

*Puti* (Plate 7-9) em bin bilong taro *kapa* streit. Taim *Patuki* givim namba wan taro long ol Reite, em givim dispela bin wantaim. Taim ol man traut, yu ken givim ol dispela bin, na em bai stopim traut bilong ol oseim long *Samat Matakaring Patuki*.

Kariking

Talis


Psophocarpus tetragonolobus

Wingbean

*Psophocarpus tetragonolobus* (Plate 7-9) is the bean which was given to ancestors along with taro *kapa*. Eating the wingbean stops vomiting, as it did in the taro myth *Samat Matakaring Patuki*.

Terminalia catappa

Malay almond

*Terminalia catappa* has a myth associated with it in Reite. At one time, the nuts of this tree were easy to split open, but then a man annoyed the spirit of the tree and she covered her seeds in hard casings. The leaves of this *Terminalia catappa* tree (Plate 7-10) are like a calendar. In August and September, during the dry season, the leaves turn red and fall (Plate 7-11). Our ancestors used this as a signal to plant next year’s gardens.

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6. *Psophocarpus tetragonolobus* (Leguminosae), bin, wingbean.
7. *Terminalia catappa* (Combretaceae), talis, Malay almond.
Plate 7-9: *Puti* *(Psophocarpus tetragonolobus)*

Plate 7-11: Taim lip bilong *Kariking* senisim kala long Augus o Septemba, em i taim bilong planim nupela gaden. When *Terminalia catappa* leaves change colour in August or September, it signals the time to plant new gardens.
Angari

Galip

Ol tumbuna save draim Angari (Plate 7-12) na saplang wantaim taro o yam long tundung kondong (see Suarkung Sapta 1) na kaikai.

Canarium vitiense

Canarium nut

Ancestors used to dry these Canarium vitiense nuts (Plate 7-12) and crush them in a pestle (tundung kondong see Nauclea sp. Chapter 1) to eat them with taro and yam as a delicacy.

Plate 7-12: Angari (Canarium vitiense)
Artocarpus altilis

Breadfruit

In earlier times of hunger, before the new gardens were ready, ancestors ate the seeds of this *Artocarpus altilis* tree (Plate 7-13, 7-14).

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Plate 7-13: *Maata (Artocarpus altilis)*

Plate 7-14: *Maata (Artocarpus altilis)*

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Sombee

Kapiak

Sombee (Plate 7-15) em wankain Maata (Plate 7-13, 7-14), tasol bai yu kaikai mit bilong en, na pikinini bilong en wantaim.

Artocarpus communis

Breadfruit

Artocarpus communis (Plate 7-15) is similar to Artocarpus altilis (Plate 7-13, 7-14), only with Artocarpus communis, the flesh can be eaten as well as the seeds.
Terminalia megalocarpa\textsuperscript{11}

Edible seeds

In early times, during January and February, the lean time of the year, people ate seeds of this species, tentatively identified as *Terminalia megalocarpa* (Plate 7-16). It is the food of the kin groups who ate taro in the latter part of the season; those who knew the names of the original taro deity and therefore waited until everyone else had eaten new taro before harvesting theirs (salili). Boil the seeds, split the husks, and soak in water for some days, then boil them again before eating.

Caryota rumphiana\textsuperscript{12}

Wild sago

Ancestors ate the shoots of this *Caryota rumphiana* palm (Plate 7-17), and its young leaves. It can be eaten fresh or cooked.

Bambusa sp.\textsuperscript{13}

Bamboo

We eat the new shoots of this *Bambusa* sp. (Plate 7-18).

\textsuperscript{11} *Terminalia megalocarpa* (Combretaceae).
\textsuperscript{12} *Caryota rumphiana* (Arecaceae), wail saksak, wild sago.
\textsuperscript{13} *Bambusa* sp. (Poaceae), mambu, bamboo.
Plate 7-16: *Mo* (Terminalia megalocarpa)
Plate 7-17: *Tekising* (Caryota rumphiana)
Plate 7-18: *Kaapi* (Bambusa sp.)
Plate 7-19: *Patorr* (Cycas rumphii)
Patorr

Kaikai bilong palmen

Kisim pikinini bilong Patorr (Plate 7-19, 7-20), rausim skin bilong en, na paitim ol inap malomalo. Draim long san, karamapim, na putim long wara. Em bai stap sampela wik. Karamapim wantaim lip, na boilim, na em bai stap strong. Saplang wantaim drai kokonas o galip (Plate 7-12) na pulimapim long mambu na kukim kaikai.

Cycas rumphii

Palm food

Take the seeds of the Cycas rumphii (Plate 7-19, 7-20) and remove their shells, pounding the seeds until flattened. Dry them in the sun, then soak in water for a few weeks. Package the seeds in leaves and boil them until they go hard. Mash the seeds with coconut or Canarium vitiense (Plate 7-12) and put the mixture in a bamboo holder and cook.

Plate 7-20: Patorr (Cycas rumphii)

14. Cycas rumphii (Cycadaceae), palmen, palm.
**Athyrium esculentum**  
*Edible fern*

*Athyrium esculentum* is a fern that is cooked with pig. The pig fat adheres to the leaves and makes them tasty.

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15. *Athyrium esculentum* (Pteridophyta), kumu gras, fern.
Asisang

**Tulip**

*Asisang* (Plate 7-23) em kumu bilong taro *kapa*. *Pel Patuki* em givim tulip wantaim fers taro. Yu kukim taro wantaim na em bai kamap stret.

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**Gnetum gnemon**

Two leaf

*Gnetum gnemon* (Plate 7-23) is the vegetable cooked with taro. The taro deity gave this tree leaf with the first taro. To cook taro in the traditional manner, it must be boiled with this leaf.

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16. *Gnetum gnemon* (Gnetaceae), tulip, two leaf.
Chapter Eight

Attracting birds to hunting hides

When we make hunting hides to shoot birds, we have certain procedures to attract birds to the trees where they are located. This chapter lists the flowers used in these procedures. These flowers have to be used in the following way. Collect small stones from where the fresh water of the Seng River meets the sea (Figure 1). Bring water from there as well. Mix the Vitex sp. flowers together in the mixture of fresh and saline water with the stones. Boil over the fire until the water has dried. Take the bits and pieces and the stones and put the stones at the base of the tree in which you will make your hide. Put all the bits of flower in a bamboo tube and lodge this in the hide. Wash the stone with Setaria palmifolia, which describes washing the birds ‘eyes’ so they see the fruits of the tree. Once the fruits of the tree are eaten and the hide abandoned, take the stone back to your house.
We use the mixture of fresh and sea water because we want all kinds of bird to come and mix at the fruiting tree. *Sesi* is a black bird; they come in waves like the sea breaking on the shore. These birds must mix with others and bring them to the tree.

As part of the ritual, we call the name of the place where the waters meet, and call the names of men who came before. We tell them to go and bring stones from there. This is a euphemistic way of saying they must send many birds to your hide.


Sauwa’sau/Nungting

Plaua bilong pasim pisin


Gomphrena sp.

Flower to attract birds

The red flower of the Gomphrena sp. (Plate 8-1) is like the red patch on the top of the Sesi black bird’s head. It is collected together with other flowers and when we put the floral arrangement in the tree, it attracts many birds. This Gomphrena sp. flower is the most important flower to attract birds. Sesi have a crownstripe the same colour on top of their head. This flower colour attracts the birds.

Plate 8-1: Sauwa’sau/Nungting (Gomphrena sp.)

Masikol

Plaua bilong pasim pisin

Plaua bilong *Masikol* (Plate 8-2) save pas long skin bilong yu. Taim pisin em i kam long diwai, bai no inap lusim. Em wankain kambang, bai pas gut long graun, na bai yu lukim rot bilong birua wokabaut (lukim Sapta 9).

Flower with burred seeds

Flower to attract birds

This unidentified flower (Plate 8-2) has burrs which make its seeds stick to your skin. When the birds visit the tree, they will stay on the tree. This flower is also used for divination because it mimics the calcined lime which adheres to the earth and is easily seen (see Chapter 9).

Plate 8-2: *Masikol* (flower with burred seeds)

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2. Unidentified species (Compositae).
**Tembam**

**Smat samting bilong pulim pisin**

Wasim sap bilong spia wantaim ol lip bilong Tembam (Plate 8-3) na em bai smat long kisim pisin. Bai yu kukim lip bilong Tembam wantaim ol ston tu na em bilong mekim haus pisin luk smat na ol pisin bai kamap. Mipela tok, tembambakiting, olsem mekim smat o kleva long kisim samting.

**Rukruk**

**Sanda bilong pulim pisin**

Plaua bilong Rukruk (Plate 8-4, 8-5) mipela yusim long smel bilong en. Ol pisin bai smelim kaikai bilong diwai na laikim moa yet. Na tu, mipela yusim long wokim sanda bilong singsing (gneemung).

**Vitex sp.**

**Lure used to attract and hunt birds**

Take leaves from this flowering Vitex sp. tree (Plate 8-3) and wash the spear tip in them, so when you shoot, it will be true to its target. You can also cook it with the stones, to make the birds come to the hunting hide. We say, tembambakiting, meaning good at catching things.

**Plectranthus amboinicus**

**Perfume to attract birds**

The flowers of Plectranthus amboinicus (Plate 8-4, 8-5) are used for perfume to attract birds. This flower is also used for making perfume for dancing.

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3. **Vitex** sp. (Lamiaceae).

4. **Plectranthus amboinicus** (Lamiaceae).
Plate 8-3: *Tembam* (Vitex sp.)

Plate 8-4: *Rukruk* (*Plectranthus amboinicus*)

Plate 8-5: *Rukruk* (*Plectranthus amboinicus*)
**Makung**

Lip bilong sikrapim bel


**Yapel**

Wail taro

*Yapel* (Plate 8-7, 8-8) em wail taro, wankain wok olsem *Makung* (Plate 8-6). I gat sikrap bilong en. Ol tumbuna save kaikai bipo *Patuki* givim *Pel kapa* (Plate 7-1) long mipela.

**Amorphophallus campanulatus**

Leaf causing itch

The leaves of *Amorphophallus campanulatus* (Plate 8-6) stimulate birds’ appetites. It makes the birds defecate quickly and return to the tree for more food.

**Alocasia macrorrhizos**

Wild taro

*Alocasia macrorrhizos* (Plate 8-7, 8-8) is a wild taro plant that works the same as *Amorphophallus campanulatus* (Plate 8-6), causing stomach irritation. The ancestors used to eat it before there was real taro *Pel kapa* (Plate 7-1).

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Plate 8-6: Makung (Amorphophallus campanulatus)

Plate 8-7: Yapel (Alocasia macrorrhizos)

Plate 8-8: Yapel (Alocasia macrorrhizos)
**Tawaki supong**

**Sanda bilong Guma**


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**Triumfeta pilosa**

**Perfume for green lorikeets**

The grass like flower of *Triumfeta pilosa* (Plate 8-9) attracts the small green lorikeet (called *Guma*) that flies in flocks. It has a smell which they like.

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**Spaking supong**

**Pisin gras**

*Spaking supong* em wanpela liklik pisin, em bai kam na lukim yu na singaut, na go. Kisim gras bilong dispela *Spaking supong* (Plate 8-10, 8-11) na wantu bai pisin kamap.

Em samting bilong kambang tu (lukim Sapta 9). Yu ken kisim dispela *Spaking supong* na bungim wantaim ol narapela lip. *Spaking supong* bai mekim kambang pundaun olsem plaua bilong dispela gras.

**Setaria palmifolia**

**Preserving power**

This species is for good fortune in playing cards as well as hunting birds. Wash your hands with *Setaria palmifolia* (Plate 8-12, 8-13) and you will not miss birds when you shoot them and when you play cards, you will win.

In a myth from Tut which Maibang people from the east tell, this grass looked after the spirit of the man who died and was grown again from his finger. *Setaria palmifolia* is a plant which looks after things.

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Plate 8-10: *Spaking supong* (Centotheca lappacea)

Plate 8-11: *Spaking supong* (Centotheca lappacea)

Plate 8-12: *Nin’ae* (Setaria palmifolia)

Plate 8-13: *Nin’ae* (Setaria palmifolia)
Chapter Nine
Divination

Most of the plants that follow are used in a process of divination that uses the white calcined lime powder (a substance usually chewed with betel nut and betel pepper) to indicate the direction from which sorcery has come. The spirit of the dead man leaves marks of calcined lime on the paths leading from the place of his death to the village that sent the sorcery that killed him.

There are several other methods of divination, such as following lighted flares, but here we only talk of calcined lime, and the use of the leaves of cordyline plants.


I gat ol narapela rot long painim sanguma o posin, olsem bihainim bombom, tasol long dispela sapta mipela tok long kambang na katim tanget tasol.
**Araratung**

Bilong kambang

Kala long baksait bilong lip *Araratung* (Plate 9-1, 9-2) em wàit na em bilong mekim kambang i kamap ples klia. Yu ken planim wantaim papul taro, olsem em bai no inap senis na taro *kapa* bai stap taro *kapa* stret.

**Pipturus argenteus**

Lime divination

The undersides of the *Pipturus argenteus* leaves (Plate 9-1, 9-2) are white, which makes the lime stand out. This tree is also planted with baby taro *kapa* tubers to keep the variety from mutating.

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**Patuang taring**

Lek bilong dok


**Desmodium sp.**

‘Dog’s leg’ grass

This *Desmodium* sp. (Plate 9-3) we call grass for lime powder because when you hold this grass, its seeds jump out and scatter. We make this connection with the way the grass seeds scatter because we want the lime powder to do the same.

---

2. *Desmodium* sp. (Fabaceae).
**Patuang artikering**

Tel bilong dok

Dispela *Patuang artikering* (Plate 9-4, 9-5) i gat longpela plaua olsem tel bilong dok. Taim dok save wokabaut bihainim rot na tel bilong en rabim graun, mipela laikim kambang mas makim na kamap long rot.

This unidentified species (Plate 9-4, 9-5) has a long pendulant spike of flowers that we refer to as ‘dog’s tail’. We use it because just as a dog’s tail drags along the ground touching things it passes, so must the spirit of the dead man touch the path with lime powder.

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3. Unidentified species (Gramineae).
**Pununung artikering**

Achyranthes sp.  

**Tel bilong kapul**


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**Achyranthes sp.**

**Cuscus tail**

_Achyranthes_ sp. (Plate 9-6) flower resembles the tail of a cuscus. The tail of a cuscus hangs down and hooks onto things as it passes. The lime must follow this example.

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4. _Achyranthes_ sp. (Amaranthaceae).
**Kipikieperi**

**Kambang**

Plaua bilong *Kipikieperi* (Plate 9-7) em waitpela, kambang mas ples klia. Bungim ol dispela waitpela samting wantaim gras bilong wait koki, o gras bilong waitpela kakaruk meri, na wokim kambang.

---

**Mussaenda sp.**

**Lime divination**

The white flower of this *Mussaenda* sp. (Plate 9-7) is used to make the lime stand out. Mix the white flowers with the feathers of a white cockatoo or chicken and then proceed with the divinatory procedure called ‘kambang’.

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*Plate 9-7: Kipikieperi (Mussaenda sp.)*

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5. *Mussaenda* sp. (Rubiaceae).
Painim tingting

Kisim lip bilong Masau (Plate 9-8) na raunim het bilong yu. Em bai yu yet painim tingting, i no tanget bai painim tingting. Holim lip Masau, na katim. Yu katim bruk stret, em mas tingting bilong yu i no stret. Em bruk long narapela hap, o hap i no bruk yu save em tok ‘yes’ long yu nau.

Divination

Take the Cordyline fruticosa leaf (Plate 9-8) and pass it around your head. It is you that finds the answer, not the leaf. Think of your question as you pass the leaf around your head. Hold and cut the leaf in one motion. If it breaks straight across, the thoughts you have are incorrect. If it breaks at another point than your cut, or remains unbroken, the answer to your question is ‘yes’.

Plate 9-8: Masau (Cordyline fruticosa)
Appendix One

Our way of sharing things

What I have to say here reflects laws and customs we abide by in our village. But it is applicable to the Rai Coast populations as a whole. I start with the analogy of the nut bearing tree, the *Canarium* sp. The tree belongs to me. I weeded and tended it while it grew. When the tree bears its first nuts and I collect them and I share with my family. Eating the nuts, they taste the fruit of this tree and know it as my tree. If I were then to sell the nuts and not give any of the produce to my family, they would complain. They would say, ‘That good *Canarium* sp. of yours that you used to give us to eat, now you are selling the nuts and don’t think of giving us any to eat’. It is possible they would want to fight and be really angry over this. It is my tree, but they can get angry. The same with extended family in other villages. They too can complain, saying, ‘In the past you gave us these nuts to eat. Now you are selling them and forgetting us’.

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Presentation by Porer Nombo at a seminar on ‘Intellectual and Cultural Property’ at Motupore Island, December 2000. The seminar was organised by Dr Lawrence Kalinoe, University of Papua New Guinea, and members of the Cambridge/Brunel Universities Project: ‘Property Transactions and Creations: New Economic Relations in the Pacific’, funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council, UK.
If I tend a tree and it grows, then it is mine. But when it comes to its fruit, all my family, from wherever, can eat for free. If you want to own it all yourself to sell the nuts, they will be angry. This applies to food and also for materials to build houses. If I tend a bamboo in the forest and then send another person to go and make use of it without telling my brothers, they will all have things to say to me and they will all be cross with me. So this is a law of ours, we must bring together our men and women to give or sell something to another person. Everyone in the family must hear of it before we can sell to another. This is a strong law and practice of ours. If you rush into selling, dissent and separation will occur in the family and even enmity later on. We have to ask first; because although it is mine, it is something they are all used to eating. When it comes to land, they all take its products and build houses as they wish. Everyone has to agree for us to send another person to collect materials or sell them. So, you must consider well. It may be yours, but not yours alone.

It is a metaphor that I want to give you with my discussion of trees. But it goes for girls who want to be married as well. There are changes coming about now where some people around here are deciding on a price for women. For example, five thousand kina and a pig. But this is the practice for tinned fish and rice we buy in a store. Bring it home, eat the fish, and throw the tin into the forest to rust and deteriorate.
The tin will not have any more use. I am speaking metaphorically. This way of setting a price for a bride as if she were a tin of fish, we are very strongly against this in relation to women and children. In our custom, though it is my daughter, all my family, wherever they are, must come and receive wealth for her. If I take five thousand kina and I consume this with the people who are nearby, then some of us will not know the pay for this woman. Suppose a few of us consume it, then other brothers and sisters and cousins in other places will be angry with us. They will say, ‘We do not know her payment’. In our custom, when you present valuables for a wife, it must be enough to satisfy the whole family. We want to exchange according to custom. The price of five thousand kina and a pig sounds large, but in terms of custom exchange it is small. In custom, we are not allowed to nominate a single payment to finish the work at one time and in one go. Certainly not. The family of the husband must collect ancestral body decorations, wealth items, money, pigs and so forth over years and slowly make presentations for the mother and her children. By keeping at it, they will collect in excess of the amount specified when we put a price on a woman like tin fish or rice. We do not want these good ways of ours to become like buying tin fish and rice. We forbid this practice in the village. We want our way to remain strong. We buy women under our custom: no setting a price, no setting a timetable,
we let others work slowly, and they can then give a higher price than one you could specify.

OK, my analogies are ended now. These ways and laws of ours are good for us, and we do not want to see them undermined. This is how we live, and we live with happiness and contentment in our hamlets, clans and families.

Here, we are discussing the topic of knowledge itself. Who can own knowledge, who can sell it? By what means can you prevent its theft or appropriation? So I will now turn to discussing these things.

In our area, custom has the status of law. Firstly, regarding children. Children belong to parents, but cousins, uncles and grandparents are required to make a child grow into a man, influence his development and make him look good in the eyes of others. If the father does not call on the uncles to receive wealth for helping in the development of the child well, they will complain. They will be angry with the mother and father. You see? It looks like something belonging to one person, but uncles and cousins have the right to complain if the parents do not follow the procedure for his development to proceed correctly. The father has to undertake custom work and the uncles must come and give the boy good advice, knowledge of spirits and myths, and thus help him to grow. If they do not provide this assistance in his growth, they will not eat his pig and will not know what kind of
person he is. They will complain about this. If you chose alone to send your daughter in marriage, then no one will know her bride wealth. The same with boys. If they remain uninitiated, no one will know their wealth.

Secondly the spirit cult. This is our music. Spirit voices were discovered in dreams by our ancestors. That is how we discover them also. So they are found using inherent power of the dreamer but they are items which belong to the whole family and with which they celebrate, dance and sing, and eat pigs. If a dreamer wants to sell to another person, the whole family must hear and agree first. This is an ancient law of ours. When a man’s sister goes in marriage to another village, he must ask his whole family before allowing her to take one of their spirit songs with her. When they all agree, then he can take it for her. If he says ‘It is mine, I’m just going to send it to her’, it is wrong. The whole family uses this ancestral song to celebrate in other places and it belongs to them all.

Once it has been left with a sister, she and her husband can go to festivals and eat pigs with it. So everyone must think about this and decide whether they are comfortable for these people to have the spirit song. On the other hand, when a woman from another village comes to marry with one of us and her brothers want to give her a spirit voice to bring to us, they must agree together to do so. If they want payment in return, we will ready a pig and give it to them first. Why?


Hap bilong dispela tasol em olsem. Husat susa marit long hia na ol lain bilong en kam lusim wanpela tambaran wantaim papa o tumbuna bilong mipela, em bai olgeta tumbuna bilong dispela papa o tumbuna mas pasim tok pastaim, na lusim long narapela man. I no wanpela lain tasol bai wokim.

Nambatri, mipela save planim yam na taro wantaim sampela pawa o stori bilong ples. Bilong mekim mas karim hariap, na karim bikpela kaikai bilong en. Dispela kain save em bilong wan wan klen tasol wanpela man noken kirap givim long husat kandere o brata. Olgeta famili pasim we will take this spirit voice with us when we go to feast and dance and sing in other places. The whole family of the person who dreamed the voice into being will receive and consume this payment.

There is also another aspect to this. Think of a woman who married here and who brought a spirit voice with her to give to our fathers or grandparents. All the grandchildren of these people must agree before any one of them takes it to give to another village. It cannot just be the brothers of a woman who leaves in marriage that decides.

Thirdly the planting of our taro and yam gardens using power and knowledge of the place. Practicing this knowledge makes the plants grow fast and provide abundant food. This kind of knowledge is specific to each clan, but a single man cannot give it to another brother or nephew. If the whole family agrees and all are content, they may give this knowledge to a nephew. It can not be one small group only who decides.

When you give this power to a nephew or grandchild, he will be wealthy with food. So everyone must think and discuss what kind of payment they will be happy with in return. If you cook meat for everyone to eat they will be happy to give it to you. If you give it to him for nothing, [your kin] will ask you if the boy will come and give you food every morning, noon and evening, or not. You must think of such things before you give power to him.
Fourthly, our designs and carvings. It is from the knowledge that one man has that he makes the designs that he carries to ceremonies in other places, or decorates his cult house. People from other places come and view them but cannot take them to make themselves. If they do, they will be called to a meeting, and charged in pigs and wealth. When a sister or cousin is married, she will give her kin a pig. If she wants to take a design with her, she must sit down with her family and all must agree. When they receive her pig, they must find things to give in return. If they all have agreed, then they can give a design to her directly at this point. But as with spirit voices, she may not pass it on again without consultation. No way. These things too are for celebrating and making a name in other villages and feasting there. One person cannot be owner of them.

Significantly, all these things bring fame. People make a name for a place through the designs they own. They contribute to the reputation of the place and the family. It is a valuable thing of theirs, so all must agree before giving to others. A man may discover or bring one of these items into being, but it is not his solely. It is something that belongs to them all. If you pass them on behind people’s backs, there will be anger and fighting over this as you will have broken custom law and done something of your own volition.

It is like this. Now people say God made them [laws, customs], but we say Patuki made them and if you do
things differently, in ways you have decided on yourself, there will be negative consequences. People must follow the right way of doing things, then they will live well and make good things.

We do not want to see these laws and customs disappear. Following the ancestral way of sharing things is good. It makes for peace and contentment, and we do not want new ways to displace them. New laws and ways of thinking will ruin our life here.

For this reason, I am happy that James and his kind come and support and strengthen such understandings. They are there to explain and speak up for our ways, and this is good. We want to explain our custom and show the good practices it has, and for others to hear about them and to say, ‘yes, there is value in this knowledge’ and so we cannot take the laws relating to money, or the law of the white men too quickly so that it ruins the lives of people with these good ways of being.
kastom na soim gutpela we bilong en, mipela laikim, na yupela ol narapela man ken harim na tok, ‘Yes, em i gat gutpela we na save bilong en na mipela no ken kisim lo bilong moni, o lo bilong waitman i kam insait kwik na bagarapim sindaun bilong ol man i gat kain gutpela tingting olem’.
Appendix Two

Indigenous knowledge and the value of plants

What follows in Appendix 2 is a short essay on the ownership of indigenous knowledge written by James in response to some of the issues that publishing a book such as this one has generated. In it, James seeks to show why intellectual property laws, and the understandings of ownership that these laws are built upon, are inadequate for the kinds of understanding that get called ‘knowledge’ contained in this publication. He suggests that it might be necessary to think again about what is meant by the term ‘indigenous knowledge’ in the light of this.

The Rai Coast, to which this book refers, has been defined as an area containing rich biodiversity (Sekhran and Miller 1994). The protection of such areas became a topic of great interest around the turn of the millennium, particularly following the 1992 Convention on Biodiversity agreed at the Rio Earth Summit in Brazil that year. The Convention on Biodiversity drew attention to the need...
for conservation in such areas. It placed the responsibility for conserving and utilising biodiversity in the hands of each nation state. The impetus to utilisation might seem contradictory to that of conservation. However, many people have suggested that the sustainable use of forest resources might aid in conservation efforts.

In the Convention on Biodiversity there exists explicit recognition of the value of biodiverse regions. Following these developments, many commentators have pointed to the value of indigenous knowledge of the environment. In some cases, it has been proposed that indigenous people ought to be compensated for any use of this knowledge, as a form of income generation that does not demand direct exploitation of forest resources.

During the years in which this book has been prepared, some progress has been made towards these goals, while at the same time some unrealistic expectations have emerged in Papua New Guinea around such possibilities.

As final appendix, we thought it might be worth considering some implications of publishing a book about ‘indigenous knowledge’ of plants in the light of such goals and expectations about the possible exploitation of such knowledge by outsiders and its possible protection under the system of laws known as ‘intellectual property’ law. What follows here is an anthropologically informed discussion of aspects of Euro-American notions of knowledge, and its value. To illustrate the issues, I point to some differences between the

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interes long lukautim kain ples bilong ol tumbuna bihain. Dispela kibung long Brazil, em wokim senis kamap olsem we lukaut bilong kain ples i stap long han bilong gavman bilong ol kantri i gat dispela kain biodiversity. Long dispela ‘Laspela hap long buk’, mi laik autim na skelim sampela tinging long olsem wanem ol man save biodiversity em bikipela samting, na totok liklik long ol rot o pasin bilong kamap papa bilong save long plants. Tu, mi bai stori liklik long olsem wanem lo bilong bosim ol tinging na kamap papa long save, em inap karamapim plants na save long plants, na tu olsem wanem ol manmeri long Reite save tok long dispela. Porer em i stori pinis long ol rot o pasin bilong stap papa long ol samting long Reite long ‘Laspela hap long buk 1’.

Dispela buk bin kamap long wanpela longpela wok liklik. Mi bin statim wantaim Porer long 1994. Taim mi bin stap wantaim ol Reite, mi bin traím wanpela rot bilong kisim save long kastom bilong ol. Taim mi stap long universiti, mi bin winim skul long social anthropology, olsem kisim save long sindaun bilong ol manmeri long ples bilong ol, tasol dispela em i no bin givim mi sampela save bilong plants long sait bilong sains. Tasol, long taim mi bin stap wantaim ol Reite, mi bin raun long bus wantaim ol na kisim piksa na stori bilong ol plants ol save yusim. Mi bin gat bikipela interes long save moa long olsem wanem ol plants save helpim ol sikman, long save na tinging ol Reite i holim bilong ol samting long bus, na long sait bilong tambaran. Long Reite, save long bus

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assumptions about value underlying such laws and Nekgini speaking people’s ways of articulating the value of plants. In the first appendix my co-author Porer outlined Nekgini perspectives on the ownership of knowledge.

Knowledge, publication, and intellectual property law

This book has had a long gestation. During my first long term field research with Nekgini speaking people in 1995, it began as a home-spun heuristic device. I was not trained as a botanist, nor was my research focused on ethnobotanical knowledge, yet I did record information on the uses and history of use of certain plant species. My intention was to gain an insight into perceptions of the environment that would prove useful in my anthropological research. I walked through the forest with Porer and other friends in Reite, photographing plants and, either at the time, or later, writing verbatim what people had to say about them. It was a useful exercise because the endeavour was by nature dynamic and elicited information without constant direction on my part. My understanding of Nekgini speaking people’s world as a whole advanced rapidly. Discussions in the context of the work around plants also made clearer the purpose of my research to people in the village, who were enthusiastic about the production of this record.
But all action has consequences, and my heuristic device produced not only good conversations, exciting walks of discovery, and a growing understanding of ‘kastom’, but also the material to produce a volume of photographs and information about the plants we found. In one sense, it has been very easy to know what to do with this product of our collaborative work. My presence in their village has always been understood by people there as a chance to have important and valuable things written down for the future. As agreed at the outset, I have returned copies of two different unpublished versions of this book to the people who participated. It is because of various interpretations of this process that people in the village of Reite have been so welcoming of me (see Leach 2003). Books like this photographic account of particular people’s knowledge of plants are a tangible outcome of our collaboration. There is another sense, however, in which it has not been so easy to know what to ‘do’ with this material. There are issues surrounding the publication and dissemination of ‘ethnobotanical’ and ‘indigenous knowledge’ which have given me pause for concern. It is worth outlining these, and our negotiations around them in the village, as a part of the documentation that this work provides. These issues are to do with how knowledge (such as that represented in this book) is valued, how it is owned, and how it might (possibly) be ‘protected’ from exploitation or appropriation. Having considered all these aspects
carefully, Porer and I have decided to go ahead and publish the book. So that the reader understands some of our reasoning, and the context in which we made the decision, I will begin with a discussion of western intellectual property law, and the thinking which lies behind it before considering how Nekgini speakers think about the value of plants.

Papua New Guinea’s laws are based upon a combination of English Common Law, Statute law, and Customary Law drawn from particular cases in the country (Kalinoe and Leach 2004: 1). The current legislation governing intellectual property law in PNG is congruent with other countries’ intellectual property law. These laws make provision for the protection of knowledge ‘only when that knowledge is presented in a material form’. The law of copyright and the law of moral right for authors make provision only for the protection of the ‘form’ of presentation of knowledge, not of the knowledge itself. Patents are another branch of intellectual property law. Patents share with copyright the premise that what is being protected is a material expression of an idea, not the idea in the abstract. The law of copyright and the law of moral right for authors make provision only for the protection of the ‘form’ of presentation of knowledge, not of the knowledge itself. Patents are another branch of intellectual property law. Patents share with copyright the premise that what is being protected is a material expression of an idea, not the idea in the abstract. This means that an author has copyright over the book they publish, not over the ideas in that book. A patent holder has a patent on a machine, process or combination, not on an idea. So under such law, one cannot copyright an idea, only the material expression of an idea nor patent it without a new, useful application. What this means practically is that as authors of this
A book on the uses of plants, Porer and I have copyright in the text and photographs. The pages of the book should not be copied and the actual ‘form of words’ used to transmit the knowledge about plants to others is not to be replicated without permission or reference to the original. This is copyright. We also have ‘moral rights’ over the text which prevents the defacement of the work; that is, they prevent the deliberate destruction or modification of the form of our words that may be offensive, or mocking, or otherwise damaging to the reputation of the authors. This is ‘moral right’. We have not sought, nor could likely obtain, patent protection for this expression.

On publication, the actual ‘information’ relayed by the text or photograph enters what is called the ‘public domain’. Having entered the public domain, the information is at that time available for others to use. As long as no one defaces our work, or copies it exactly without permission, they can do what they like with the information.

Now, thinking about botanical knowledge and its possible exploitation, this means that any pharmaceutical company could use the information in this book to guide their research without reference to the authors, or indeed, to Nekgini-speaking people who discovered and developed these uses of plants. Copyright does not stop them from doing this. In fact, the idea that information enters the public domain while copyright law...
ensures the authors are recognised for their expressive work is a common justification for the copyright system. It is argued by those who argue in favour that in this system, knowledge circulates, increasing the possibilities for development and progress while authors are rewarded for their work.

If that pharmaceutical company performs experiments on the plant and isolates a compound that could have a therapeutic (and therefore a marketable) value, they are then able to claim exclusive rights to the use of that compound by applying for a patent on the use of the compound for medical purposes.

Patents share with copyright the premise that what is being protected is a material expression of an idea, an application of an idea, not mere discoveries or facts of nature. This is perhaps a difficult but important distinction to understand. When applying for a patent, the applicant must demonstrate the use and effect of an idea by making something which has an effect. So it is in isolating a particular compound, one that can be demonstrated to have certain effects on human health, that the pharmaceutical company can be recognised as gaining a right over the knowledge of its manufacture and use. In the hypothetical case I am outlining here, the patent would be granted over the use of the substance that was isolated from the plant, and would give exclusive rights to the use of that compound for medical purposes to that company. Again, this
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ol wokim nupela samting, na ol truim yus bilong en long sait bilong saiens. Wanpela man husat em save gut long saiens bilong ol plants, em inap long soim wanem kain marasin insait long plants em i gat kaikai long stretim ol sikman. Long sait bilong patent, yus na strong bilong plant em i stap long marasin insait na we em i inap long rausim dispela marasin long wanpela wok long saiens, ol man inap kisim patent.

Sampela taim, ol saiens bai no inap long painim kain strong bilong ol plants ol Nekgini save stap long en. Long kain taim, mipela save tok: ‘ah, yus bilong dispela plant em i wanpela samting long kastom tasol’. Kain olsem mipela tok, ‘i no yus tru, inap bai yu save long en long saiens, em mas samting long kastom o tok bilong ol tumbuna tasol. Em samting bilong kalsia, em i no save wok trutru’. Taim yumi tok olsem, yumi bungim save Nekgini i gat long plants wantaim kastom na no gat ol save samting long saiens wantaim dispela. Em min olsem, we ol Nekgini skelim strong bilong dispela save em arakain long we saiens na ‘intellectual property’ lo em skelim strong bilong save. Bilong ol waitman, ol marasin na biodiversity i gat wanpela kain strong; dispela strong yu inap save long rot bilong saiens. Taim yu wokim olsem, yu inap kamap papa long save. Long kastom o kalsia, ol waitman i no bisi long strong na yus bilong en. Em i samting bilong bilas o hamamas na em i no save wokim wok trutru. Tasol, mi bai tok olsem, long tingting bilong ol Nekgini, kastom em i wanpela strongpela samting, na ol save insait protects the form that the knowledge takes (an isolated chemical compound and the process of its manufacture) rather than knowledge itself. Patent law demands that the applicant for a patent demonstrates that they have achieved two criteria: first, ‘novelty’ (or what is called ‘inventive step’, - that a new thing has been made), and second, ‘utility’, (that there is a proven use for the invention).

This emphasis in law on the form that knowledge takes (be that published words and photographs, or a newly isolated compound or process) undermines the applicability of these laws to recognising indigenous knowledge of plants such as that documented here. It might even call into question whether we are correct to apply the term ‘knowledge’ to these very different kinds of thing. Calling it knowledge has the effect of making it into something that can be thought about and understood through the categories of intellectual property law. And that may not be appropriate for all the kinds of thing that get labelled ‘knowledge’ because it misunderstands what those things are, and what value they have to the people who operate with them.

Now the book you are reading, being a material form is recognised as an object by the law. As authors we have rights over ‘this object’, and hold copyright in its pages. What intellectual property law protects is our relationship to the object we have produced.
Western laws of property are based on one set of cultural assumptions about where value is generated. The predominant means of valuation in this system is of one object against another object: commodities against other commodities, with money as the medium of transaction. These relationships define a system in which things have value in relation to other things. The idea-content of our book then, an understanding of the uses of plants, is not defined as an object by the law. It cannot be valued against other objects, and so in law, we cannot be compensated for a ‘loss’ if others appropriate those ideas or understandings. But of course, the real value of the knowledge Rai Coast people have about plants is not as a series of images and words in our book.

What is protected under intellectual property law about this book then is neither what a pharmaceutical company, nor Nekgini speaking people actually value about plants. I now examine how these two ways of understanding and expressing value differ from one another, and some of the consequences of these differences for claims to own knowledge about the use and effect of these plants.

Returning to the example outlined, Nekgini speakers know of the healing properties of a plant, and make use of the plant. However they can neither own the knowledge by publishing it in this book, nor claim a patent in that knowledge without demonstrating that they have ‘invented’ something...
new, and proved its effect scientifically. A chemist may well be able to demonstrate the scientific basis for the use of the plant for certain purposes as described in this book. There may be value in healing the sick. In other words the value of the plant is seen to lie in its chemical composition, in compounds it contains which can be isolated through particular technical processes of a scientific nature.

But it is also possible that in some examples in this book, perhaps there are no immediate scientific explanations for the use Nekgini speakers make of them. And thus we are led to say that the ‘value’ of these plants to Nekgini people is a ‘cultural’ or ‘traditional’ value. That is not the sort of value that can be protected under intellectual property law.

My argument here is that the emphasis in law on the thing produced, that is on the form that knowledge takes, be that published words and photographs, or a newly isolated chemical compound, is a move that undermines the applicability of such legislation to the recognition of ‘indigenous knowledge’. I have previously suggested that calling the kinds of understanding and practices in this book ‘knowledge’ may misconstrue the thing. The understanding of the properties of plants is not an object.

My suggestion is that for Nekgini speakers, value lies in the process whereby a desired outcome is

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1. Not the same meaning as ‘process’ in patent law, as the next sentences outline.
achieved. That process typically mixes social, cultural and chemical aspects. The focus is neither the knowledge-as-object in its own right, nor on the outcome of the implementation of knowledge as if that were isolated from the social context of its implementation.

To illustrate this argument I turn now to discussion of a specific plant recorded in this book: Asarsing, Euodia hortensis in Chapter 5, Plate 5-4. Explanation of the use of this plant involves a myth and a series of ceremonial rites. The properties of the plant are not specified or isolated as objects, making any claim under intellectual property law difficult. In short, they have a ‘cultural’ explanation for the value of the plant, and while we also value culture, intellectual property law does not make property out of culture in the same way as it makes property out of technical knowledge.

Asarsing, Euodia hortensis: How babies grow

When a child is born to Nekgini speaking parents, the baby is immediately secluded, along with the mother, in the marital house. People in Reite hamlets emphasise that the subsequent restrictions on movement, and involvement of the mother’s kin in ending this seclusion, are especially important for first born children. Parents of the child observe strict restrictions on food they consume. The
Wanpela meri Sorang bin bihainim dispela wara na kamap long haus bilong tupela man. Em stretim haus bilong tupela na kukim kaikai em bin karim i kam long bilum bilong en. Meri luk save long tupela bet na em stretim tupela plet kaikai.

Taim tupela man kamap long haus, ol lukim smok i go antap. Wanpela man em salim dok bilong en long luk save husat i stap insait long haus kanaka. Em i tok olsem, “Em wanem kain man i stap? Yu go na luk save pastaim. Sapos em wanpela man i stap, kisim hap mal bilong en na sapos meri i stap, kisim hap purpur bilong en”. Dok em i go na kam bek wantaim hap purpur. Dispela man tokim poroman bilong en, “Yu hait i stap na bai mi go insait long haus”. Poroman, em hait i stap insait long Asarsing klostu long dua. Taim man em go long haus meri em i tok, “Olsem wanem i gat tupela bet long haus, narapela man we?” Man em bekim olsem, “Nogat, sampela taim mi save slip long dispela bet na narapela taim bai mi slip long hap”. Em tokim meri olsem, “Mi laikim bai yu putim tupela plet kaikai olgeta taim, sampela taim bai mi givim dok na sampela taim bai mi kaikai bihain”. Taim meri givim em kaikai, em save kaikai wanpela na lusim wanpela. Long nait, mother eats only sweet potato, often boiled with ginger to make a ‘hot’ soup. She may also eat the original variety of taro tuber revealed in myth (see Pel kapa, Colocasia esculenta var. antiquorum, Chapter 7), and certain leafy green vegetables. The state of both parents and child is described as vulnerable and they are referred to as kundieng, that is, avoiding foods thought to cause ‘heaviness’, and sickness. When the baby’s skin has ‘become strong’ (sowiraenikin), a process which is thought to take about two weeks, the mother’s kin are called to the house.

At this time, the father places the child on a large wooden plate (see Suarkung, Nauclea sp. Chapter 1) on a bed made of the aromatic herb, Asarsing. The child is then covered with valuable items such as dog’s teeth, bark cloth, money and store-bought cloth. The father breaks a hole in the woven bamboo wall at the rear of the house and passes the plate containing the child out through this opening into the waiting hands of the mother’s brother. He and his close kinsmen take the child to water for the first time, and wash the child. This is called nek sulet, and the wealth items, including the plate itself, pass to the mother’s brother in return for performing this ceremony.

Having washed the child, a game begins in which the maternal kin vie with one another to enact an absurd parody of adult life. Shrubs and saplings are cut, and wild taro plants are set out as if in a garden. If the

Meri em save nau, olsem narapela man mas i stap. Em laik trik nau. Neks de, meri em i pasim liklik hap purpur tasol taim em i go long gaden. Papa bilong bebi askim em, ‘olsem wanem yu pasim liklik hap tasol na stap olsem as nating’? Meri em bekim, “Nogat samting, yu tasol bai lukim mi”. Taim tupela laik kamap klostu long diwai kil, meri em lusim hap purpur, na em ranawe i go bek long haus. Man em hariap ron long diwai na paitim kil, tasol meri kamap long haus pinis. Man long haus, em harim tamiok paitim child is male, men climb tiny trees and make rough hides in them for hunting birds. Women weed areas of forest and pretend to sweep clean leaf litter from the forest floor. All this is done with much hilarity, but with the serious purpose of showing the child what he or she will need to know in later life.

While we were working on this book, I asked Porer: “Why this herb? Why do you use Asarsing to lay the baby on when it is passed to the mother’s brother? What does Asarsing do for the child?” In an effort to make these things clear for me, Porer took me to see his elderly father-in-law, Winedum, in Sarangama hamlet, who answered in the following way:

_Yerin nimbasa:_ Two friends

There were once two friends who lived together in the bush hunting game, oh, away at the head of the Yakai River up there. A woman from Sorang was following the course of the river, and she came upon the house of the two men. She cleaned and swept out the house, then cooked food she had brought in her net bag. She saw that there were two places to sleep, and so she set out two plates of food.

When the men came back from hunting, they saw smoke rising from their house. One said to his hunting dog, “You run in and see what sort of person is there. If it is a man, bring a bit of his bark loin-

Mipela yusim dispela pasin bilong hait na giamanim pikinini, tasol mipela yusim hap tok bilong dispela man long wasim ol pikinini na ol save kamap hariap.

cloth (*maal*), and if a woman, a bit of her string skirt (purpur *Naie*”). The dog went in and came back with a bit of red string from a woman’s skirt. One told the other, “You wait, and I’ll go in”. The one left behind hid in a large bush of *Asarsing*. His friend went ahead, and the woman asked, “Hey, there are two beds here, where is the other one of you?” The man replied, “No, sometimes I like to sleep here, and sometimes over there”.

Then he told her, “I want you to put out two plates of food every day. Sometimes I can give the other to the dog, sometimes I will have it myself later on”. So when the woman gave him food, he would eat one and put one aside. At night he used to take the food outside for his friend. The woman puzzled over this, but they lived like this. Time passed, and the woman was pregnant, soon to give birth. The man said, “When we need to go to the garden, we can just hang the baby in its string bag”. Duly the man took her off into the forest to garden, leaving the baby in the house. When this happened, the other man would come out from his hiding place near the *Asarsing* bush. He would come into the house, and rock the baby, singing softly over him. When the mother and man
When the man came back from the forest, he would strike the buttress root of a large tree with his axe while still some distance from the house. The man inside the house would hear the thud and slip away to his hiding place. As they did this, the child grew incredibly quickly. From being a tiny baby in his string bag in the morning, he was standing holding the door post in the afternoon when they returned.

Now the woman knew another man must be around. She played a trick now. She half fastened only a tiny bit of string skirt to go to the garden the next day. The man asked, “How come you are only wearing a bit of skirt?” But she said, “It will do, it’s only you who will see me”. When they came close, but had not yet reached the buttress root, the woman let her skirt slip altogether, and saying, “Oh, it’s fallen down”, turned and ran quickly back to the house. The man ran on, and struck the buttress root. Inside, the other man heard, and was just trying to jump out through the door, when, shocked at being seen, he caught his nose and cut it badly on the sharp bamboo over the door. He fainted, and when the woman saw him she said, “Eh, I’ve done something wrong here”. But she asked him, “Why


Ol dispela askim em gat draipela as, i no liklik samting. Asarsing bai wok long mekim pikinini kamap bikipela hariap, o nogat? Wanem hap bilong marasin em wok, na wanem hap mekim em wok long sait bilong stori o bilip? Mi stori pinis. Long dispela toktok, ol man bai skelim husat i gat rait long kamap papa bilong save.

Ol Reite save tok, em wanpela kastom wok bilong kandere em save kamapim pikinini. Sapos ol tok olsem, em tewel bilong Asarsing save kamapim pikinini, dispela bai lusim strong bilong Asarsing long sait bilong kastom, stori na bilip. Sapos ol save gut long marasin insait long Asarsing, tasol ol toktok olsem, em kastom na hap tok save wokim wok na mipela gat wari yet. Dispela em tupela we came back from the forest, the man would strike the buttress root of a large tree with his axe while still some distance from the house. The man inside the house would hear the thud and slip away to his hiding place. As they did this, the child grew incredibly quickly. From being a tiny baby in his string bag in the morning, he was standing holding the door post in the afternoon when they returned.

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didn’t you live out in the open?’ The other man came back, and spoke crossly to the woman, then they dropped the matter.

This way of hiding and ‘giamanim’ (tricking/looking after/growing) babies does not happen now. But we sing the name of this man when we wash babies for the first time, so that they will grow quickly.

This kind of interaction was a common experience during my anthropological fieldwork. I thought my question was practical and technical. ‘What property does this plant have that makes babies grow?’ Winedum gave a complex answer, and perhaps one he understood also as ‘technical’, but in a different sense. My question was the kind of question someone who has grown up in a context that gives rise to intellectual property law would ask. My question was about Asarsing as something in its own right, with certain chemical attributes. I assumed that it is these chemical attributes that make it ‘valuable’ to Reite people. But the explanation I was given was not of that kind at all. It placed the plant in a narrative, and as part of a complex of myth, rituals, and kinship. It is this ‘position’ that means it has the effect of making babies grow for Nekgini speaking people. I was asking ‘Do you know if there is something instrumental about Asarsing? What is it that makes the baby grow? Do Nekgini speakers have ‘knowledge’ of Asarsing’s properties?’
These are not innocent questions because it is exactly these kinds of distinctions (scientific and practical as opposed to traditional and mythical) that are the basis for various kinds of claims people make over plants and their uses. Even if the myth is a metaphorical rendering of knowledge about the properties of Asarsing, the fact people tell it in this way presents us with a problem because of our categories. We have an issue of how one translates the value of one kind of understanding into terms that make sense in another, without losing the specificity of the former. What grows the child? It turns out that it is a ritual process involving a mother’s brother that achieves the growth of the child, and this begins with a public moment of emergence, in which Asarsing plays a key role. That role is to link the moment of emergence with the power of another to grow the child, and this begins with a public moment of emergence, in which Asarsing plays a key role. That role is to link the moment of emergence with the power of another to grow the child. Is it sensible to think of such an understanding as ‘knowledge’ in the sense implied by intellectual property law, that is, as something which could be translated into a technical process or object? I suggest not.

Scientists most commonly realise the value of plants used by indigenous peoples by collecting specimens and determining their chemical composition. This process is a type of translation: ‘indigenous people use the bark of this plant to cure malaria: we can see why they choose to do so, if we know what is actually in the plant.’ No problem here.
But, this is a kind of translation in which what indigenous people ‘say’ about plants is not relevant after the initial identification. In other words, this is a ‘sample collecting’ approach; emotively dubbed ‘bioprospecting’. Plants are removed from their cultural context and given value in another milieu. Cultural context has nothing to do with the objectively observable and scientifically testable properties of a plant.

This then is not so much translation as reformulation. The plants that indigenous people value are redescribed in other, more powerful terms; those of science. Let me spell out what I have in mind. Reite people use *Asarsing* to wash new born babies. They also use the plant as bedding for young children. The reason they give for doing so is couched in terms of a mythic narrative in which powerful characters magically caused a baby to grow to adolescence in a few days. This explanation for the use of *Asarsing* in washing babies is enough for people in Reite. The connection between the power of a named mythic ancestor and any individual child was made through the plant. The association of child, power, others to grow them (mothers’ brothers) explains the reason *Asarsing* is used. But it sounds like superstition when viewed from a scientific perspective; at best ‘traditional knowledge’ in the sense of knowledge that people do not know the origin of, or indeed, the reason for.


In order to ‘prove’ the worth of the plant itself, science would seek another kind of explanation, a more obviously mechanical one. Perhaps *Asarsing* has a chemical make up which protects children from disease for example? As Euro-Americans, to value this plant we would want to know its properties, isolate the chemicals and concentrate them. The fact that Rai Coast people use *Asarsing* in the way they do provides us with a clue as to how to analyse it, and what to look for in it. But ‘their’ explanation for its value, for why they use it appears metaphorical at best.

The situation described is a common one. That is, people interested in the knowledge indigenous people have about plants are usually not interested in the cultural and mythic elaboration of that knowledge, but in scientifically verifiable reasons for their use. There is a process of abstraction here, where the ‘knowledge’ is isolated from its context. This is highly significant, because the kind of reformulation and abstraction I describe trails ownership in its wake. The work to isolate compounds or properties involves the input of scientific work, the labour of trained people, and an infrastructure for testing. By the time a plant like *Asarsing* comes to have a value scientists can understand and be confident in, it will be something completely different: performing few of the same tasks it does in Reite. This work of abstraction justifies ownership under property law, so while indigenous people may own their myths, in most cases they do
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not own the outcome of scientific analysis of the plants they use. Chemical formulas belong to those who discover their uses. Hence the ‘knowledge’ indigenous people have is routinely subsumed by a form of knowing that undermines its worth. There is a political economy of power relations inherent in such translations, and a systematic devaluation of the practices that indigenous peoples have. Using the word knowledge for these practices and understandings immediately invites comparison with other ‘knowledge’. This leaves the indigenous practices at a disadvantage, however well intentioned the move is. The point I want to get to is to find a translation in which the value of this knowledge is not merely as a pointer to real value which lies elsewhere, and which requires scientific intervention to reveal. To see the value, if you like, in the myths themselves as elements of generative kinship practices. The question becomes one of how we are to describe value in these processes that is in some way equivalent to the value of scientific discovery.

The focus on biological knowledge over social, or mythic, or cultural, must be examined for the power relations that this brings in its train. Not only do we make entities in order to make claims, thereby undermining much of what local people ‘know’ through understanding interconnections between things and effects as social processes and outcomes, but the value of the things so made into objects in their own right is wholly dependent on their ‘use’ value. That then readily

wanem, mipela wokim gut, o nogut, taim mipela mekim dispela save i go long ol manmeri?


Nambatu, mipela i no bisi wantaim ‘intellectual property’. Longtaim mipela save pinis olsem ‘intellectual property’ em i rabis long helpim ol man long ples lukautim save bilong ol. Em i kam long narapela kastom, na em save wok long dispela kastom. Em save bagarapim kastom bilong ol man bilong ples.

Long narapela hap, mi wantaim ol narapela manmeri bin wok hat long
makes them available for ‘use’, and establishes exactly the potential for outside exploitation.

Conclusion

In this appendix, I have made the suggestion that ‘indigenous knowledge’ may not be the right term for the processes and understandings recorded elsewhere in this book. This is a controversial suggestion. I make it having pointed out two things. Firstly, that to call social processes ‘knowledge’ in the contemporary world has the effect of translating those processes into entities, into objects of various kinds, and that this misrepresents these processes, and distorts the actual value which they have in practice for those who use them. It also categorises them as things that can be owned or transacted as intellectual property. I do not mean that Reite people do not know things. They certainly do. Rather, that calling what they do ‘knowledge’ has certain effects: negative effects as I have tried to outline in this appendix. By making this argument, I do not undermine or devalue Nekgini speakers’ knowledge of their environment, their mythic understandings of the process of social generation and regeneration, or their use of the plants in this book. The whole exercise of writing and publishing this volume has been driven by respect for them, and recognition of the value of these things.

In the light of this discussion, why did Porer and I decide that we would...
go ahead and publish this book? Where does it leave us in terms of the protection of Reite knowledge, or their claims over any other value produced from that knowledge? It is clear that in publishing the book, we have no way of preventing the exploitation of the knowledge of plants that it contains. Should we care?

There are two things to say in conclusion. The first is that we did not intend to make an object that could be owned (as knowledge, as intellectual property) out of Reite practices by publishing this book. Instead, in our own ways, we saw it as an opportunity for new relationships and connections. For Porer, those are with his children and grandchildren. For me, it is to connect Reite to other places and people who have an interest in the information in the book. This then is in keeping with one aspect of the intellectual property model of ownership, that information and ideas should circulate, but not another, that of restricting the use of knowledge so only the creators can benefit. Through publicising the understandings of Reite people we both hope to draw attention to their skills and achievements, and also, as stated in the Preface, to encourage other people in PNG to take an interest in, and hold onto vital social practices.

Secondly, we are not following the intellectual property model in another sense. It has been apparent to some of us for quite some time that intellectual property is poorly adapted to the needs of protecting ‘traditional forms
of knowledge’, or cultural expression (Aragon and Leach 2008, Brown 2003, Hirsch and Strathern 2004). It is too closely formulated around the principles of individual ownership, alienation and commercialisation. There exist several initiatives at the moment to find alternative ways to promote responsible and fair use of information and understanding across various cultural or disciplinary divides (see Leach 2007). Such initiatives suggest a way forward for those wanting to make use of indigenous people’s knowledge without doing so in terms those people would find inappropriate. Publishing this book of Reite Plants, we hope aids the establishment of positive relationships among those with interests in the kinds of process recorded in this book by demonstrating clearly the depth and breadth and beauty of Rai Coast people’s knowledge of plants. This knowledge and the use of plants are aspects of their way of life, their genius. This book only touches the surface of all they know.
### Glossary

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<td>kumu gras bilong stapim blut</td>
<td><em>Sphaerostephanos</em> sp., fern used to stop blood flow</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Alu karowung</em></td>
<td>rop bilong wokim marila</td>
<td><em>Piper</em> sp., vine used in love magic</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Alucaru’ung</em></td>
<td>rop long pasim rot bilong taro</td>
<td><em>Dichapetalum</em> sp., vine used to ‘block the road of taro’</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>alulik ya’ketem</em></td>
<td>mi givim kaikai long yu nau</td>
<td>I give you the food now</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Anangisowung</em></td>
<td>yusim kru long sik bilong lewa</td>
<td><em>Spathiostemon</em> sp., shoots used to treat an enlarged spleen or jaundice</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Angari</em></td>
<td>galip bilong kaikai</td>
<td><em>Canarium vitiense</em>, edible nut</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Apiyoi</em></td>
<td>yusim plaua bilong wail taro bilong bilasim tambaran</td>
<td>wild taro, flower used to decorate the spirit paraphernalia</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Araratung</em></td>
<td>yusim lip bilong mekim kambang kamap ples klia</td>
<td><em>Pipturus argenteus</em>, leaves used in divination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>artikukung</em></td>
<td>malen luk olsem skru bilong han</td>
<td>elbow design</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Asarsing/Narengding</em></td>
<td>smel purpur bilong wasim pikinini na planim long ai bilong gaden</td>
<td><em>Euodia hortensis</em>, aromatic herb used in rituals</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Asisang</em></td>
<td>tulip</td>
<td><em>Gnetum gnemon</em>, two leaf</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ataki’taki</strong></td>
<td>plaua bilong bilasim</td>
<td>unidentified species, flower used in dyeing string skirts</td>
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<td><strong>au</strong></td>
<td>bilum</td>
<td>string bag</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>aukekeri</strong></td>
<td>bilum i gat malen</td>
<td>string bag with pattern</td>
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<td><strong>aupatuking</strong></td>
<td>liklik bilum</td>
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<td>big string bag</td>
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<td><strong>autandang</strong></td>
<td>liklik bilum bilong karim ol samting bilong wan wan</td>
<td>small string bag for personal items</td>
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<td>blanket</td>
<td>blanket</td>
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<td><strong>Giramung</strong></td>
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<td><em>Elmerrillia tsiampaca</em>, wood used for slit-gong manufacture</td>
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<td><strong>Gnarr</strong></td>
<td>yusim diwai bilong wokim kundu na blut long taitim skin bilong bilong pilai</td>
<td><em>Pterocarpus indicus</em>, rosewood used in hourglass manufacture and sap used to glue lizard skin membrane</td>
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<td><strong>gneemung</strong></td>
<td>sanda bilong singsing</td>
<td>perfumed plant used in ceremonies</td>
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<td><strong>gninsi ginsing</strong></td>
<td>liklik mak i kamap long skin</td>
<td>rash like pimples</td>
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<td><strong>Gnorunggnorung</strong></td>
<td>yusim lip long hatim skin</td>
<td><em>Smilax</em> sp., leaves used to restore spiritual power</td>
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<td><strong>Guma</strong></td>
<td>grinpela pisin</td>
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<td><strong>Kaaki</strong></td>
<td>kumu gras bilong kaikai</td>
<td><em>Athyrium esculentum</em>, edible fern</td>
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<td><strong>kaap arerenung</strong></td>
<td>rausim tewel</td>
<td>remove spirits</td>
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<td><strong>kaap sawing</strong></td>
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<td>wild spirits</td>
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<td><strong>Kaapi</strong></td>
<td>mambu</td>
<td><em>Bambusa</em> sp., bamboo</td>
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<td><strong>kaaping popawe</strong></td>
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<td>coconut spirit will leave the host</td>
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<td><strong>Kaapu</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Kaatiping</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Kako’ping</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Kananba</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Kandang dau</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Kawara’pung</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Kinga’lau</strong></td>
<td>yusim rop long mekim kus lus long nek</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Mussaenda</em> sp., flowers</td>
<td>Mussaenda sp., flowers</td>
<td>used to make lime stand out</td>
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<td><em>Tapeinochilos piniformis</em></td>
<td>Tapeinochilos piniformis,</td>
<td>used to scorch the bamboo pole skin before carving</td>
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<td><em>Ficus robusta</em></td>
<td>Ficus robusta, bark used in making loin-cloths and blankets</td>
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<td><em>Endospermum labios</em></td>
<td>Endospermum labios,</td>
<td>used to elevate oneself</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Cinnamomum</em> sp., used to deter spirits</td>
<td>Cinnamomum sp., used to deter spirits</td>
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<td><em>Holochlamys beccarii</em></td>
<td>Holochlamys beccarii,</td>
<td>vine and shoots used to counteract poisin</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Taro stori bilong ol meri</td>
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<td><em>Makama kung</em></td>
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<td><em>Kising tong</em></td>
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<td>‘break the bamboo’</td>
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<td><em>Kuping</em></td>
<td>Yusim skin diawai long rausim tewel</td>
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<td><em>Kundeing</em></td>
<td>Taim bilong tambu olsem manki stap long haus tambaran na mama karim pikinini</td>
<td>taboos on water and food including seclusion period for initiation and birth</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Kunung</em></td>
<td>Yusim bilong daunim narapela</td>
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