Identity Needs in Contemporary Melanesian Cities: Melanesian Fiction in Socio-Cultural Anthropology

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Abstract: In contemporary Melanesia young men and women leave their village communities for cities to attend higher education or to find paid work. This situation creates specific challenges that urban Melanesians face and react to creatively. On the one side there are the expectations of their families and relatives in the village communities. On the other side there are the new opportunities as well as the challenges of city life. In this situation rules for behavior that would ensure the social relationships work are missing. This article aims to show the value of using Melanesian fictional literature in socio-cultural anthropology for assessing the contemporary identity needs of young Melanesian men and women and their challenges in Melanesian cities.

Introduction

T ALKING ABOUT IDENTITY NEEDS in contemporary Melanesia should not start with a western imposed definition of Melanesia, be it geographical or political. Rather, it should start with an explanation that comes from the heart. In a talk with the Papua New Guinean author Steven Edmund Winduo at the University of Minnesota I asked him, amongst others, about the concept of Melanesia. The problem that I wanted to solve was: does a "Melanesian way" as it was suggested by Bernard Narokobi (Narokobi 1983) really exist from his perspective as a famous writer and academic? And moreover, does this lead to a feeling of a Melanesian identity? Steven Edmund Winduo reformulated my question into: What attributes and values make up a Melanesian? Then he told a short anecdote that I will paraphrase here. The Boiken people in the East Sepik Province, where Steven Edmund Winduo comes from, love to dance. During his travels around Melanesia he encountered many communities. And when he visited communities

who shared the love of dancing and who were using similar costumes he immediately felt a deep connection to these people. This has been the case with all the communities he visited in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. It was also the general attitude to tradition that felt like his own. And not to forget, Tok Pisin, Tok Pijin and Bislama are very similar, thus he was able to communicate with the people there. This was very different from the communities in New Caledonia, which, politically speaking, also belong to Melanesia. Steven E. Winduo's anecdote shows there is a feeling of togetherness beyond the single village societies. But it is not based on an abstract concept but concrete emotional knowledge about common cultural traditions and contemporary life. Research also shows that there are similarities in the traditions and history of the independent states Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, while there are fundamental differences in the colonization and immigration history of Fiji and New Caledonia (Sillitoe 1998, 2000). Moreover, in the first three states Melanesians are the majority population. For my research I need a definition of Melanesia that is culture based. For these reasons, I decided to focus on fiction from Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu as Melanesian Fiction.

To use Melanesian fiction as a field of identity research, first we must determine what parts of knowledge of the fictional worlds can be taken as cultural knowledge of identity issues despite the fictional nature of the material. This will determine the subject of research. To get a connection between the content of the literary works and the cultural knowledge about identity issues one could ask about the specific function of Melanesian literature and the function of fiction in general. Therefore, the article starts with introducing Melanesian fiction as a literature of change. It continues with showing on which parts of the fictional worlds the research focus must be in order to assess identity needs and their challenges. This happens with reference to research in cultural anthropology, literary anthropology, psychology and sociology. Further on in this article, Melanesian fiction is defined as the field of research and the results of my own research are presented - the cultural anthropological analysis of 96 literary works of male and female Melanesian authors. These results were first published in my German Dissertation "Fiktionale Literatur als Quelle ethnologischer Identitätsforschung: Identitätsbedürfnisse im zeitgenössischen Melanesien" by Peter Lang Publishing Company. The goal is to offer insight into the identity needs of young men and women and their challenges in contemporary Melanesian cities. This is to offer a basis for further research on addressing these issues.

Melanesian Fiction - Literature of Change

Melanesian Fiction can only be used as a field of research to assess identity needs and their challenges because of its special function in the contemporary situation. This is the re-positioning of the self in a changed reality through writing (Löschner 2011a, 2011b). The concept of constructing an identity through re-positioning the self only becomes important in a situation when prescribed identity roles do not work anymore (Benson 2001; Keupp et al. 2008) - as is the case for Melanesian writers in cities. Then the individuals are asked to re-position themselves independently through the evaluation of their needs. Drawing on the research of psychology and cultural anthropology, this process requires the evaluation of the following six relationships: ethnic belonging, family relations, romantic relations or partnership, friendship, existential orientation and threats from strangers. The needs of individuals within these six identity-relevant relationships are referred to as identity needs. This evaluation is important for constructing an identity independent of cultural influences (Müller 1987; Antweiler 2007). However, what it takes to fulfill identity needs and what challenges exist that prevent the individuals from fulfilling them differs from one socio-cultural group to another.

Returning to the function of Melanesian fiction, this process of evaluation as described also takes place in Melanesian fiction. Although Melanesian fiction has its foundation in the Oral Tradition of Melanesian societies, something which is evident in how stories are told and in the themes (Schild 1981; Aitau 2004; Wood 2006), the content differs greatly from the Oral Tradition content or the content of modern story telling. And the same is true of their function. While in the Oral Tradition as well as in modern stories the focus is on the description of events, the appearances of characters and the context situation, Melanesian fiction works as a forum for focusing on serious personal inner issues that have arisen as a result of the changes (Löschner 2011b). According to the time of production in relation to independence there are differences in the context situation in which the self must be positioned. Therefore Melanesian fiction can be distinguished into three phases: pre-independence literature, post-independence literature and post-post-colonial literature. The first writers were the first students in the 1960s of the 20th century who studied with Ulli Beier at the newly founded University of Papua New Guinea in Port Moresby (Beier 2005). This pre-independence literature is mainly used to protest against the colonial government and to attract the attention of foreign countries to their situation. (Maka'a/Oxenham 1993; Stella 1999a). Besides this protest this writing worked for dealing with problems that arose for the Melanesian societies as a result of colonization. One of the most famous authors from this generation is Russell Soaba. The pre-independence literature was followed in the 1980s by a new generation of student writers (Gorle 1996). Achieving independence

brought high expectations which were not met. The search for identity in literature takes place in two different ways. On the one hand through the reference to Oral Tradition material and every day life in the villages. On the other hand through the focus on the social problems that arose in the cities as a result of identity insecurity (Winduo 1990). Since the 1990s, a new breed of young writers, whose mentors are academics and famous authors of the post-independence literature like e.g. Steven E. Winduo and Regis Stella, have been producing literature. This young generation still has a connection to their home villages but are facing new challenges created by life in the independent states. They are mainly writing about their own challenges of embracing modern life and at the same time seeing the risk of losing more and more of their cultural traditions (Watson 2001). The risk of losing one's roots is prevalent in all three literary phases. However, the last phase of writers do indeed find themselves in the situation of not having learnt their own mother tongue of their ethnic societies and are missing out on many cultural norms, altered versions of which still exist in their societies. The reason is their life in the city that disconnects them from village life. Solving this situation - keeping a foot in two cultures - is more important than ever. Melanesian fiction came into being in addition to a modern way of oral story-telling that superseded the Oral Tradition of the traditional village society (Kulick 1992; Josephides 1998). As John Rivers points out, the fictional character of written stories offers the possibility to express true feelings more openly than it is possible in Oral Tradition or modern storytelling where the teller is directly faced with the audience (Rivers 2001). Thereby, the fictionality of the stories opens up a new possibility of dealing with these personal issues of modern times.

Emotional Cultural Knowledge - Subject of Research

The cultural anthropological analysis of Melanesian fiction aims to assess identity needs and their challenges. As shown in the previous chapter, Melanesian fiction works as a way of re-positioning the self in a city environment. Now it is necessary to determine which parts of the information given in the fictional worlds refer to identity issues that exist in reality. For this, one has to go deeper into the relation between the content of the stories and the function of Melanesian fiction. Therefore, we need to leave the narrow topic of Melanesian fiction and ask about the function of all kinds of fiction in general. This leads to the statement that all fiction fulfills an emotional function for author and reader (Mellmann 2006). As we know from our own experience, there are stories that are interesting but nothing more, and there are stories that touch the heart. For stories to touch the heart our own emotional

knowledge must be in the stories so that we can relate to it. We feel the sorrow of the father whose rebellious daughter marries a man other than the one her father wanted her to the most when we are emotionally socialized in a society where the daughter's loyalty means love for her father and where the daughter's decision to follow her own wishes means she lacks empathy for her father. However, if we are someone who lives in a contemporary city and loves another man or woman but our family wants us to marry someone else, we also feel for the unhappy daughter or son whose dreams are threatened by family expectations. The author always wants to communicate with the reader (Wendt 1983; Bradshaw 2007). This only becomes possible when the author refers largely to the emotional knowledge of the reader (Bohannan 1966; Heeschen 1988; Winko 2003; Huber 2008). Therefore, the emotional knowledge within the fictional stories must be largely emotional cultural knowledge. Emotional cultural knowledge is a term for the emotional knowledge that is shared by the members of a socio-cultural group because of similar cultural experiences (Röttger-Rössler 2004). This is the case for Melanesians who left their village communities and settled down in cities. To assess their identity needs and their challenges we must focus on the emotional cultural knowledge about the six identity-relevant relationships within the literary works (Löschner 2011b). Consequently, emotional knowledge can only be taken as emotional cultural knowledge when it repeats within the literary works of different Melanesian authors. In order to deduce the identity needs and their challenges from the identified emotional cultural knowledge, we must contextualize the knowledge. This means considering the reference to knowledge according to gender, age, status and time of writing.

Melanesian Fiction as Field of Research

The selection of Melanesian fiction for analysis is determined by the research topic. To recognize the emotional cultural knowledge there must be terminology in the literary works that refers to emotions connected to knowledge about the six identity-relevant relationships. Therefore, it makes more sense to focus on fictional stories rather than poems since poems often express the emotional knowledge in an indirect way rather than explicitly. Identification of the emotional knowledge in poems would usually ask for too much reference to background information which would increase the chance of misinterpretation. Hence, the genre of the literary works analyzed is mainly prose. For the cultural anthropological analysis in this case 96 literary works by authors from Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu have been analyzed, of which 61 literary works have been written by male authors and 33 literary works have been written by female authors. Two literary works have been

jointly produced by a male and a female author. Regionally the corpus of Melanesian fictional literature contains literary works by 36 male and 16 female authors from Papua New Guinea, nine male and nine female authors from Solomon Islands and three male and one female authors from Vanuatu. The literary works were written in the period from 1970 to 2008. The main focus lies on literary works written after independence, thus reflecting the contemporary situation. The genre is mainly prose - 85 short stories and six novels, four dramatic works and one poem. Unfortunately, for lack of space, it is not possible to cite all the literary works analyzed. A complete list of the literature analyzed can be found in Löschner 2011b.

The writers hail from very different ethnic societies across Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu (Löschner 2011b, 301 - 314). Through schooling they came in closer contact with western concepts and ideas than the majority of the population in Melanesia, but they have also learned about the value of their own culture. The variety of the cultural background of the writers is evident in the themes and the terminology of the literary works. However, comparing the emotional cultural knowledge within the fictional stories by different authors also shows that there are common needs and challenges that the people of contemporary Melanesia share with each other. The stories are written in English but indigenized by the use of words or even whole sentences in Tok Pisin, Pijin, Bislama and Tok Ples.

The stories analyzed were mainly written by students, thus mirroring the identity needs of the young adult generation and their challenges in contemporary Melanesia. The stories address the dreams, hopes and sorrows of Melanesians who left their families and relatives in the village communities to find paid employment or to pursue higher education in the cities. These men and women, usually young, face the challenge of reconciling two different worlds: the expectations of their families and relatives in the village communities and the possibilities and challenges of living in the cities far away.

Melanesian Identity Needs and Their Challenges - Results of Cultural Anthropological Analysis

The comparison, contextualization and interpretation of the identified emotional cultural knowledge about the six identity-relevant relationships in Melanesian fiction leads to the assessment of identity needs and their challenges in contemporary Melanesian cities. Of course these results show only tendencies, however, this offers a basis for further research. In the following section of the article the results of the analysis will be presented. With a view to enhancing realism and impact, the text is

complemented by quotations from the literary works from which the emotional cultural knowledge about the identity-relevant relationships derives.

Ethnic Belonging - Between Tradition and Modernity

According to the results of the analysis, in light of the changes that took place as a result of colonization and conversion, the definition of ethnic belonging appears to be very important for Melanesian men and women. A significant proportion of the analyzed stories takes place in the village context, thus allowing the authors to tell of the cultural knowledge of specific ethnic societies (Sorariba 1997; Javin 2001; Koi 2001; Mark 2001; Ravu 2001; Rumbali 2001; Tanuve 2001; Zimike 2001; Lokinap 2004). In the first instance, ethnic belonging is constituted through the specific ethnic origin and experiences of customs and rituals of the respective societies of origin. These areas of cultural identity are very much connected to strong emotions as is obvious in the following example: ""It was an early morning flight and the Talair Britten-Norman Islander was taking him to his beloved home. This was paradise. He could see the whole Waghi Valley stretching for miles and miles in a westerly direction. It was a bright sunny morning and while he could clearly see the Kubor Range, Mount Digni and Nimnala, his ancestral dwelling place, there were still scattered clouds and haze in the distance above Kuli Gap and Komis. The whole valley was stunningly beautiful."" (Kepa 2001, 59) The constitution of ethnic belonging through a national identity as shown with the use of common languages like Tok Pisin, Hiri Motu, Pijin and Bislama stands only in second place. The problem of westernization and primarily the decline of Melanesian moral values are still of high interest for contemporary ethnic belonging (Javin 2001; John 2001; Keviame 2001; Zimike 2001). The problems of ethnic belonging are mainly seen in the break-down of clan structures and decline of family cohesion. These changes are ascribed to the exercise of individual interests. Therefore, there also arises a gap between the interests of the elder generation, who try to preserve the traditional Melanesian values, and interests of the younger generation who increasingly reject these values. These young people prefer to experience the opportunities that have been created through the opening of societies and contact with western culture. The rejection of Neo-Tradition is interpreted as the rejection of one's own family. Therefore, schooling in particular is seen as responsible for the changed values of the younger generation. In the stories this is expressed in two ways. On the one hand, older people are unhappy about these changes and worry about the future (Orotaloa 1989; Keviame 2001; John 2001; Javin 2001; Zimike 2001) like the old man in "Past, Present and Future" by Jenny Hilinke: ""'Yes, but what is going to happen to my sons if I cross over, they will live like fools with no land to return home to,' the old man called over to

his brothers. (…) 'What will happen to our sons, they will have nothing at all, they will lose their identity and my name would be mocked at and they would be a disgrace to us, their forefathers.'"" (Hilinke 2001,165) On the other hand, conflicts between problematic westernized Melanesians and neo-traditional Melanesians are the focus of the stories (Kerpi 1974; Alasia 1985a; Zimike 2001). This is also the case with Mafutu in "Big Brother" who went into education and changed completely: ""But he did not behave like a Solomon Islander. He always wanted to be independent, to live like the White men. Though he was in a high position, being the Chief's advisor and well paid, his money was 'here today and gone tomorrow'. He bought a car for himself but never thought of his family at home."" (Big Brother 1983a, 25)

These problematic westernized Melanesians not only risk their own happiness but also bring shame upon their families. The frequency of this subject shows that it is an issue that must be solved urgently. This is also evident in the statement of the narrator in "A Special Necklace", who worries about the situation of his fictional character Peter: ""Peter was caught up in the Western world. He disliked his traditional ways. He was caught up in a situation where he couldn't come to terms with his father's proposal. Peter was just one of those young Papua New Guineans who had been caught between the collisions of two cultures."" (Ravu 2001, 55) The threat of ethnic belonging through discrimination by white men was a significant problem in colonial times (J. Kasaipwalova 1971; L. Kasaipwalova 1972; Opa 1973; Saunana 1982). However, today these experiences no longer seem to be a problem for men and women in Melanesia.

Family Relations - Between Deep Love and Personal Dreams

The emotional cultural knowledge leaves no doubt that young Melanesian men and women love their parents and relatives dearly and will make every effort to please them. This shows that maintaining a good relationship with the family of origin is still crucial for a stable identity in contemporary Melanesian cities. The relationship with family members - especially parents - is the main subject in 60 of the 96 literary works analyzed. Even if the main subject is something different, the relationship with family members is mentioned in almost every story connected to emotions of love, loyalty and thankfulness. One example is Pranis' father in "Never give up" by Steven Mavii Gimbo, who did everything to give his son a good education: ""Pranis' heart ached very much for his father. He knew if there was a father he really wanted, it was his own. No one would have sacrificed so much for him."" (Gimbo 2000, 22) Love for the family is not only expressed in a direct way but also indirectly, like in "A Good Man's Death" by Steven Edmund Winduo, where Suwalika cries over the death of his good father: ""Suddenly, without a word, Suwalika broke into tears. His red eyes filled

with endless tears. The sorrow in his cousin's heart struck Nalanduo. Not once in his life had he seen Suwalika cry – not even when a close relative died. He was known as 'mlinku kakhu', the tearless one."" (Winduo 1994, 91) A final example here should be from a story by a female author. Maras, Tingsois' mother, in "Freedom before Dawn" by Estella Cheung suffers alongside her daughter who is to be married according to custom instead of going to school. Moreover, she is unhappy at losing her child: ""Maras sees the sadness in the eyes of her fourteen-year-old daughter. It is painful enough, just watching her sit in front of the fire, tilting her head to the side to avoid the sting of the smoke in her eyes. (…) A guilty conscience stabs her in the chest. Tingsoi's age children are going to school to get an education. She is kept at home because of an unfair village custom. (...) They cannot see a mother's heart break of losing a child."" (Cheung 2004, 105f.) This example also highlights another point: the determination by custom. Young Melanesian men and women know about the importance of custom and that they must act according to custom to prevent bringing shame on their parents. However, the results show that it is not easy for young Melanesians to act according to custom in today's world. They have their own dreams about how their life should be. This situation creates inner conflicts (Ata 1996; Mamavi 1996a; Mark 2001; Cheung 2004; Lahui 2004). An important reason for conflicts seem to be that young women long to choose their own marriage partner whilst at the same time knowing that if they do not fulfill the wishes of their parents they will let them down and bring shame on them. How terrible this feeling of shame is can be seen in how the families punish the young women if they disobey. However, the countless examples of love for the family show that young women are not motivated to act according to custom for fear of being punished. Rather they deny their own wishes in favor of their parents' wishes out of love for them and the need to have a good relationship with them (Ata 1996; Mamavi 1996a; Mark 2001). However, this often leads to emotions of desperation, sadness and unhappiness for the young women who are denied the chance to live their dreams. One example of the inner conflict between love for one's parents and love for one's boyfriend is Hilaisa in "A Cold Wednesday Morning" by Hale Lahui: ""She was in a real deep situation and had to cry her worries out. She sat down and thought back of Mark, their plans about the future, and the times they shared together. She thought about how good he had been to her and the love and affection they had for each other. Yet she had to submit to her parents because she was the only daughter. A decline to marry would surely let them down. She loved them so dearly that she could not go against them."" (Lahui 2004, 117)

Young men are also asked to act according to custom. From the young men's perspective following the rules of their societies stands above their own personal interests, since every offence brings bad luck to the society (Kepa 2001; Panta 2001b; Tanuve 2001). This bad luck consists either of conflict with the family or

punishment from ancestors. This last case is seen in the misfortune of the couple Mana and Sine in "The Call at Nightfall" by Patrick Panta. Mana and Sine break a taboo and as a consequence a terrible storm destroys the village and they lose their children (Panta 2001b, 137). However, young men also experience inner conflicts when the family does not understand their situation and there is nothing they can do about it. This is the case in the last example "Nogat Wantok - Nogat Wok" by Nash Sorariba. Ivan Sagadi has a university degree but he can't find a job, which means he brings shame to his community: ""His people would no doubt call him a failure, they would say he wasted his father's hard-earned money and time. But was he prepared to accept the embarrassment in silence? It wasn't their fault that they could not accept his fate. They wouldn't understand either, and neither was it his fault that he could not join the public service or at least find a job."" (Sorariba 1997, 29)

Romantic Relationships - Between Love and Pride

Romantic relationships are the main topic of 33 of the 96 literary works analyzed. This shows how important this relationship is for the construction of contemporary identity. However, 18 stories tell of conflicts. As the analysis of Melanesian fiction shows, conflicts within romantic relationships are a fundamental problem for Melanesian men and women in cities. One important reason for conflicts seems to be that Melanesian men and women have very different needs from their romantic partners. For young Melanesian men, creating successful romantic relationships with women reinforces their self-confidence. For this need to be satisfied the duration of the relationship is not of importance. It is already fulfilled when the beautiful woman is interested in the man and/or is willing to have sexual contact with him. For Melanesian men, attracting the interest of beautiful Melanesian women in them is an important source of male pride (Tiki 1996; Kepa 2001; Ray 2001; Garae 2002). If, moreover, the man is interested in a relationship to lead to a partnership or marriage, they are willing to talk in terms of love very quickly - without really knowing the personality of the woman (Navala 1996; Alasia 2001b). Therefore, any struggles with romantic interests threaten the male self. Problems for Melanesian men arise mainly as a result of the following three reasons: First, self-esteem is not reinforced because of the man fails to build a romantic relationship (Maka'a 1982; Tatahu 2001). Second, other men infringe upon the rights the men feel over the partnership (Kilage 1987; Maka'a 1987; Navala 1996; Stella 1999b). And third, the woman injures the male self-confidence through her behavior (Sorariba 1997, 109ff.). When men feel that their rights are threatened or their self-esteem is injured through the assumed or real infidelity of their women they often react with violence against the other men or the woman. The constant fear of Melanesian men that their girlfriends or wives may be

unfaithful is a huge burden on the romantic relationships in urban Melanesia. The slightest suspicion leads to a desire for revenge on the rival and violent punishment of the women who caused the emotional pain. This is for example the case in "The marriage" by Julian Maka'a. A young Solomon man was very eager to marry his young beautiful Solomon wife, however, as soon as they are married he starts doubting her faithfulness: ""Slowly , as the weeks went by, the seed of suspicion grew in John. 'I'm sure somebody is seeing my wife while I'm away,' he thought one day. ' Especially now that I'm away for such a long time, she must be doing just that! I'll give her what she deserves when I get back,' he muttered to himself."" (Maka'a 1987: 32) These same emotions of anger and the desire for revenge is also shown in "Gutsini Posa" by Regis Stella. Here, a man from Bougainville Island is afraid that his girlfriend might cheat on him: ""Suddenly he was furious with her. He wanted to tear her flesh to pieces for demeaning his dignity and his manhood. (...) He wanted her to beg him. Then he would be satisfied, his pride would be partially restored, though memory would never be erased completely."" (Stella 1999b: 27) That this fear is not a seldom case but very frequent shows a third example. In this case a man does not dare to talk to a beautiful woman because he is afraid of these emotions of jealousy that are sure to arise when he is successful in his attempt: ""No, she is too beautiful for me. I will be making a fool of myself following after this beautiful woman,' I warned myself, consciously swallowing my saliva. 'She is so beautiful. Beautiful women always have many male admirers, and I would be a slave to jealousy,' I confided to myself."" (Navala 1996, 80)

On the other side, for Melanesian women successfully building a relationship alone is not sufficient to fulfill their need for romantic relationships. Whether their needs are fulfilled or not is fundamentally dependent on the character of their men. Melanesian women want their men to be caring and faithful, but both these needs are often threatened in romantic relationships (Alebago 2001; Lahui 2004; Lokinap 2004). This is a significant problem for Melanesian women. Hence the female student Dugume in "A Real Loser" by Mary Alebago is breaking up with the father of her unborn child because he is unfaithful and physically violent towards her: ""You've got to understand that for a couple to live together there must be love and trust. It seems that we don't possess these and our life would never be full of fun and jokes."" (Alebago 2001, 113) The two main causes of suffering in a relationship for women are: violence against them by their men (Dad 1983; Lingairi 1983; Hilinke 2001; Maeaniani 2004) and infidelity of their men (Alebago 2001). The emotional cultural knowledge shows that violence against women happens often without any trigger in the behavior of the women. One significant cause of violence that is mentioned is when women hold opinions different than their men.

Comparing the needs and problems of Melanesian men and women in the context of their romantic relationships, one can state that the problems are mainly

rooted in the differing expectations of romantic relationships. Since Melanesian men see their romantic relationships as confirmation of their own self-esteem, infidelity might occur more often. Consequently, they assume their women are behaving in a similar fashion. This leads to a situation where Melanesian men live in constant jealousy, thus not being able to offer the support and faithfulness that their women need for them to be happy.

Friendship - A Second Source of Emotional Support

Family is still the foundation of Melanesian identity. However, leaving the village communities to pursue higher education or find paid employment in the cities means removing the constant support of the family members and friends who stay in the villages. In cities, people from different cultures come together. The special situation in cities makes it necessary to build family-like connections with strangers, even with members from a different ethnic background. Therefore, the concept of friendship takes on a new importance for Melanesians in cities. As research shows, the friends of the fictional characters in the stories are often still from the same ethnic background or at least have a connection to their ethnic societies in some way (Saunana 1982; Billy 1983b; Sorariba 1997; Alasia 2001b; Zimike 2001). This makes it possible to build a strong friendly connection without having known each other for a long time. For example in "Footprints in the Sky" by Sam Alasia the young man Ioane feels very close to Diake because they share common traits of their cultural background: ""In fact Diake was quite generous in giving because he knew that his uncle, the one who brought the fish and taro from Honiara, was from Ioane's place at Lambi Bay, Diake's aunty had married that man from Lambi."" (Alasia 2001b, 23) This leads to a close friendship where both of them support each other in any way possible. However, there are also stories that tell of male friendship where the ethical background seems not of particular importance. This kind of friendship is based on having fun together in groups of male Melanesians. However, the moral support in these cases does not extend to pure raising of spirits (Sorariba 1997,113).

The close connection between friends and the importance of the support of friends is also expressed in stories by female authors (Billy 1983b; Alebago 2001). The female friends not only support their friends morally but also through actions. In "A real loser" Dugume had an unplanned pregnancy and is afraid of the trouble this will cause her with her family. However, her friends all try to support her in any way possible: ""Some of her friends cried together and assured her that with their help, she would be okay. They encouraged her to forget about the problems and concentrate on her studies and the health of the child inside her. Sometimes her friends took her out to visit other people and kept her occupied, helping her forget her

worries and problems."" (Alebago 2001, 112) This close connection between friends can be found throughout the different stories . However, there are also two stories - "Nogat Wantok - Nogat Wok" by Nash Sorariba (Sorariba 1997) and "The Pushed Out" by Mike Zimike (Zimike 2001) - that tell of the problem of Melanesian friendship. These stories depict the situation of wantoks and the close connection that is sometimes felt between them for no apparent reason. Although there are just two examples for this theme, these stories seem to touch on an important point of contemporary needs in cities. Friendship makes it easier to deal with the absence of family support in the city, but there is still no doubt that friends cannot replace family.

Threats to the Male Self - Tribal Wars and Malicious Beings

As the emotional cultural knowledge in the stories suggests, Melanesian men live in constant worry of themselves or their loved ones being a victim of attacks by strangers - be it physical or by malicious beings. The pay back system challenges Melanesian male identity security in many regions of Melanesia. This system asks for compensation for any injustice experienced oneself or, in extension, the family or clan members (Sorariba 1997; Rumbali 2001; Dabuma 2001; Kia 2001; Anzu 2001; Junnie 2001; Kepa 2001; Sailas 2001). If it is only a minor issue the conflict may be settled through payments. However, when someone important and beloved is killed the balance can only be restored through a blood payment. The main problems are the feelings of anger and rage that result in the desire for revenge. Men feel that only visiting the same fate on the guilty party can solve this. This is a doom loop, because now the other party feels anger and feels that pay back is the only way to restore justice. The need for blood payments is specifically in reference to young men. Indeed, for a short moment revenge leads to a feeling of contentment. But fright quickly takes it place, since the other party will now feel obliged to take revenge (Aguang 1993; Anzu 2001; Junnie 2001; Kia 2001). In contrast, the older men try to solve these conflicts with communication and the arrangement of compensation payments. For example in "Kaupi" by David Rumbali a sacred pig is injured by a frustrated neighbor. The young men want to immediately take revenge because of this insult. However, the elders are afraid that this act could destroy the relations with the other clan and decide to solve the matter through payments: ""The elders decided to act on the matter immediately because it was sensitive and they needed to do something to solve the conflict before our action-thirsty young clansmen ruined the already fragile relationship between the two clans."" (Rumbali 2001,193) The threat of fights seem to be a particular problem for male identity in the Western and Southern Highlands and the Chimbu Area. The concept of revenge, however, and the connected problems are also common in other areas, like Central Province or

Madang Province for example. The same is true of the threat of black magic and evil spirits. The fright and sorrow caused by malicious beings and witchcraft is a common experience in societies of Papua New Guinea (Paipaira 1994; Roaveneo 2001; Sailas 2001), Solomon Islands (Alasia 1985a; Tuaveku 1985; Maka'a 1987) and Vanuatu (Tula 1983). The use of black magic seems especially connected to feelings of jealousy, such as when a neighbor has a new store and is successful as is the case in "Coconut is Useless" by Sam Alasia. However, there are also malicious beings that do not need a reason to attack innocent people. These beings prey particularly on people who are alone wandering around. Therefore, the best protection is provided by the family and other relatives or friends. That the threat of malicious beings and witchcraft is by no means limited to the villages shows the frequent occurrence of related emotional cultural knowledge within the stories of the authors. All authors live in cities but the sorrow that these powers cause is apparent in many stories. This sorrow also leads to revenge killings when loved ones are involved. This is the case in "Witchcraft" by David Sailas where Jeff's aunt is killed by boys who were asked to do so by the village elders as punishment for the killing of Jeff through pancreatitis (Sailas 2001). Another example for the threat of an attack by malicious beings in cities can be found in "Yapune" by May Paipaira. Here, a man from the Anuki is living in the city with his Australian fiancé. Since a woman from the village is unhappy about this liaison, Yapune destroys his life and he finally must return to his village - without a job and without a wife. Yapune is just one example of the power malicious beings have over people and how they influence their lives - even when they are far away in cities: ""Yapune was a name I had heard so often in the village. She was not one woman, but many, and she appeared in many different forms, both human and non-human. She was a destroyer, and her main purpose was to hurt people both physically and mentally. She brought misery into the lives of many people."" (Paipaira 1994, 53f.) The threat from strangers, malicious beings and black magic can be found throughout Melanesia and is a central theme in many stories by male writers. Female writers also recognize it, but they do not appear to feel the urgency to write about these attacks so often.

Existential Orientation - Own Children, Christianity and Humor as Sources of Happiness

Living in cities opens up new chances that are connected to living in contemporary globalized societies. At the same time, these young Melanesian men and women are left alone to choose between all these opportunities. However, as yet, there are no new rules for behavior that ensure all the important social relationships will work. When these relationships - family, romantic relationships and friends - are not

working as well as they should, there arises a situation of loneliness that is not easy to address. In such a situation it is important to have something to hold onto. There are just a few cases where emotional cultural knowledge about existential orientation can be found, but it is still worth mentioning it as a tendency that can help as a source of encouragement or that is used as such. These areas are: one's own children, Christian faith and humor. In "The Wind" by Peter Kepa for example the young Chimbu man Kulame had lost anything he lived for because of his own mistakes. However, his son Numaikane gives him hope and convinces him to go on: ""Kulame's faithful companion was Numaikane. Numaikane his beautiful and unquestioning son. His companion for better and for worse."" (Kepa 2001, 77) This knowledge about the importance of one's own children can also be found in a story by a Solomon female author, Eva Lingairi. In "What is true love" the Solomon woman Nana is supported by her sons when she is beaten by her husband (Lingairi 1983). Also the college students Dugume in "A real loser" by Mary Alebago (Alebago 2001) and Tallangat in "Tallangat" by Denise Lokinap (Lokinap 2004) are happy about their children, although both of their pregnancies were unplanned, which caused a great deal of trouble with their families. However, they see their as yet unborn children as their future companions as well.

The importance of the Christian faith becomes obvious throughout many of the stories. It is, however, only expressed in a few stories as well as in the following example. This story tells about the power the Christian faith has when a situation seems hopeless. In "Bewitched" by Gregory Roaveneo, the Motu man Deini is cursed and cannot be saved by the priest, leading to his death. However, the narrator still expresses hope for him as he remarks: ""The evil ones had succeeded this time but only for the moment. For the Bible says, those dead in Christ shall rise on that great day, that wonderful morning."" (Roaveneo 2001, 163) There are three further examples within the corpus of stories analyzed in which the characters find new hope for the future thanks to their Christian faith (Saunana 1982; Mamavi 1996b; Kepa 2001).

Three stories tell about the function of humor. In "Our New Neighbour" by Regis Stella and Lynda Maeaniani, the man Kai has left his wife and children at home in order to earn money for school fees. Life in the city is hard but his attitude gives him hope: ""'Despite all else, we've got to push on nonetheless.' he continued. 'And laughter is sure the best medicine in helping to ease the journey.'"" (Stella/Maeaniani 2004, 48) This concept of getting happiness from funny stories is also expressed in two other stories. In the drama "The High Cost of Living Differently" by Nora Vagi Brash, the man Ikopo makes people happy by joking around and telling funny stories (Brash 1996a). And in "Raraifilu" by Rexford Orotaloa, a man who is not generally liked by the villagers because he lies and breaks the rules of the village with his behavior still makes a little boy very happy with his funny stories (Orotaloa

1989). It is clear to see from these examples that there is emotional cultural knowledge of existential orientation in the stories. However, other subjects, like the relationship with the family or romantic relationships, seem to be far more important to the writers than this concept of constituting an identity on the basis of belonging outside of these social relationships.

Conclusion

With Melanesians meeting other ethnic groups in cities, it becomes increasingly important in cultural anthropological research to focus also on the similarities of Melanesian cultures. This is important for future generations in finding a common ground and to enhance communication. Life in contemporary Melanesian cities offers its own opportunities but also challenges. The living situation of the mainly young writers - leaving their village communities, living in the city on their own and attaining higher education - influence the reference to the areas of emotional cultural knowledge that are chosen. They are consequently particularly well-placed to speak for these young Melanesians who have left their village communities and have to reposition themselves in the reality of the city. These writers use the opportunity born of the privilege of achieving higher education to reflect and write about these issues and challenges of everyday life in contemporary Melanesian cities. They are part of this life and share the experiences of these Melanesians in cities. Therefore, they really can tell of these needs and challenges. Indeed, Melanesian authors are often very motivated to support the lives of their own people and so focus on themes that are relevant to a wider Melanesian audience. However, Melanesian cultures are still oral cultures and there is no tradition of reading yet, hence it is very hard for authors to achieve sufficient recognition. However, they make an important contribution to the welfare of society as a whole.

The cultural anthropological analysis of Melanesian fiction shows what areas of emotional cultural knowledge exist, thus influencing the behavior of young men and women in cities. The need for an identity - a place in the world - and the emotions connected to this is stronger than the rules that govern everyday life. Access to the emotional cultural knowledge of young Melanesian men and women in cities may offer a new perspective for addressing current problems like unplanned pregnancy, domestic violence or criminality. In order to use the results from the cultural anthropological analysis of Melanesian fiction, they must be discussed with Melanesians themselves. Only Melanesians can say which of the identity-related needs must be addressed and in what way this must happen. Therefore, I suggest using the results of this analysis as a basis for interviews with Melanesians to offer the chance to talk about the needs and challenges of contemporary Melanesian

identities without necessarily raising the issues of their individual struggles. Addressing these issues will only become possible when social policies offer ways for individuals to fulfill these needs for identity. Since identity needs are largely shaped by cultures, each culture has to tackle this task with regard to its own culture-specific needs and values.

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