All over the world, cultural groups understand the world to operate in different ways. Central to these various philosophies of life is how people make sense of the mysteries of their lived environments: how do we connect what we know (and can control), with what we do not know (and cannot truly control). An answer that all cultures have—our own included—is the spirit world, that powerful, nebulous realm that enables us to make sense of things and that touches us at the deepest existential levels while always remaining somehow distant and mysterious.

Given that all cultural landscapes contain spiritual presences, we would be remiss to try to explain past cultural practices without considering such existential and operational dimensions. Yet how do we attempt landscape archaeology of the intangibles of life? (see McNiven; Ashmore; Bradley, this volume; also David 2002 for detailed discussion). The first step, we suggest, is to recognize the central importance of spiritscapes in everyday social and environmental engagement. This chapter is dedicated toward this aim, by focusing on spiritscapes in one ethnographic community, the Rumu of Papua New Guinea. We outline various kinds of spiritual connections to place to show how everyday life is embedded in sacred geographies. We then focus on a single dimension, the kepe and the land of the dead, to highlight how an archaeology of the dead itself opens doorways to an archaeology of spiritual landscapes.

The subject of what governs mortuary practices, and how these relate to social life, is a vast anthropological and archaeological subject in its own right, with a long history. Archaeologists have long been aware that mortuary practices do not simply represent cultural ways of disposing of recently deceased bodies. Mortuary practices and understanding the particular contexts of archaeological human remains may be affected by specific circumstances of death and invariably reflect a variety of social processes, including:

1. varied processes of social power (e.g., King [2004], who argues that early Saxon grave goods acted to establish ongoing relations of social expectation and due between survivors and donors);
2. particular circumstances of death (e.g., Spindler [1994], who suggested that 5,000 years ago during the Copper Age, Ötzi, “the ice-man,” was a traveling distant villager caught during a severe snow storm on the Schnalstal glacier of the Italian-Austrian Alps and died, soon to be covered by snowfall; or Fleckinger’s [2003] view that Ötzi was an old man who had been fatally injured during a fight, only to escape and die in the Schnalstal glacier);
3. political negotiation and contestation (e.g., Pardoe [1988], who argues that cemeteries are an expression of territory-building by member corporate groups calling on the historical hegemony of place);

4. attitudes of social order (e.g., Glob [1969], who argues that [in the main] Iron Age, bog bodies in northern Europe may have been executed criminals ritually sacrificed to the goddess of fertility);

5. cosmological understandings (e.g., Greber and Ruhl [1989: 273] who suggest that the archaeological remains at the Hopewell burial site signal an understanding of how the universe operates and how to keep the cosmos in good working order);

6. the social manipulation of psychological states of remembering (e.g., Williams [2005], who in part argues that European Medieval funerary goods, such as weapons, knives, and iron buckles, were biographic aids to remembering past social circumstances, whereas cremation acted to selective forgetting; see also Hallam and Hockey [2001]); and

7. religious beliefs that concern the human soul (e.g., Solecki [1971], who argued that the deliberate burial of Neanderthals at Shanidar Cave in Iraq indicates religious beliefs in a life after death).

Burial practices are, therefore, about preparing the once-living and meaningful person for a life in the afterworld (however defined) by living members of social, political, and spiritual communities. In short, burial practices are mediated by the ontological constitution of landscapes of the dead by the living.

It is, of course, the material body and associated material remains with which the archaeologist dealing with mortuary practices usually commences her or his studies—although this is only partly true, because when we aim to address religious pasts through mortuary practices we also assume that the world is animated by spiritual concerns, since these are variously expressed in the earth's many cultures and beliefs, past and present. Perhaps the most celebrated archaeological case for a belief in life after death concerns the much-debated Neanderthal burial practices (for examples of differing views, see Solecki 1971; Stringer and Gamble 1993; Turner and Hannon 1988), widely thought to indicate that Neanderthals conceived as Predynastic and Dynastic Egyptian attempts to preserve the body undertaken in the expectation of enabling the person to go through the process of rebirth into the afterlife (e.g., see Museum of Science 2003; also Ikram 2003 for details). The use of amulets and sacred texts among burial goods enabled communication between (or on behalf of) the dead and the spirits in many cultures of the world, including ancient Egyptian, Abyssinian Christian, and Muslim (e.g., Wallis Budge 1973: 282–87). In the early years of Christianity, burials were oriented west-east, with the head facing upward and the feet to the east “in order to rise facing the Son of Man on the day of resurrection” (Davies 1999: 199). Among the Kerewo of Papua New Guinea, decapitated enemy heads were placed on sacred gobi boards during the 19th and early 20th centuries A.D. to enhance the spiritual power of the holder (e.g., Haddon 1918). Among the Yolngu of northern Australia, coffins are painted for the well-being of the birrimbirr [soul] during its return journey to the clan’s well (from whence clan “souls” enter the physical world of the living) (Morphy 1984, especially pp. 69–75). With more general application, Dimitrov (2002, cited in Bailey and Hofmann 2005: 220–22) makes the oft-made observation that the inclusion of grave goods with human burials, in this case at the Neolithic cemetery of Durankulak in Bulgaria, signals the preparation of worldly goods for the benefit of the recently departed in the afterworld (see also, for example, Ikram [2003] and Ikram and Dodson [1998] for similar notions of ancient Egyptian funerary goods).

In this chapter, we present one example of Rumu burial practices to illustrate the notion that what is at stake in the archaeology of systematic “human disposal” concerns how the living perceive the dead and life after death. Through bodily preparation, maintenance, and “disposal” in the land of the living, archaeology allows us to historicize living landscapes of the dead.

**Rumu Landscapes**

The Rumu people of Uitti Creek and the Kikori River in the Gulf Province of Papua New Guinea live in a lush green landscape. Gardens are cleared on creek edges, villages are built on higher ground by waterways, hunting camps are made against limestone cliffs, large logs are dug out for canoe hulls in the midst of the rainforest, and sago palms are processed for their rich starch among the sago groves at the edges of swamps. Here the dense lowland forest temporarily opens up as Rumu clans...
Yoto Uti clans—work the land. But soon enough, the 6 meters of rain that yearly falls quickly help the forest grow back until all signs of human activity disappear, at least as far as their obvious traces are concerned.

It would be easy to think of these Rumu lands in the language of forest landscapes. Here can be found the massive fig trees with their high, spreading roots; the dense stands of sago palms, the major source of food that during the 19th century helped determine irregular but seasonal residential locations for family groups; the arave (rosewood), tao bokore (red cedar), ninibo (pencil cedar), aniki (wildnut), yeni, and apiko (irimoi) (in the Motu language) trunks that are sought after for the making of indispensable canoe hulls by which the river systems afford the major means of travel; the black palms commonly used for floorboards in house construction; the bamboos whose tubes are used as carrying and cooking containers and whose sharp edges are relied on as cutting knives; the many food and medicinal plants, such as the fruiting enebi (breadfruit), makahe and yahoo (these two have no English names); and all around the rainforest closes in dense and extensive blankets of undergrowth, tall trees, and vines (Jack Kaiwari, Yoto Uki clan, personal communication, 2006). Today these trees are located within one of the largest rainforests in the world, second only to the Amazon. But for the members of the Himaiyu clan, life and death revolves not simply around a forested landscape but around the way people read their surroundings as a mysterious yet tangible world inhabited by spirits that mediate the known and the unknown; the domestically benign, numinous, and often dangerous realms; and the land of the living and the land of the dead.

Yakari

As is the case throughout the Papuan lowlands, these Rumu lands are inhabited by spirits. Yakari spirits are all around, informing clan members of the state of the world. In the treetops are the yakari pai with which people communicate. When young men are being initiated, sometimes the initiation helps pull yakari spirits to their body. Initiates attract yakari emotionally and thus become friends with specific yakari. Among the Rumu, every man is expected to have a yakari “guardian spirit” to help him look after his land or to help his clanspeople in the daily run of life. Some yakari are healers who help cure people. Some yakari are expert gardeners, or fishers, or hunters or warriors. Some yakari are dangerous, depend on its character and on the kind of place in which it resides. But the spirits are everywhere, and Rumu people call them yakari (John Soba, Para [Wauri Moro] clan, personal communication 2005; see David 2005).

Kowoi

Among the Rumu, kowoi sorcerers’ spirits are dangerous spirits that people fear, because it is they who bring death to the unsuspecting. Kowoi is the name for the sorcerer. “The yakari is the thing that a kowoi man gets to help him,” says John Soba (personal communication 2005). “The yakari is initiated into the kowoi man’s body to help him. A kowoi is his own being made into spirit-form, to go out in a spiritual way. So a kowoi always uses the yakari spirit to incarnate into its spirit.” But yakari itself does not have the strength to act on its own, nor is it visible to ordinary eyes. The yakari is the spirit that kowoi uses, but the yakari are not themselves ruthless, acting only on the orders of the kowoi man; he uses them. Yakari is mostly a helpful spirit that does help even if kowoi has this yakari. A yakari may be a gardening spirit who helps a person make more gardens; or it may be a yakari who knows how to make canoes, and in this capacity helps a person make canoes better than any other person. Or it may be a yakari who can protect a person from enemies. When a kowoi wants to attack someone, the yakari around a person are there to protect that person—yakari make signs to protect people against danger, including against the danger of the kowoi who use the yakari spirits in their own misdemeanors.

Nania

There are also nania animal spirits that people regard as personal guardians. Nania spirits are like yakari, but they are powerful spirits in themselves. Nania tend to live in rivers, in stones, and sometimes they can be seen as they turn into snakes, crocodiles, or cassowaries. These spirits help people, or they can punish people by making them sick. Nania spirits are powerful and therefore can make a person sick if the rules of the sacred are not obeyed in an area where nania reside. “Sometimes when we go out,” says John Soba, “we are not allowed to cook a small fish called yuhini in any of those places, or when going with children. Because these are spirits. Nania will turn around and give pain to the children or person when this kind of rule is broken. But not yakari. Yakari are the ones who sometimes try to make friends with
ordered by the *kowoi*. The *kowoi* man can use his spiritual soul to go out and use the spiritual snake or pig or dog to help him as his transport, to go out and do [mischievous acts]." So *nania* are powerful by themselves, but *yakari* become powerful only under the control of *kowoi*. *Yakari* do not hurt people of their own volition, only under the orders of the *kowoi* men. But *nania* have their own order and can hurt people when their rule is broken.

**Kupi**

*Kupi* are another spirit form. *Kupi* live in the caves of the limestone karst pinnacles, and each clan has its special name for their cave men or *kupi*. These are thought of as real physical beings possessing supernatural powers. *Kupi* are generally dangerous, and sometimes *kowoi* can make friends with particular *kupi*. It is only *kowoi* who make friends with *kupi*; ordinary people do not. *Kupi* are more powerful than *kowoi* because of their imposing physical presence; when *kupi* and *kowoi* unite, it is the *kupi* who will lead and be the most dangerous partner. *Kupi* are generally of human form; sometimes they even enter local villages. They have the characteristics of rascals or petty criminals, and sometimes come to steal things from villagers. Few people have seen them, but they are generally said to be real physical beings, often described today as “apes” or “gorillas.”

**Kepe**

*Kepe*, the spirits of the dead, are yet another spirit form in the Rumu landscape. They are the spirits of the loved ones who have passed away. “Sometimes,” says John Soba, “even when a person goes hunting, they might call out their dead father’s name, or their mother’s or brother’s. And sometimes calling the spirits of the dead is an omen, and so when someone goes hunting they will never call the name of the family. But sometimes, a few months after the dead has been buried, there will be signs of communication, such as when food has been left out for them, and you will hear some kind of whistling, you will know that the spirit of that dead person is talking to the clan members or families.” These are the *kepe*, the spirits of dead family members.

Throughout Papua, from Mt. Karimui to Mt. Bosavi, elaborate ritual procedures existed before the era of Christianization to formally detach the spirit of a dead person from the precincts of community life (see, for example, Schieffelin 1976; the death of a relative a special song called *yey* is sung by the grieving relatives, a song that sends the spirit of the dead person to the afterlife. When it is sung, the song will start from the deceased person’s house. If that person’s house has a clan name, they will call that person’s name, and in the song they will tell him “we are taking you out from the house now.” They will say “we are taking your axe;” they will call the name of the axe. Or they will call the name of the bow, the arrows, the *bitum* (this is a pidgin word) bag, and other objects that belonged to the deceased person. And they will sing, “we are packing your things, and it is time for you to go down the steps of your house.” They will call the step, what kind of step the dead spirit will walk down. When the dead person’s spirit walks down the step, after going a short distance, in the song they will call the dead person’s name and say, “you turn around and have a last look at your house before you go.” Each clan has its own names for the objects in question, and each clan also has its own spiritual afterworld, named according to its respective location accessible only by members of that particular clan.

The route followed by the deceased’s spirit will be that particular clan’s spirit road, the one that leads to that clan’s afterworld. Among the Parua’uki clan of the Kopi area, that afterworld is in the sacred mountain Ru, a large limestone pinnacle that lies but a kilometer or so from the present-day Kopi village. (Here spirits travel along the underground waters that link subterranean caverns in limestone karst outcrops.) Among the Himaiyu clan, the afterworld lies in the sacred mountain Hoimu, on Himaiyu lands more than 10 kilometers from Kopi village. (Kopi was established as a centralized colonial village during the 20th century A.D.; Himaiyu clan members previously lived in villages on their own clan lands.) Each of these clans, and others, sings the *kepe* spirit to its clan afterworld during ritual performances held within the village itself, and principally directed by the closest members of the deceased person’s family.

The passing of the dead involves ritual performances for the safe journey of *kepe* to the afterworld. In the process, particular acts are required for the proper treatment of the physical remains of the dead, and it is here that Rumu landscapes attain their greatest archaeological potential. Prior to Christianity—that is, until the early years of the 20th century—the bodies of the dead were not buried but rather underwent other forms of complex ritual and then display. The displayed bones of the person were repeatedly accessed, from the moment of initial display soon after death (when...
into times well past personal memories of that person.

The following description of traditional mortuary practices, although described as for an adult male, applied to all people regardless of age, sex, or social position. Following the death of a Rumu person, the deceased's body is left in its own house for the first three or four days, during which the widow removes all the skin and hair from the body. During this ritual, clan members ask the dead person's kepe spirit: who killed him, who made the magic that caused his or her death? The body is then removed and laid on a wooden platform or shelter called tete, with the skin and hair placed beneath the platform. A fire is lit on the ground beneath the shelter so that the smoke rises and covers the body. The fire is kept burning for one to two months, until all the flesh has rotted away, leaving only the skeleton.

Once the body has completely decomposed, the bones are gathered and left in the sun to dry. While the bones are drying, the male relatives weave a special tumbuna (a pidgin word) net from bamboo, which is given to the women. The widow, or another close female relative, places the dried bones into the net, and carries them in procession to another specially constructed house, this time much smaller. The path to this house is strewn with the leaves of a special tree, known locally as kamu. Inside this house the tumbuna net is hung over a small fire, to further smoke the dry bones. This smoking process continues for about two weeks, until the bones are thoroughly dried. Once dry, the bones are taken, still wrapped in the tumbuna net, to the widow's house; then preparations for a feast begin. The men collect delicacies such as sago grubs, while the women weave a special bilum bag into which the bones of the deceased will later be placed.

Once this feast has been prepared, the women collect oil from the ate tree and gather flowers known as kiwau. A bowl-shaped cut is made in the tree for the oily resin to drip and settle into. After a week, white spots in the liquid begin to clear, and the white creamy liquid turns into a shiny, oily liquid. The "oil" is poured into bamboo tubes, and the human bones from the recently deceased are rubbed with a mixture of oil and flowers to give them a clean, fragrant smell. When this washing occurs, the female relatives gather and mourn the deceased by crying and wailing. After washing, the bones are placed in the specially prepared bilum, which has been decorated with small branches from the kamu tree. The top of the bilum is covered with a tata cloth and hung on a pole in the village longhouse for public display.

All the villagers gather and sing mourning songs into the night, while close relatives continue to cry and mourn until daybreak. The following day, the widow retrieves the bilum and hangs it in her own house. If she must leave her house for more than one week, she must carry the bones of her husband with her.

After a period of one to two years, preparations are made for removal of the bones to a special cave such as Rupo among the Himaiyu clan (see below). Female relatives weave a number of bilums while the men make bows and arrows. Some of these newly made artifacts are then burnt in a fire, others are thrown into the river, and the remainder are given to those people who help in preparing the feast. The feast begins early in the morning, when cooked sago is placed in split black palm tubes and laid over bamboo racks, while a male relative of the deceased calls out to his spirit, asking him to come and eat. After this, half of the prepared food is eaten by the friends and relatives of the deceased. Three days later, the bones of the deceased and the remainder of the food are taken to the cave, where the people sit and eat the remainder of the food, along with gifts that include bilums, tapa (a pidgin word of Polynesian origin) cloth, and kina (a pidgin word) shells, bows, arrows, and spears. The bones, now placed in new bilums, are then laid on the kipa (black palm) beside the gifts.

At the time the skull is placed in the cave, it is given a special identifying mark, either painted with ochre or by a special cloth tied to it, which indicates the clan affiliation of the deceased. Some skulls can be further decorated by filling the orbits and the nasal aperture with a mixture of ochre, plant fiber, and soil. Sometimes small cowrie shells were impressed into this orbital filling.

Each clan has its own cave; among the Himaiyu clan, the bones were until recently taken to a small cave called Rupo, high up a limestone karst tower at the headwaters of Utiti Creek. Upon depositing the bones of a recently deceased person at Rupo, a group of clan members would camp at Rupo and/or on the nearby banks of Utiti Creek, near the cave. Rupo Cave is very small and cannot accommodate many people; therefore, a camping site is established by the creek near the cave, (David Kupere Snr, Amou-uki clan, personal communication 2006). That cave was discovered long ago by the ancestors of the present-day Himaiyu clan members—the ossuary was located thus because it was some distance from the village, and it was rather uncomfortable, meaning that villagers would not be tempted to use it as a residential cave. Upon
clan members would visit the site out of respect for the deceased, leaving there also items of material culture that belonged to the deceased person, such as bows and arrows and bilum bags. A feast would then ensue at the deceased person’s village. The owner of the feast would be the clan to whom the deceased belonged; if other clans wished to help contribute food to the feast, then they would do so, or assist in hunting or the like for the feast.

In the years following the deposition of a person’s bones in the ossuary, Rumu individuals repeatedly visited the bones of their deceased family members. “In the caves [ossuaries],” says William Pivoru, a member of the Himaiyu clan, “you can see the bone, so you remember. Today with burials you don’t see the bones, so you forget the person. That’s why bones were put in the cave, to not forget the person.” In one way, the caves are as effectively outside the vicinity of everyday life as being 6 feet under; but in another, crucial way, the bones—as the continuing presence of once-living beings—can be accessed and thus can mediate interactions between the living and the dead, between the material and the spiritual.

**The Archaeology of the Afterlife among the Rumu**

It is customary among archaeologists to see ossuaries as places within which human skeletal remains are placed. But in effect these are not only places of disposal; rather, they are also places that mediate the spirit flow from the land of the living to the land of the dead. At the same time, they are also places that enable memorialization of the ancestors, remembrances of how clan members are unified into communities of landed peoples, each with ancestral claims to territory and with ancestral claims to mutual obligations and responsibilities as social beings who are required by ancestral privilege to ensure the safety of the clan, in the present, among the living, and by seeing the spirit of the dead through to the afterlife. An archaeology of ossuaries in Rumu lands is thus more than an archaeology of skeletal remains; it represents a historicizing of beliefs about the structure of the world, a cultural inscription of biography onto the landscape, including the way that the living organize themselves socially, territorially, and spiritually. It is also a historicizing of cosmology, of the way that people see the world as a fully operating system, and one that identifies how people are located ontologically in the world. An archaeology of Rumu ossuaries is thus an archaeology of the cognate world as much as it is an archaeology of social relationships among the living and between the ancestors and the living.

**Rupo Cave**

In March and April 2006, three ossuaries within Rumu lands near Utiti Creek and Kikori River were archaeologically excavated and radiocarbon dated as part of a community-based cultural heritage consultancy to do with planned developments in the region. Two of these are small ossuaries located in Parua’uki clan lands to the immediate south of present-day Kopi village, south also of Utiti Creek. The third is the cave of Rupo, the Himaiyu clan ossuary. Each of these caves is small; contains a damp, clayey floor; is located some way up a limestone karst tower; and is generally uncomfortable for camping purposes. In short, these are specialized ossuaries, although this is not to say that occasional rest or camps were not sometimes held within these sites, particularly at times of refuge during intertribal wars.

Rupo is a small cave, 1.8 meters wide and 1.8 meters high at the cave entrance, with floor area of 7.5 by 6.5 meters. To access the site requires a steep vertical climb of 14 meters across a horizontal distance of 22 meters from Utiti Creek to the cave; the entrance faces east and overlooks this steep and heavily vegetated slope down to the creek.

Today the cave surface is dominated by open pits from previous archaeological excavations undertaken by James Rhoads (1980) during the mid-1970s. These pits show sediment deposits from surface to bedrock to be about 120 centimeters at their deepest. In the southwest corner of the cave are the arranged skulls of some 17 individuals, with many hundreds and possibly thousands of postcranial human bones placed behind them and in a deep natural niche in the limestone rock just to the north. One of the skulls contains a small metal ring around the zygomatic arch. This marked skull also had an unmarked red plastic tag attached to the ring. Kuiari, a senior Kopi resident in 1984–1985, told one of us (MG) that the ring had been attached to some skulls in ossuaries (such as at Rupo and another ossuary called Urapo) by his grandfather’s people, and that they marked the skulls of important chiefs. Scattered around the cave at Rupo are fragments of human bone and shell as well as European contact artifacts such as bottle glass, nails, and even a rusted old bush knife (machete) (Figure 14.1). This site ceased to be used as an ossuary soon after the commencement of government administration in the area (after which the dead were buried).

James Rhoads’s (1980) original excavations pointed to a first use of Rupo as an ossuary around the end of the 19th century A.D., and this was the living and the ancestors. It is also a historicizing of cosmology, of the way that people see the world as a fully operating system, and one that identifies how people are located ontologically in the world. An archaeology of Rumu ossuaries is thus an archaeology of the cognate world as much as it is an archaeology of social relationships among the living and between the ancestors and the living.
confirmed by our 2006 excavations, when finer-grained investigations revealed the presence of human bones only following the introduction of glass beads. The cave was first used some 2,000 years ago (as indicated by radiocarbon dating) and witnessed pulses of use and abandonment.

The glass beads at Rupo indicate major cultural changes with the coming of European colonial powers about 100 years ago. At that time, Rupo began to be used as the major Himaiyu clan ossuary, from whence the kepe spirits of recently deceased family members proceeded to the afterworld at the sacred mountain of Hoimu. These changes, detected archaeologically, implicate not so much cosmological changes in the way that the spirits of the dead were sent to the afterlife among the Rumu clanspeople of upper Utiti Creek and single, large ossuary marking Himaiyu clan lands. Rupo is the largest ossuary we have encountered in the region, whereas very small ossuaries, often containing the remains of one or a few individuals on other clan lands (such as sites KG141 and KG142 of the Parua'uki clan), appear to predate the use of Rupo as an ossuary. The emerging archaeological evidence points to the presence of numerous small ossuaries predating the coming of Europeans, followed by the onset of large, centralized ossuaries around 100 years ago, signaling broader changes in regional cultural systems associated with post-European shifts toward river-bordering villages and increased levels of village nucleation.

An archaeology of social and cultural landscapes by definition implicates, in the first instance, an archaeology of cosmological systems, because all human groups live and breath in and through beliefs about how the world operates. These operational dimensions of life are, by definition, key components of social landscapes and, as such, core dimensions also of landscape archaeology. The results from Rupo on Himaiyu lands, and ossuary sites KG141 and KG142 on Parua'uki land (among other small ossuaries), announce significant changes in the way various clans expressed views of the afterlife in the mid-Kikori River lowlands. What is at stake is more than settlement-subsistence patterns, for such ossuaries are important clan locations and symbols that allow the recently deceased to access the afterworld. We suggest that late in the 19th century, with the commencement of Rupo as a key clan ossuary, increasingly centralized mortuary practices emerged and, with this, new Rumu understandings of how to send the recently deceased to the afterworld (however defined). The timing of commencement of use of Rupo and other ossuaries on Rumu clan lands indicates not simply a centralization of mortuary practices but also local community responses to the coming of Europeans, the ensuing shifts of villages along the banks of major rivers, increasing village nucleation, and possibly also shifting opportunities and threats (from both European/missionary and neighboring Indigenous groups) to access of clan lands, via new cosmological configurations concerned with the land of the dead accessed through the land of the living.

**Historical Contexts**

The first sustained contacts between Rumu peoples and Europeans took place in 1887 "when the explorer Theodore Bevan visited the region twice, confirming by our 2006 excavations, when finer-grained investigations revealed the presence of human bones only following the introduction of glass beads. The cave was first used some 2,000 years ago (as indicated by radiocarbon dating) and witnessed pulses of use and abandonment.

The glass beads at Rupo indicate major cultural changes with the coming of European colonial powers about 100 years ago. At that time, Rupo began to be used as the major Himaiyu clan ossuary, from whence the kepe spirits of recently deceased family members proceeded to the afterworld at the sacred mountain of Hoimu. These changes, detected archaeologically, implicate not so much cosmological changes in the way that the spirits of the dead were sent to the afterlife among the Rumu clanspeople of upper Utiti Creek and single, large ossuary marking Himaiyu clan lands. Rupo is the largest ossuary we have encountered in the region, whereas very small ossuaries, often containing the remains of one or a few individuals on other clan lands (such as sites KG141 and KG142 of the Parua'uki clan), appear to predate the use of Rupo as an ossuary. The emerging archaeological evidence points to the presence of numerous small ossuaries predating the coming of Europeans, followed by the onset of large, centralized ossuaries around 100 years ago, signaling broader changes in regional cultural systems associated with post-European shifts toward river-bordering villages and increased levels of village nucleation.

An archaeology of social and cultural landscapes by definition implicates, in the first instance, an archaeology of cosmological systems, because all human groups live and breath in and through beliefs about how the world operates. These operational dimensions of life are, by definition, key components of social landscapes and, as such, core dimensions also of landscape archaeology. The results from Rupo on Himaiyu lands, and ossuary sites KG141 and KG142 on Parua'uki land (among other small ossuaries), announce significant changes in the way various clans expressed views of the afterlife in the mid-Kikori River lowlands. What is at stake is more than settlement-subsistence patterns, for such ossuaries are important clan locations and symbols that allow the recently deceased to access the afterworld. We suggest that late in the 19th century, with the commencement of Rupo as a key clan ossuary, increasingly centralized mortuary practices emerged and, with this, new Rumu understandings of how to send the recently deceased to the afterworld (however defined). The timing of commencement of use of Rupo and other ossuaries on Rumu clan lands indicates not simply a centralization of mortuary practices but also local community responses to the coming of Europeans, the ensuing shifts of villages along the banks of major rivers, increasing village nucleation, and possibly also shifting opportunities and threats (from both European/missionary and neighboring Indigenous groups) to access of clan lands, via new cosmological configurations concerned with the land of the dead accessed through the land of the living.

**Historical Contexts**

The first sustained contacts between Rumu peoples and Europeans took place in 1887 "when the explorer Theodore Bevan visited the region twice, confirming by our 2006 excavations, when finer-grained investigations revealed the presence of human bones only following the introduction of glass beads. The cave was first used some 2,000 years ago (as indicated by radiocarbon dating) and witnessed pulses of use and abandonment.

The glass beads at Rupo indicate major cultural changes with the coming of European colonial powers about 100 years ago. At that time, Rupo began to be used as the major Himaiyu clan ossuary, from whence the kepe spirits of recently deceased family members proceeded to the afterworld at the sacred mountain of Hoimu. These changes, detected archaeologically, implicate not so much cosmological changes in the way that the spirits of the dead were sent to the afterlife among the Rumu clanspeople of upper Utiti Creek and single, large ossuary marking Himaiyu clan lands. Rupo is the largest ossuary we have encountered in the region, whereas very small ossuaries, often containing the remains of one or a few individuals on other clan lands (such as sites KG141 and KG142 of the Parua'uki clan), appear to predate the use of Rupo as an ossuary. The emerging archaeological evidence points to the presence of numerous small ossuaries predating the coming of Europeans, followed by the onset of large, centralized ossuaries around 100 years ago, signaling broader changes in regional cultural systems associated with post-European shifts toward river-bordering villages and increased levels of village nucleation.

An archaeology of social and cultural landscapes by definition implicates, in the first instance, an archaeology of cosmological systems, because all human groups live and breath in and through beliefs about how the world operates. These operational dimensions of life are, by definition, key components of social landscapes and, as such, core dimensions also of landscape archaeology. The results from Rupo on Himaiyu lands, and ossuary sites KG141 and KG142 on Parua'uki land (among other small ossuaries), announce significant changes in the way various clans expressed views of the afterlife in the mid-Kikori River lowlands. What is at stake is more than settlement-subsistence patterns, for such ossuaries are important clan locations and symbols that allow the recently deceased to access the afterworld. We suggest that late in the 19th century, with the commencement of Rupo as a key clan ossuary, increasingly centralized mortuary practices emerged and, with this, new Rumu understandings of how to send the recently deceased to the afterworld (however defined). The timing of commencement of use of Rupo and other ossuaries on Rumu clan lands indicates not simply a centralization of mortuary practices but also local community responses to the coming of Europeans, the ensuing shifts of villages along the banks of major rivers, increasing village nucleation, and possibly also shifting opportunities and threats (from both European/missionary and neighboring Indigenous groups) to access of clan lands, via new cosmological configurations concerned with the land of the dead accessed through the land of the living.

**Historical Contexts**

The first sustained contacts between Rumu peoples and Europeans took place in 1887 "when the explorer Theodore Bevan visited the region twice, confirming by our 2006 excavations, when finer-grained investigations revealed the presence of human bones only following the introduction of glass beads. The cave was first used some 2,000 years ago (as indicated by radiocarbon dating) and witnessed pulses of use and abandonment.

The glass beads at Rupo indicate major cultural changes with the coming of European colonial powers about 100 years ago. At that time, Rupo began to be used as the major Himaiyu clan ossuary, from whence the kepe spirits of recently deceased family members proceeded to the afterworld at the sacred mountain of Hoimu. These changes, detected archaeologically, implicate not so much cosmological changes in the way that the spirits of the dead were sent to the afterlife among the Rumu clanspeople of upper Utiti Creek and
the Sirebi, just above where Kopi village stands today” (Busse, Turner, and Araho 1993: 17). In 1912, the government station was built at Kikori, and a London Missionary Society mission was established in the Aird Hills to the immediate east in 1913. Soon after, the Ogamobu coconut and rubber plantation was begun to the immediate northwest of Kikori in 1914, and in 1922 a sawmill at Kikori and a distillery along the Paibuna River were established. Regular government patrols, commercial employment, and government administration had become established across Rumu lands by the second decade of the 20th century (Busse, Turner, and Araho 1993: 18). These contacts caused local Rumu settlements to relocate, to take advantage of the new trade and resource opportunities created by the newly established government stations, missions, and plantations—at times by order or pressure of government authorities who aimed to administer the region in colonial terms and as a result of the decreased threats of external headhunting raids that government intervention (and protection) entailed. Additionally, government policies enforced changes in rubbish disposal from inside the village (as was customary practice) into the rivers, further encouraging a shift to closer riverside residence locations following early European contact.

The onset of Rupo as a centralized clan ossuary coincides in timing with the first use or reestablishment of a number of Rumu hunting camps and villages around the time of European arrival or shortly beforehand when population levels were rapidly increasing—sites such as Puriau, Barauni, Ihi Kaeke, Kikiniu, Epe, Wokoi Amoho, Leipo cave, KG124, KG125, and KG143, among others. We are uncertain at this stage whether the major regional changes are direct responses to the onset of Europeans or whether they relate to ritual responses of a spiritual kind, to responses to actual or perceived threats and opportunities, or to indirect responses to demographic changes caused farther away to the west, only eventually to be felt in Rumu lands, although at Rupo the association of the first human remains with glass beads is clear (confirming James Rhoods’s earlier observations).

One implication of these results is that at times of social change, uncertainty and/or new opportunities, people consolidate territory. The mortuary practices evidenced on Rumu lands suggest that one way of doing this is to create focal locations legitimated by cosmological necessity—places of activity where particular types of practice are repeatedly undertaken and in the process strengthen claims to place. People establish an ongoing history in places by reference to cosmopolitan landscapes, and the Himaiyu clan, the entryway to the clan land of the dead being in the clan land of the living. Establishing a place as the gateway to a clan’s afterworld, incorporating the physical (skeletal) remains of recently deceased clan members in the process, is a strong marking of earthly place with sanctity, furthering that same process of territorial consolidation.

This, we suggest, is what happened at Rupo: at a time of population increase (possibly due in part at least to immigration) and of spreading populations, each establishing new homelands across parts (or much of) the Gulf Province lowlands, and at a time also when Europeans were establishing new colonial administrative bases and mission stations in the region, the locations of Rumu villages were shifting. It is at this time that the Himaiyu clan established its major gateway to the afterworld in one cave at the core of its territory, farther away from what became smaller numbers of larger and more nucleated villages than was previously the case. Toward the end of the 19th century, at a time of initial European contact, village locations and residential strategies were shifting as a result of increasing administrative influence and a decreased need for strategically locating settlements out of sight of headhunting raiding parties who came by canoe along the major waterways. Recently deceased members of the Himaiyu clan were brought to Rupo to allow them access to the afterworld. Around this time or soon after, Rumu villages were relocated to Koi and elsewhere (mainly along the banks of the Kikori River), and in the space of a few years following missionization, Christian burial practices were introduced, with major influences on local cosmologies (including the imminent cessation of use of Rupo for the placement of human bones). But in the land of the living, it is Rupo that was, and continues to this day to be, the symbolic heartland of life after death for the Himaiyu clan, a clan with land and an ongoing local history and sacred geography that continues to be recognized and entrenched throughout Rumu territory.

Conclusions

Rumu landscapes can be properly understood not only by reference to spirits but more critically as spiritscapes. Historicizing Rumu culture must therefore aim to historicize Rumu sacred landscapes: how people have in the past engaged with a world of meaning. In places where ethnographic information is available, this may be attempted by reference to the Dual Historical Method—systematically track-
ethnographic practices and beliefs (the backward approach to history), while ping-ponging with an exploration of how things have unfolded through the course of history (the forward-movement of history) (see David 2002). Although the archaeology of the intangibles of life may be a challenge, all the more reason to recognize their central importance to cultural landscapes of the present and the past.

Acknowledgments

This chapter combines information recorded by Bruno David in 2005–2006 on Rumu spiritscapes and mortuary practices (including information given by, among others, Max Pivoru and William Pivoru, clan representatives and co-authors) and by Michael Green in 1984–1985 on mortuary practices. We thank Soren Blau, Michael Boiru, Tim Denham, John Soba, and Ian McNiven for comments on various aspects of this paper, and David Kupere for helping with the Rupo excavations. Michael Green recorded details of Rumu mortuary practice during interviews with Kuiari and other senior men in the company of many residents of Kopi village in 1985; we thank all clan representatives and Kopi villagers who participated in these discussions.

Note

1. The interrogator can be a man or a woman clan member.

References


Ikram, S., and Dodson, A. 1998. The mummy in Ancient Egypt: Equipping the dead for eternity. London: Thames and Hudson


Williams, H. 2005. Keeping the dead at arm’s length: Memory, weaponry and early Medieval mortuary technologies. Journal of Social Archaeology 5: