



Fluid Ontologies: Myth, Ritual, and Philosophy in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea

C. Ballard, Laurence R. Goldman

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Myths are best understood as a convergence of voices from across times and cultures. They are the instruments through which authors and audiences seek to grapple with questions about the fundamental nature of the universe. The answers, however, constantly change in light of changing circumstances such as the interface between western and non-western cultures, or cataclysmic events. The authors argue that these societies' worldviews assume that the process of flow between events, rather than the nature of the events, is critical to a model of human sociality.

Boundaries, whether of a ritual, physical, or social nature, are perceived as constantly broken by the exchange of ideas across time, space, and peoples. Our understanding of such issues as gender relations and the body, social change, imagination, play, and the conceptualization of power is furthered by probing how it is that myth is both expressive as well as constitutive of human thought on these topics.

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