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## **The significance of parallelism in *Kaunjambi*, an Awiakay all-night song/dance cycle from the Sepik region of Papua New Guinea**

### **ABSTRACT**

The Awiakay people of East Sepik Province in Papua New Guinea closely identify themselves with a cycle of 42 songs, called *Kaunjambi*. While much of this cycle is composed in a non-translatable spirit language, the abundance of parallelisms uncovers what the words keep hidden.

Parallelism is an ordered interplay between repetition and variation, in which the non-repeated elements or variables are associated on the basis of similarity. The logic of these associations is opaque if we look only at the physical or most literal senses of the words/phrases compared. They carry symbolic implications which are 'infused by cultural assumptions' (in the sense used by Roger Keesing 1979), and can only be understood in reference to other aspects of Awiakay lifeworld.

In this talk, accompanied by subtitled video segments, I will explore various forms of parallelism used in *Kaunjambi*, and present them as vignettes that together form a picture of Awiakay lifeworld.

### **REFERENCE:**

Keesing, Roger M. 1979. Linguistic Knowledge and Cultural Knowledge: Some Doubts and Speculations. In: *American Anthropologist*. Vol. 81:1, pp. 14–36.