

## INTRODUCTION

No one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of a society.

Said, 1991: 10.

What did I see? I saw a society that was firmly situated in the late twentieth century, a set of people who were not at all the inward-facing and isolated villagers who seem to populate the societies presented in so much Melanesian ethnography.

Carrier, 1992c: vii.

## Arrival

I want to tell a different kind of anthropological “arrival story”, in which it is not so much a case of the foreigner going through a local rite of passage before being accepted by local people, as of the anthropologist finally realizing that *she* must accept *them*. I applied to undertake research on Simbo because, ignoring the paradox, I was not interested in historical ethnography and there was an apparent plenitude of historical documentation relating to Simbo and its neighbouring New Georgian Islands (Maps I, II).<sup>1</sup> Retrospectively, I suppose I was interested in a kind of salvage ethnography although I felt that, really, most of what I wanted to learn would be there under a fine veneer of “Westernization”—that if I ignored the local clinic, the outboard motors, four Christian denominations, “speedy gas” oven (x 1), diesel-powered videos, school, piped water, regular tourist yachts, PK chewing gum, rice, tinned fish and noodles, the metal cooking utensils and gardening implements, the biweekly trading trips to cash markets in Gizo, the Christian idioms, western clothes, plastic clothes-pegs and Omo washing powder, the Anglicized Pidgin, the young men’s joggers and young women’s plastic combs and eternal quest for news of Princess Diana and Lady Sarah,<sup>2</sup> the “iron houses”<sup>3</sup> and cement gravestones and all the other “intrusions” that I saw around me; if I could ignore it all, underneath I would find “real Simbo custom”. My academic supervisor had encouraged me to look at historical ethnography and we had numerous discussions about the phenomenon of Pacific Islander and anthropological reifications of *kastom*. A brief pre-fieldwork trip had made it obvious that Simbo was transformed, but I remained attracted by the allure of underlying pristine alterity. We all know of those case histories of spectacular religious syncretism in Latin American where Catholicism had been enforced hundreds of

years ago but resilient Andeans continued to follow indigenous deities in the guise of Mary, Jesus and the saints. Well, wasn't that what most "social change" in the Pacific was about? When an eminent anthropologist advised me not to go to the western Solomons because "there's no custom left there anymore", that was my retort. After all, I'd heard that Western Province was eager to have researchers record custom before it disappeared, so there must be custom aplenty. The written sources were really there for verification and to fill in any gaps that the odd careless or prematurely deceased ancestor may have failed to tell their descendants about. Far from mistaking European<sup>4</sup> artefacts for evidence of "modernization", I was determined that they did not, in fact, reflect any significant political or economic incursions of the "outside world".

The layout of the island seemed to symbolize Simbo's containment. The wharf, adjacent to which visiting yachts anchored, was immediately surrounded by the clinic, the schoolmaster's residence and school and the minister's house. To one side of the sportsfield were the teachers' residences and then, continuing in a circle, the decrepit United Church building. Down the fourth side ran a path to the site of the soon-to-be-built "community hall", a couple of corrugated-iron stores and a copra shed. Paths led away from all this to the "real" villages where Simbo people lived. The significance was clear: the outside was contained at the point of disembarkation and not permitted to penetrate everyday life.

Simbo had been a renowned headhunting society before pacification at the turn of the century. Its warriors had been famed as far away as Guadalcanal, Choiseul and Santa Isabel (not to mention Europe). I had conceived my research project as an exploration of gendered representations of fertility in death ritual. I had already written a paper (Dureau, 1991), in order to clarify my conceptual framework. Hocart's (1922) paper, "The cult of the dead in Eddystone Island", had stirred my enthusiasm. Not only would I find intriguing material but I would have a chance to address the androcentrism of an anthropological ancestor. I would "do an Annette Weiner or a Karla Poewe" (1977, 1981). I was aware of the growing body of work on the connexion between reified tradition (*kastom* in Melanesia) and the politics of resistance and nationalism (e.g. Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983; Keesing and Tonkinson, 1982), but I was determined that if I could just scratch the surface of "Westernization" I would find real, unpoliticized, traditional practices and a few old people to explicate significance. I, in other words, wanted the same thing as the Simbo people who had encouraged me to come. We wanted *kastom*, some distilled timeless practices that revealed the authentic before it was lost.

I was rapidly disabused. Everyone knew Tinoni Simbo<sup>5</sup> were headhunters, they took an ambivalent pride in it. But when I wanted details about practices and meanings, people just looked at me. Most said something along the lines of “The old women and old men did not tell us. They died without telling.” That was disappointing. When two or three grey-haired men looked at me and said, “*You* are the anthropologist [the word is known in Pidgin]: your work is to tell us about *kastom*”, or when they came and asked me to tell them about “real Simbo custom”, I just looked at *them*. I knew in advance that I was not dealing with an analogue of the resilient Kwaio, so sympathetically represented by Keesing, in a long series of papers and books. This, however, was astounding to me. So were the numbers of people coming to ask me about written materials on Simbo. Perhaps I could approach issues through genealogies—tracing connexions and eliciting biographical accounts? But, alas, most genealogical knowledge was broad but shallow. People sometimes did not know their grandparents’ names if they had lost them early. Extended genealogies were guarded in locked boxes and brought out only for land disputes. People were not interested in *banara* (“chiefs”) and genealogies of the “time before”: the mating habits of movie stars, the British royals and the Sultan of Brunei were far more interesting. Every promising lead into “old Simbo” turned to dust.

A few men offered to tell me the “real *kastom*” and show me their genealogies but they wanted to tell me who to talk to and what to write, as well as divulge to them the names of all other informants. Indigenous peoples have long been subject to representation by others, representations that have all too often distorted cultural realities or provided an Other for Occidental ideological groundings of the Self and Empire (Said, 1991; Clifford, 1988: 14-15). How then could a contemporary anthropologist justify evading local control over the production of knowledge? But there are power relations and power relations. Addressing the problem of the validating power of the European pen, through simply subordinating ethnographic research to local control, can elide the issue of local power relations. If social life is inherently political, the issue of *who* is controlling internal knowledge production is a vital question. To have submitted my work for verification and approval would have meant facilitating the strategies of an elite group of men from one area of an island riven by dissent. Commoners, women and opposing political forces would have been “othered” at least as surely as by an anthropologist who was selfconsciously striving to understand and establish communication. In this case, it was soon clear that these men wanted particular genealogies published—things written are more categorically true than things said. (It took me a long time

to appreciate the value of oral discourses about written texts.) Their concern was with particular local political stances or with validating claims to land.

A further possibility of tapping into pre-Christian practices arose when a neighbouring woman, chatting casually, offered to take me to her garden and tell me about fertility. I was ecstatic. Thoughts of Trobriand garden magic flickered through my mind. Perhaps some arcane women's knowledge? She was a little young (24) but she'd already mentioned that her father controlled an old headhunting shrine—perhaps her family knew more about the old practices. Arriving at her garden, I found that fertility on Simbo meant excessive fecundity: she wanted to discuss European contraceptive technology away from her affines. She went through the pros and cons of depo provera, IUCDs and oral contraceptives and knew about withdrawal and rhythm methods.

Dureau: What about "custom medicine"?

Ana: Some people use it. It doesn't work.

When I got to her father's shrine he was talking in Pidgin to the outraged crew of a tourist yacht.

Ali: It's a real *kastom* shrine. My ancestors of the "time before" made it. Its a skull shrine. It's very old, very good.

Crewmember: [broken Pidgin] \$25 is too much. [Aside, in English to his companions] Money has really spoiled the culture around here.

Ali: \$25—that's for everyone.

Crewmember: I'll give you \$10.

Ali: [Silent, looks down at his feet]

Crewmember: \$15, how about \$15?

Ali: Good.

I was uncomfortably aware of the close parallels between the crew's behaviour and my expectations. I was irate at their clear attempt at exploitation, delighted when Ali sent *me* in without paying, and just as disgruntled as the crew when I saw the discarded junk—cardboard boxes, rusting corrugated iron, etc.—scattered around the shrine. Skulls littered the ground, some broken, others carelessly wired together. *Tabuna* stones had slipped astray. Flat stones, which had presumably been used for sacrifices, had been tipped askew. A decaying pandanus mat was crumpled on the edge of the clearing. The retaliatory rampage which followed the assassination of government officer Bell, in Malaita in 1927, had wreaked such havoc (Keesing, 1992a: 67-73, *passim*) and missionaries and converts had done so elsewhere (Macintyre, 1989: 162-167; White, 1991: 103-104)—on Simbo prolonged neglect had achieved the same, I thought.

easy This anthropologist's "world turned upside down". I use Hill's (1975) title deliberately, for I regard his work, on the radical potential of key texts at times of social upheaval, as a fruitful source of insight into the consequences of the discordances and uncertainties which beset many Pacific Island societies during their incorporation into colonial and then neocolonial states. (I describe the inversion of the Simbo world in Chapter Four.) The words of Solomon Islanders in Honiara and European anthropologists in Australia, telling me I had to go to Malaita to study "culture", came back to me. A couple of Simbo people kindly made the same suggestion. Fortunately, my research permit specified that I work on Simbo.

I had to do something. I decided to find out what had "happened". My sympathies had been stirred by the complaints of Ani and other women about the difficulties of maternity and marriage. I found a ready scapegoat for both—the Methodist Mission, arriving in 1903, had "Christianized" Simbo. That initial vulgar formulation was the first step on the road to the present work, but like many vulgarities, it contains a seed of truth. Although I have moved away from the view of missionaries as "culture wreckers", I still maintain that the Methodist Mission influence was crucial to the reconstitution of Simbo sociality during the last ninety years. After returning from my final fieldwork I came upon the missionary-anthropologist, Codrington's, century-old observation of the difficulty of learning about customary practices after conversions began. He also attributed it to the missionaries: "The elders are naturally disinclined to communicate freely concerning subjects round which, among Christian converts, there hangs a certain shame; while those who are still heathen will speak with reserve of what retains a sacred character" (Codrington, 1888: 262).

Issues in Anthropological Theory

... I retain an uncomfortable awareness of the artfulness of my own responses to ... It is with some embarrassment that I proffer the prior ego-centred paragraphs. It is well recognized that representation of others is never "objective", that it arises out of, and reinforces, inequalities of power (Said, 1991; Fabian, 1983: 1). Postmodernists, pointing to the ways in which anthropologists objectify other cultures through observation and, above all, academic discourse, demand that ethnographers locate themselves in the text, recognize their own interests and motivations and transform ethnographies into works which enable indigenous voices to be heard. Easier said than done. I think it is significant that some of the best postmodernist work takes the form of literary criticism. Clifford, for instance, focuses overwhelmingly on texts. Where the epistemology is applied to ethnographic practice, difficulties arise. Gitlin (1989, cited and quoted in di Leonardo, 1991: 26) argues that this arises from the ways in which postmodernist proponents with political values become

ensnared in a fundamental contradiction. Undermining the legitimacy of texts has been politically motivated by the concern to expose the power relations underlying various systems of knowledge. However, it simultaneously undermines the possibility of valid knowledge about material injustice, violence or inequity. Thus, Taussig (1987), who attempts to overcome this political enervation, must resort to the solipsistic claim of gaining knowledge only through subjectivity. We are, once again, back to the trust in professional authority so ably critiqued by Clifford (1988), Clifford and Marcus *et al.* (1986), Said (1991: 10; *passim*) and others. Kapferer, noting Taussig's dependence on establishing his own radical credentials points out that making ethnographers' authority dependent upon their own subjectivity can mask conservative as much as radical intention (Kapferer, 1988: 86-87,95). Further, the postmodernists' silence on the ways in which their dialogue is caught up in contemporary developed-world dialogues, which are founded on perceptions of an increasingly fragmentary world, "constitutes a superficial reading of the economic and political essence of the late capitalist era" (Peace, 1990: 28, *passim*; di Leonardo, 1991: 26; Kapferer, 1988: 94).

Anthropologists continue to struggle to find appropriate modes of ethnographic representation, modes which acknowledge the ethnographer's role in depicting cultures (e.g. Taussig) while privileging indigenous expression (e.g. Abu-Lughod, 1993) and maintaining a critical stance towards all "texts" (e.g. Clifford). An awareness both of the validity of postmodernist critiques and of critiques of postmodernist method underlies much of this work. The reflexive passage above, and again below, where I locate myself in regard to Christianity, are a response to that critique. So, too, are the repetitive acknowledgments of the partiality of perspective, the equivocating footnotes and my resolution not to disguise my own responses to revelations and actions. Throughout, I retain an uncomfortable awareness of the arbitrariness of my arrangement, the limitations of my perspective and thus, necessarily, of the analysis (perhaps little more than the "traditional" anthropological critique of ethnocentrism demands). I stress the variability of Simbo experiences and perspectives. Simbo society is analytically uncontainable—to quote M. Strathern (1988: xii), "[e]thnographies are the analytical constructions of scholars; the peoples they study are not". I attempt to avoid what Abu-Lughod (1993: 7) calls "[trafficking] in generalizations", but cannot accept that etic perspectives are inevitably invalid. Rather, I strive to incorporate "the 'objective' ambiguities of the socio-historical process" (Lederman, 1990: 57). My work is thus shaped by an ambivalence in which I oscillate between generalizations about a Simbo worldview and indications that these perspectives are only partially shared by Tinoni Simbo.

If the postmodernist critique of anthropology is to be taken seriously—and, given the doubts it casts upon the ethnographer's ability to represent others without objectification, I think it should be—and if attempts to construct postmodernist ethnographies are, as yet, largely unsuccessful, we have reached an apparent impasse. If the act of writing ethnography is inherently flawed we must ask whether it is justifiable. Kapferer and Peace strive to resolve this via moral arguments. While postmodernism implicitly attacks the immorality of objectification and anthropological complicity in colonization, Kapferer and Peace both counter that postmodernism itself follows the agenda of a potentially conservative Western intellectual trend, predicated on views of social fragmentation, in which social cohesion disappears. As a new world-culture emerges, the mutual interpenetration of worlds is presented in terms which acknowledge the creative Third World appropriation of European cultural icons, but leave out the crucial realities of power differentials, global exploitation and the increasing concentration of economic control (see also Torgovnick, 1990). They both counter with the moral potential of anthropology to report on alterity and resistance to global culture and colonial and neocolonial domination (Kapferer, 1988: 104; Peace, 1990: 29). Yet, unless he is claiming the possibility of objective morality, this is precisely what Kapferer (1988: 88-89) criticizes Taussig for attempting. His reasoning is thus circular and self-contradictory. Kapferer does not tout an alternative methodology. Admitting the validity of postmodernist critiques, he points to the as-yet unsatisfactory epistemology as implicit justification for more of the same old thing.

Comaroff and Comaroff (1991) also react critically to post-modernism. Their response, however, is less defensive. They argue that, while ethnography may indeed be flawed, to dwell on the processes of ethnographic production to the point of academic paralysis is to abandon the radical potential of the discipline. Their response is to argue that a discipline which has its origins in the colonial encounter and which may have facilitated control can equally oppose relations of dominance via "an anthropology of the colonial encounter" (1991: xiii).

If the discipline can unmask anything unique about the nature of the human condition—of colonialism and consciousness, of domination and resistance, of oppression and liberation—it is both possible and worthwhile . . . [H]owever finely wrought his or her *angst*, the social scientist has in the end to suspend disbelief and *act*. It is at best a gratuitous indulgence merely to debate epistemological niceties, or to argue over the impossibility of making 'objective' statements about the world, while . . . oppressive regimes continue to wreak havoc on human lives, often claiming anthropological alibis as they do so. (1991: xiv)

The result is a monograph which passionately depicts relationships between Christianity, colonial exploitation and potential liberation in apartheid South Africa (see also J. Comaroff,

1985). It is, in principle, similar to Taussig's work (1987)—both are assertively committed anthropologies which arise out of concerns with the political oppressions of colonialism and their consequences in the present. Both, further, write about indigenous subversion of colonial ideologies. J. Comaroff (1985: 10-11, *passim*) points to the bitter contrast between mission ideology and colonial reality, a contrast which gives cogency to the subconscious resistance of contemporary Zionist cult members, who continue to struggle against political and economic suppression.<sup>7</sup> Taussig deals with the ways in which the powerless, refusing to be dominated, resist the imposition of coherent order through symbolic evocations of chaos.

It is in style that the two clearly diverge. Taussig gives us montage—the juxtaposition of images, the evocation of anarchy, past and present. Comaroff and Comaroff proffer a more conventional linear account of events, encounters and their consequences. The contrast can be deepened—for Taussig, the autonomous individual shaman holds the key to subversive possibility. While Kapferer questions the interpretation of visionaries as deconstructionists—arguing that they may rather be concerned with maintaining coherent orders—what seems to me particularly significant is Taussig's evocation of shamanic autonomy. The answer to totalizing power is, implicitly, individual resistance. For Comaroff and Comaroff, culture remains centrally important as a way of explaining the observable outcomes of the collision of historical trajectories which have occurred in South Africa. "Culture" does not determine social practice or historical outcomes so much as it delimits possibilities and empowers particular responses.<sup>8</sup> Explanation lies in the nexus of cultured expectations and understandings of indigenes and colonists (whether missionaries or settlers), and power and resource differentials are mediated by these encultured agents (1991: 8-9). There are, as Clifford, Abu-Lughod, Taussig and many others argue, problems with "culture", in particular with its totalizing or essentialist implications. To substitute for this a universal existentialism (see Williams, 1983: 123-125) is, however, to risk imposing yet another ideology of individualism.

My work shares an awareness of the dangers of viewing sociality in terms of either totalizing "culture" or of inevitable fragmentation. Perhaps the problem is one of degree: both fission and cohesion are characteristic of contemporary Simbo society. Shared understandings, observable regularities of practice and discernible "models" and logics are dissected by strategies, variable interpretations and conflicting interests in everyday life. I cannot speak of a cohesive worldview in the sense of a monolithic way of seeing and acting in the world. I can, however, speak of a worldview in the sense of a mutually intelligible, albeit



ambiguous, mode of interpretation which structures social action. This may circumscribe the possible for Tinoni Simbo, but it does so broadly. "Knowledge" and "fact" are available for manipulation, explanation and guidance. The later chapters of this work, particularly, reveal this intersection of culture and action when I deal with the varying perspectives of gender, age, denomination and status within a shared interpretive framework. That framework is one which has been continuously developed. Avowedly Christian, it is rhetorically presented in terms of a definitive break with the past, while in fact it is sustained not only by its work in the congruence with pre-Christian precepts and practices, but by the ways in which the latter inform contemporary practice (White, 1991: 245-247).

The social historian, K. Thomas (1985: 5) distinguishes his task from that of the anthropologist in terms of the relative complexity of variability and dissent in their respective kinds of society:

The task of the historian is thus infinitely harder than that of the social anthropologist, studying a small homogeneous community in which all inhabitants share the same beliefs, and where few of those beliefs are borrowed from other societies. [Seventeenth-century England] ... was no simple unified primitive world, but a dynamic and infinitely various society, where social and intellectual change had long been at work and where currents were moving in many different directions.

Such distinctions are no longer convincing. I have noted the continuous development of Simbo sociality since the arrival of the Christian missionaries. The same may be attributed to both pre-Christian and pre-contact society. Ways of seeing and interpreting the world may always have been shared, but, as today, *partially* shared. In order to comprehend contemporary Simbo society, it is necessary to adopt a historical perspective. The immediate outcome of such a strategy is to undermine any notion of a "simple unified primitive world" unless we are to simultaneously hold that history consists of what Europeans "did" to others. As I argue in Chapter One, the archaeological evidence invalidates such assumptions. Colonial and postcolonial history, likewise, undermine views of indigenous peoples as passive recipients of global forces and reflect their active participation in the making of their own histories. We see this in histories of resistance or creative adjustments to the encroachments of Europe throughout the Pacific. Simbo provides another such instance.

## History

There is rich historical material relating to Simbo specifically and New Georgia generally. A number of ship's journals and logs, many filmed by the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau (PMB), make direct reference to the island as long ago as the eighteenth century. The earliest reference is that by Lt Shortland of the British Navy in 1788: returning from escorting the First Fleet to Botany Bay to establish European settlement in Australia, he stopped off at

Simbo (Appendix I). Passing and resident traders and British colonial personnel left later records. From the early twentieth century, Methodist missionaries documented their activities there. Unfortunately, the mission headquarters at Munda (Roviana) were destroyed during the Japanese-American Battle of Munda during WWII and all records were lost. I have, to date, been able to locate few European accounts of conversion and social transformation in New Georgia. As far as I am aware there are no extant records written by the South Sea Island missionaries who were responsible for the bulk of missionary work in the Methodist Mission. There are, however, a number of Church histories, written from fifty to 75 years after arrival. Judith Bennett's (1987) history of Solomon Islands post-contact history has much material relating to the western Solomons. Kim Jackson's (1978) meticulous history of the New Georgia Group, up until 1925, has been particularly valuable.

In 1908, the anthropologists Arthur M. Hocart and William H. R. Rivers undertook joint research on Simbo, Roviana, Kolombangara, Vella Lavella and, to a lesser extent, other New Georgian islands. Their works provide a valuable basis for both temporal and theoretical comparison. (Hocart's Roviana ethnography, in particular, is generally applicable to Simbo). Hocart's work is preserved in a number of papers which appeared in the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* and in a collection of manuscripts and fieldnotes held by the Alexander Turnbull Library in New Zealand. Rivers' approach was far more comparative than Hocart's, and his material is scattered in brief sections throughout his corpus. There has also been later anthropological work on Simbo.<sup>9</sup> Harold Scheffler's two week visit in 1960 generated a paper (1962) on the constitution of kindreds. Finally, Ricky Burman visited a number of times in the 1970s. All of this material, including Burman's 1981 paper, are sources of historical comparison. Within a decade my own contemporary analysis will be further grist for historical accounts.<sup>10</sup> Finally, I rely heavily on Simbo stories and accounts about past practices, conversions to Christianity and experiences of modernity.

Recent analyses of indigenous historical discourses in the Pacific (e.g. Handler and Linnekin, 1984; Keesing, 1989a; Keesing and Tonkinson, *et al.*, 1982; N. Thomas, 1992b; White, 1991) point to the ways in which "custom" and "history" are constructed or deployed for strategic purposes of resistance, political manipulation or the construction of local and personal identity and meaning. Thus, outside discourses are appropriated and applied to indigenous issues. Foreign tropes of warriorhood or of darkness and light, for example, are used on Simbo to represent categories of history or the nature of present-day society. This raises the difficult issue of the place of oral accounts in the writing of histories. If oral histories are to be celebrated for presenting internal perspectives, they cannot thereby be

regarded as neutral or as unaffected by colonialist distortions (N. Thomas, 1991: 87). White (1991: 157-160), for example, points to the ways in which Santa Isabel epics and public histories have particular structural features which serve the purposes of local discourses about a novel Christian identity and rootedness in pre-Christian cultural norms. If local accounts are inherently shaped by contemporary interests, how then can they be used as insights into historical events, responses and motivations? In what way are they history, rather than myth or legend? In a sense we have returned to early anthropological questions about the degree of historical fact to be extracted from mythical accounts, for oral accounts are both edited—often bowdlerized—and created.

But are written texts any more reliable? Postmodernism suggests that they are equally mythical (see also Biersack, 1991: 20-21). Whalers, traders, planters, colonialists, missionaries and anthropologists also, consciously or otherwise, followed their own agendas in the western Solomons. N. Thomas (1992a), for instance, reveals the creative editing characteristic of missionary literature, photographs and films in New Georgia. Missionary bias is well established, but a critical cultural view tells us that all accounts are partial (in both senses of the word). Comaroff and Comaroff (1991: 104) also illustrate the way in which key tales by observers may harden into stereotypical representations, masquerading as scientific facts. Thomas (1991: 87-88) and White (1991: 158) acknowledge these problems with written texts, but hold that they nonetheless represent a more reliable resource than oral texts which are retold over successive generations. They also enable us, once we admit their partiality, to extract knowledge or probabilities not openly alluded to by their authors. This logic cannot be denied, but the veracity—or lack thereof—of the written and the oral is now *de facto* seen to be much more comparable than previously acknowledged. I would hold, then, that oral histories are to be treated with the same degree of respect as are written—or otherwise recorded—histories and that the latter are to be recognized for their partiality as much as are oral accounts (Biersack, 1991: 21-23; Neumann, 1992: 9). We have returned to the issues, raised in the earlier discussion, of the possibility and utility of continuing to undertake ethnographic research. History, it seems, is equally suspect. The answer is the same: lack of perfection does not constitute invalidation. Indeed, only those who hold that impartiality is possible would query a view for partiality. Oral and written sources can both prove valuable in addressing colonial and postcolonial cultures when used with care and discretion. where there has been no opportunity for gathering information or perspectives.

In 1973 (p13, n. 15), Asad made a critical aside about "the general tendency of functional anthropology . . . to assimilate indigenous history to the category of myth—i.e. to

view it in terms of instrumentality rather than of truth in the classical non-pragmatist sense". I am concerned with the second aspect of Asad's point, viz, the elements of truthfulness or fact to be found in oral accounts and their utility in reconstructing, rather than simply constructing, prior social practices, meanings and values. There are two apparent aspects to contestations of history: first, there is contention about what actually was so, which may or may not be subject to degrees of verification or disputation by reference to alternative sources, such as manuscripts, artifacts, comparison with known facts, and so on. As Neumann (1992: 23-26; *passim*) argues, however, veracity varies according to one's perspective. The irrefutable "facts" to be obtained by such means are both extremely few and simple. Then there are those events or practices upon which everyone concurs, although the significance, meanings, contexts and value thereof may be avidly contested. The difficulty is to effectively delimit actual prior practice—to accept the truth in the oral histories we are given—whilst striving to obscure neither the lived diversity of the past nor the myriad voices striving to evoke those pasts.

There is no perfect solution to this dilemma but to reject oral accounts because of their partiality is to unduly privilege European literacy. No scholar would seriously suggest disregarding a Resident Commissioner's personal accounts of land tenure because he facilitated land alienation, for example; or ignoring a missionary's accounts of conversion. Such resources, critically or sceptically treated and adequately contextualized, continue to provide fruitful sources of ethnographic knowledge (Douglas, 1992: 108-110). Hocart's and Rivers' papers exemplify this. On a number of occasions in the following chapters I treat their presumptions—and thus their conclusions—critically. Thus, I deconstruct Hocart's approaches to indigenous sexuality and marriage. The same papers, however, also provided vital clues for my own reconstructions of pre-Christian marriage.<sup>11</sup> So, treated the same way, do oral accounts. I attempt to tread this taut line—to treat oral sources as partial, biased, perhaps blatantly untrue, like written sources. That old research technique of checking, cross-checking and challenging information until contradictions, lacunae and illogicalities are revealed, is as applicable to oral, archival and academic sources as it is to participant observation. In the modern world, *Kastom* refers further to the reconstitution of society in the past. In using all available sources of information I operate on the basis of a few untested assumptions. I assume, firstly, that where all sources concur, the material is reliable. This is especially so where there has been no opportunity for exchanging information or perspectives, as when Simbo people have not yet read Hocart's material. Similarly, where all sources can be recognized as consistent in their revelation of different kinds of information, such as when

local discussion on captives may suddenly verify written accounts of sacrifice, I assume some connexion to reality. Thirdly, I tend to privilege witnessing and experience in assessing the reliability of information—where somebody actually *did* something or can recall their parents doing it, I grant their claims greater credence than that of someone who claims to have *found* knowledge in their keeping after a lapse of intervening generations. Fourthly, I assume, *contra* much contemporary writing, that not all accounts are interested, although they are necessarily shaped by experience and perspective. I hold this to be particularly so of less selfconscious kinds of discourse such as casual conversation. It seems to me that interpreting all texts in terms of strategies, interests and agencies can come remarkably close to replicating European ideologies of individual self-interest as the basic premise of social action (Medick and Sabeau, 1984: 2). Finally, I hold that, even where local accounts are clearly strategically manipulated, they can tell us much about contemporary mores, perspectives, issues and social structures.

past, permeate relations between kin groups, spouses, church members and celebrations, and leaders and commoners.

#### **Kastom**

this secondary interpretation of *kastom* and Christianity, however, it is important

*Kastom*—reified traditional values and practices—refers to pan-Melanesian re-presentations of the past. It is often the idiom of resistance to colonial and postcolonial domination and, increasingly, a *leit motif* of postcolonial elites (Jolly, 1992c; Keesing & Tonkinson, *et al.*, 1982; Keesing, 1989a; 1992a). It is also a way of conceptualizing contemporary practices in terms which imbue them with the authority of the past (Jolly, 1992c; White, 1991). Jolly notes that this latter use of *kastom* may be interpreted by scholars in terms of inauthenticity, which reveals at least as much about anthropological as about indigenous reification of *but* cultures:

[W]hy shouldn't church hymns, the mass, and *bislama* [Vanuatu Pidgin] be seen as part of Pacific tradition alongside pagan songs and indigenous languages? . . . Perhaps it is not so much that Pacific peoples are glossing over differences in an indiscriminating valorization of precolonial and colonial strata of their past as that Pacific peoples are more accepting of both indigenous and exogenous elements as constituting *their* culture. (1992c: 53)

It is in this sense that *kastom* is deployed in Simbo daily life: it refers to “traditional” practices and values which are seen as compatible with, or limiting of, the possibilities proffered by Christianity and the modern world. *Kastom* refers, further, to the reconstitution of society in the wake of Christianity. The shared, simultaneously compatible and alternative idioms of Christianity and *kastom* (the latter, on Simbo, phrased largely in terms of kinship or the loss of old ways) provide fertile ground for the development, explication, negotiation and practice of daily life and family relationships on which I focus. The common disputation between men

and women about the proper constitution of conjugality (Chapter Eight) is a good example. So are the quiet struggles over the disbursement of the cash and goods between those with higher incomes, who tend to accumulate within the domestic unit, and their cognatic kin who expect also to benefit from those incomes. It is not so much a matter of one side appealing to Christianity or tradition in contradistinction to the other (Poewe, 1981: 102-104) as of each deploying both modes of adjudication in different contexts. Thus, those with money may speak resignedly of the *wantok* (Pidgin: "one-talk") system "spoiling" family life, which is so central to Christian discourse. Those without refer, more plaintively, to the *hahanana vaiaia kame rane* ("ways [of] sharing of one day", i.e. long ago). Neither Christianity nor *kastom* are homogeneous constructions. The issues of what actually constitutes *kastom*-ary practice, of which Christian authority—minister, bishop, Bible, and individual prayer—is most sacrosanct and of the degree to which Christianity transcends the world of the past, permeate relations between kin groups, spouses, church authorities and congregations, and leaders and commoners. 1955 of Tinoni Simbo, the changes are clear.

Despite this constant juxtaposition of *kastom* and Christianity, however, it is important to be clear about one point—*kastom* is never described in opposition to Christianity. This is a graphic contrast to the Kwaio of Malaita, against whom I frequently compare Simbo experiences. *Kastom* is at all times regarded as not only compatible with, but as subordinate to, Christianity. It is a mode of discriminating between conflicting interpretations of Christian authority or possibility. If A. claims biblical authority for an action, for example, B. may counter that it is against *kastom*, but they invariably cite an alternative Christian authority to sustain their counterclaim. In succeeding chapters, *kastom* recurs, not in a thematic way but as a reflexive touchstone in adjudications about the ways in which contemporary practice is tied to the past through the social reconfigurations wrought by Christianity. It is for this reason that I deal at some length with *kastom* here.

Although my perceptions about the manner, content and significance of the process are in many ways opposed to those of Tinoni Simbo (see especially Chapter Three), I think that local perceptions that Christianity was responsible for a revolution in Simbo ways of seeing and acting in the world are quite accurate. The degree to which Christian practice subsumes "traditional" Simbo sociality is manifested in the pervasive local contrast between *kastom* and *hahanana rodomo* ("behaviours [of the] darkness"). *Hahanana rodomo* is iconically all the practices abandoned at the instigation of missionaries of the Methodist Mission. In 1968, the Mission was succeeded by the independent United Church of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands (UC). Since that time, there has been considerably less pressure to deny

islander identity through abandoning traditional practices. *Hahanana rodomo*, however, can be said to persist in behaviour adjudicated, by minister, pastor or congregation, as anti-Christian. Although particular contemporary practices may be labelled *hahanana rodomo* by ministers, their general persistence reflects the fact that, though they may be communally disapproved, they are not regarded as sinful or dark. Sexuality recurs as an ongoing point of church-congregation dialogue here. There is, however, universal agreement about the benefits of Christianity and its foundation in the suppression of the ways of the "time of darkness" (*totoso rodomo*). Specifically addressed, but the broader issue of the place of Christianity in the community. Foremost among the *hahanana rodomo* was ancestor veneration, with its periodic celebration of days of the dead and its constant rounds of offerings of supplication and appeasement. Witchcraft, the "evil eye", divination, arranged marriage, magic, nakedness and infanticide among others are also *hahanana rodomo*.<sup>12</sup> This "time of darkness" (*totoso rodomo*) is evoked at length in Chapter Two. Although there has been significant continuity in the "behavioural environment" (Hallowell, 1955) of Tinoni Simbo, the changes are deep and pervasive. These changes constitute far more than a superficial veneer or a simple co-existence of indigenous and exotic elements (Barker, 1985: 263; 1992: 150-151, 158). Rather, they constitute a *bricolage*, a dialectically generated outcome in which local and foreign cultural practices have been mutually transformed through the agency of Tinoni Simbo. Changes in the form of housing or the kinds of household mats instigated by missionaries and later supported by government, for example, indicate a fundamental reorganization of domesticity and household relations (Macintyre, 1989: 165-166). The Christian form of marriage was associated with new ideas about corporeality, conjugality, siblingship, parenthood and property. The adoption of clothing, access to European medicine and medicalized childbirth had similar significance. Cash is more than a new form of wealth substitutable for other wealth items. Ministers did not merely take over the roles of local leaders (*banara*),<sup>13</sup> but centralized influence and transformed their rights and responsibilities. *Hahanana rodomo* is both historically transcended practice and rhetorical device. It is used entirely in reference to those abandoned practices of the past which contemporary Christians evaluate negatively. The past, however, is not utterly denigrated or entirely discontinuous—some of its attributes are regarded positively or neutrally. Further these may be regarded as both historically transcended and yet as continuing in the present (albeit under threat). The terms *hahanana kame rane* ("behaviour one day" i.e., long ago) and *kastom* are appropriate here. The former generally refers to past practices which are not morally evaluated. *Kastom*, by contrast, is positively evaluated. It is abandoned or threatened positive

social practices of the past, exemplified by the representation of ancestors as *of agency*— inherently unselfish (Chapter Four), or it is a term which legitimates contemporary practices. Christianity may thus be *kastom*, both because it is regarded as central to Simbo social life and because today it is seen as having indigenous theological and practical antecedents in pre- and missionary norms (Boseto, 1983). *mists or followers. I am concerned with their interpretation*

*Christianity manifested itself in particular practices. Even in later*

### **Histories of Christianity**

*men's and women's negotiation of actions and rights within a*

These issues are specifically addressed, but the broader issue of the place of Christianity in the continuing transformation of a contemporary Solomon Islands society is my first and foremost concern. Comaroff and Comaroff point out that it is as important to focus on missionary logics, intentions and understandings as it is to consider indigenous models (1991: 54-55; see also J. L. Comaroff, 1989: 662-663; Schieffelin, 1991: 3-7). Indeed, there has been a growing body of work in Oceania on precisely the issue raised by the Comaroffs. Gunson (1978), Jolly (1991), Langmore (1974; 1989a), Latukefu (1978), N. Thomas (1992a) and others have analyzed "missionary lives" from various perspectives as part of the study of colonial culture. These works stress the motivations and understandings of missionaries and the ways in which these structured their interactions with indigenous peoples. To varying degrees, they represent missionaries as beings who acted in ways that were logical and appropriate to their own class and cultural milieu. On Simbo, all missionaries were South Sea Islanders who were recruited by the Methodist Mission from among previously converted populations in Fiji, Samoa and Tonga. The efficacy and sincerity of these people is not in question. Nor is their courage. Unlike Europeans, their emigration was always permanent. Lacking resistance to malaria, they died in droves in pursuit of their goals of conversion. Their sometimes violent authoritarian manner (Langmore, 1989a: 126, 146) is to be seen in this context (Latukefu, 1978: 97-99). They were nonetheless assertively engaged in a project of undermining the cultural milieux of their flocks and in establishing an authoritarian theocracy. Power and sacrifice can hardly be separated in acknowledging the missionary presence.

I deal briefly with the culture of missionaries in Chapter Three. However, I am more concerned with the Simbo *reception* of missionaries. Although the ultimate shape of local Christianity would undoubtedly have been different if an alternative denomination or members of another cultural group had arrived in 1903, I argue that the *fact* of Simbo Christianity was not in doubt once pacification had occurred. What I am doing seems rather dated, for I analytically privilege the "'moral community' [and] . . . instituted value systems embedded in kinship" concepts which have been supplanted by others, such as "practice" and



"strategy" (Medick & Sabeau, 1984: 2). I do this, not because I am unaware of agency—indeed I stress it simultaneously—but because I am concerned with the *logics* by which indigenous groups responded to Christianity. I am also concerned, not with the entrepreneurial or revolutionary figures who may have precipitated and facilitated significant social change, but with the conformists or followers. I am concerned with their interpretation of Christian forces and how Christianity manifested itself in particular practices. Even in later chapters, when I describe men's and women's negotiation of actions and rights within a Christian framework, I focus on their *perspectives*, rather than their motives.

The focus on gender and kinship in later chapters is designed to offer a lens for viewing this process. These topics are particularly apposite to any study of Pacific Christianity; and Christian conversion and practice is a fruitful way of looking at the colonial history of some parts of the Pacific<sup>14</sup> (Cowling, 1990; Jolly and Macintyre, 1989: 6-7; Langmore, 1989b: 84; Miller, 1985). This is only a starting point to the analysis of Christianity, however. If early Christianity was the local face of colonialism on Simbo, it has come to occupy a central place in local thought and practice that, today, is in many respects independent of Simbo's place in the wider world. This, I think, is the realization behind Barker's (1990b: 5-10) critique of anthropological stresses on the imposed, colonial face of Christianity. Tinoni Simbo have transformed an imposed ideology into meaningful social practice: Christianity is a point of universal reference and meaning, a dominant local idiom and a source of personal comfort. I do not see this as "appropriation", which implies an intentionality which is not evident in oral or written accounts of Simbo history (compare White, 1979: 109-111, 123-126; 1991: 97-100). It is more a matter of infiltration or reconfiguration in the wake of the loss of legitimacy of indigenous alternatives, caused by "pacification".

The apparent facility with which this occurred can obscure the violence upon which it was founded. It is this recognition of the violent imposition of an ideological complex, that has now become a central and enabling system of meaning, that dictates my use of Comaroff and Comaroff's works to analyze Simbo Christianity. The Comaroffs' writings may be placed in the corpus of academic works concerned with resistance to domination and exploitation. Indeed, this literature, with its focus on active, overt indigenous response to First World encroachments is among the most exciting in contemporary anthropology. Yet it implicitly raises the question of why many societies did not actively or passively oppose colonial forces. The dominance, within Solomon Islands studies, of Keesing's work on Kwaio temerity made the question particularly pressing in regard to Simbo. The very nature of Keesing's celebratory focus on pagan resistance, however, means that he cannot provide an analytical

framework for those societies which did not resist. He thus describes indigenous Christianity as exemplary of "the classic hegemonic process, in which subalterns are deeply implicated in their own subjugation" (1992a: 238). In his work, Kwaio Christians are implicitly, at worst, collaborators in colonial and postcolonial oppression and, at best, lacking in resilience. Yet, Christianity on Simbo doesn't seem so terrible once we get behind the (foreigners') horror at the devastation of cultural icons described earlier. Nobody on the island would seek to return to the "time of darkness". Although I have argued elsewhere that Simbo Christians internalized colonial adjudications about themselves (Dureau, n.d.c.), local Christianity has transcended its colonial imposition.

Comaroff and Comaroff point out that economic and political factors have been unduly stressed in accounting for the spread of Christianity. They attribute this to a Western ontological bias which privileges the material over the meaningful. The success of Protestant missionaries, they argue, lay equally in the fact "that their civilizing mission was simultaneously symbolic and practical, theological and temporal" (1991: 8-9). I think this is also true of the consolidation of Methodism on Simbo and of the later establishment of rival denominations. Still, political factors were paramount in its establishment. The reality of European force had particular ramifications for local cosmologies which were irresolvable in local religious terms except by recourse to the ideology of the prevailing power. Despite the number of explanations extolling the benefits of Christianity to "pragmatic Melanesians" (Chapter Three), I regard its initial imposition on Simbo as an exercise in brute force in which officials of the Methodist Mission were, knowingly, at least partially complicit.

That, perhaps, seems little removed from explanations that see all missionary activity as the ideological face of colonialism. However, conversion is not inevitably founded upon initial brutality. There have been many cases in which Christianity was perceived as a positive benefit by indigenous peoples. White's (1991) analysis of Santa Isabel Christianity impresses as an instance in which local people were perhaps more responsible for the change than were missionaries. M. Kahn (1983: 102-107) also suggests that, as on Santa Isabel, Christianity was regarded by Wamirans as ensuring relief from the uncertainties of warfare. Burt (1994: 141-44; 147; *passim*) makes a similar point in regard to the burdens incumbent in ancestor veneration. Elsewhere, however, social traumas associated with colonization have been cited as explanatory (Monberg, 1962). The point, however, is that the prevailing realities within indigenous society at key historical moments are decisive in shaping the responses to proffered social or material innovations. N. Thomas (1991) makes this point forcefully in

... there than in South Africa.

Tshid

mapping the variable effects of European culture throughout the Pacific (see Chapter Two). The same argument is applicable to ideological artifacts.

Comaroff and Comaroff's work offers a way to address the centrality of contemporary indigenous Christianity without seeing it entirely in terms of subordination. Let me be quite clear here—this work is about what Christianity has *become*. The brutality that marked the establishment of Christianity on Simbo was over ninety years ago: generations have subsequently grown up as Christians. Such people do not regard themselves as former pagans, a point manifested in relative indifference to past cultural practices and icons. Further, they regard themselves as inherently superior to the very Kwaio pagans described by Keesing. It is this movement of Christianity from imposed ideology and colonial humiliation to hegemonic worldview and indigenous practices that I trace. Comaroff and Comaroff are explicit about this distinction between ideology and hegemony. Their distinction, informed by both Bourdieu and Gramsci, is reproduced at some length here:

[Ideology] is distinctly supported by, in fact hinges on, the agency of dominant social groups; . . . [hegemony] derives, as if naturally, from the very construction of economy and society (1991: 23).

And again:

Whereas . . . [hegemony] consists of constructs and conventions that have come to be shared and naturalized throughout a political community, . . . [ideology] is the expression and ultimately the possession of a particular social group, although it may be widely peddled beyond. The first is nonnegotiable and therefore beyond direct argument; the second is more susceptible to being perceived as a matter of inimical opinion and interest and is therefore open to contestation. Hegemony homogenizes, ideology articulates. Hegemony, at its most effective, is mute; by contrast, says de Certeau (1984:46), 'all the while, ideology babbles on'. (1991: 24)

Both constitute alternative faces of power—overt and covert, realized and unrecognized, external and internal. Ideology is opposable; hegemony unquestionable although, because it is founded on contradictions between perceived reality and lived experience, it is always potentially unstable. Hegemony does not indicate complete subordination of cultural semiotics to the dominant worldview, for although "[m]eaning may never be innocent . . . it is also not merely reducible to the postures of power" (1991: 21). As such hegemony is always potentially convertible or reconvertible into ideology which may, in turn, be politically contested. It is this potential to convert hegemony into ideology that the Comaroffs see as the revolutionary possibility inherent in acquiescence to the colonizer's ideational systems (J. Comaroff, 1985: 191-197; Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991: 31; see also Wedenoja, 1988).

At this point that I must differentiate the Simbo situation from that of the Tshidi.

The abruptness of the imposition of colonial rule on Simbo and the cultural history which preceded it (Chapters Two and Three) may arguably have made colonization a more shocking experience there than in South Africa, where the Tshidi engaged in protracted

struggles with English and Boer settlers and missionaries before being subordinated. Subsequently, however, the exploitation and degradation of the Tshidi, who have been progressively transformed into peasant producers and urban proletariat in an avowedly racist state, has been both more extreme and more explicit than has been the case on Simbo, where labour migration is a more autonomous decision and political sovereignty is vested in an indigenous national state. The incorporation of Simbo into a colonial polity was characterized primarily by malign neglect<sup>15</sup> (Laracy & Laracy, 1980-81: 133) and, for decades, left the missions as the primary point of contact between ruler and ruled. In contrast to the Tshidi situation, this left the dissonance between mission discourse and colonial administration unexpressed.

The Christian missions' relationship to the dominant power was significantly different in each case. On Simbo, the Methodist Mission arrived on the back of the government but was subsequently able to distance itself by representing itself as the champion of indigenous interests. Thus, despite its key role in shaping Solomon Islanders to the needs of capitalist production (Chapter Nine), the paternalistic self-presentation of its first Chairman, the Rev. John Francis Goldie, successfully obscured this connexion. Among the Tshidi, English Christian missionaries were adopted as media of opposition to the appropriations of Boer settlers. Ultimately, the stark discrepancy between missionary promises of equality and oppressive racial, political and economic realities has provided fruitful grounds for ongoing resistance to apartheid. For Tshidi, then, Christianity, more overtly tied to continuing oppression, is both legitimate and potentially illegitimate. The pendulum may swing between Christian practice as ideology and as hegemony and back again. This is reflected in the proliferation of Zionist cults within which "the peasant-proletarian majority objectifies and reacts to its predicament" (J. Comaroff, 1985: 194). On Simbo, local cultural interpretations of military defeat predisposed the acceptance of Christianity as legitimate and thus the eventual transformation from ideological imposition into hegemonic indigenous practice. The denominational rivalries there do not approximate the cultic strife of the Tshidi. Thus, despite my adoption of the Comaroff's framework, I do not deal with revolution or resistance, but rather with transcendent worldviews. The divergence is less than may appear—to oversimplify, we both deal with the indigenous utilizations of Christianity, whether for subversive or for conservative purposes.

In New Georgia, the ready adoption of the missions was an earnest imitation of Europeans, as local people attempted to replicate their potency. Even the schismatic Christian Fellowship (CFC), as described by Harwood (1971: 101), was designed by its leaders only in

response to European dominance *within* the Methodist Mission. For their followers, I suspect that it was less of a reaction to Europeans. Harwood's many references to the state of *tataru* as indicative of the descent of the "spirit" of God seem redolent of local attempts to get closer to the source of European power. In Southern Africa, in contrast, the diverse new religions share one common feature: "the apparent ease with which African peoples internalized the forms of the Western church marked an often trenchant resistance to the culture of colonial domination" (Sundkler, 1961, cited in J. Comaroff, 1985: 168). ~~simonized theology have~~

~~table companions to this cultural and historical variab~~ 8: 323-324.

### Meanings of Christianity

Thus far, I have used the word "Christianity" as if it were unproblematic. A Christian colleague in Australia, however, pulled me up abruptly as I spoke of "indigenous ~~work~~ Christianity". What, she demanded, did I mean by *indigenous* Christianity? Christianity is Christianity, despite the plethora of denominations and sects. I do not intend to debate the authenticity of Simbo theology. I regard Tinoni Simbo as Christians because that is how they regard themselves and because they profess a belief in the godhead of Jesus Christ and in the authority of the Christian Bible. For what it is worth theologically, that seems to me to plausibly indicate "real Christianity". I include the word "indigenous", not to suggest that it is either more or less authentic than European Christianity, but to recognize the local form of Christianity and the ways in which colonized peoples have creatively made Christian practice both sensible and meaningful to themselves. It is also particularly apposite in reference to a society wherein everyone is born Christian. ~~So, Christianity does constitute both cultural~~

Whiteman (1983) chides anthropologists for failure to discriminate between syncretism and indigenization. He defines syncretism as the blending of elements of two belief systems to create a discrete third system, and indigenization as "the expression of Christian beliefs and meanings in forms that are culturally appropriate for adherents of that faith". "Indigenous Christianity", he argues, "thus sharpens the focus of the gospel, whereas syncretism diffuses and confuses the gospel" (1983: 415). Whiteman neatly obscures a number of contending facts here. Quite apart from the fact that his distinction rests on implications of theological authority and authenticity that are hardly the province of anthropologists, his assumption that syncretism arises from problems of meaning and understanding which can be rectified with culturally sensitive instruction, conveniently elides the facts that syncretism also arises in ~~in~~ situations of oppressive impositions of Christianity (Harris, 1982: 45-49; Vogt, 1970; Wolf, 1958) and that there are myriad views of "proper Christianity" in European tradition alone, as any review of the history of European warfare suggests. (And, as Tasie and Gray, 1978: 3-4,

note, there is a very long history of non-European Christian theology, such as that of the Coptics, which is rather ethnocentrically overlooked by commentators.) Whiteman also ignores the syncretic nature of much occidental Christian practice—to take only two well-known examples, the derivation of Christmas from pagan winter solstice celebrations and the connexion between Easter and the Goddess Oestre and her fertile eggs. The point is that Christianity has always been characterized by heterodoxy and historically specific forms. Tensions between the Christian culture of common people and institutionalized theology have been inevitable companions to this cultural and historical variability (Turner, 1988: 323-324; see also K. Thomas, 1985: 27-57). ~~The same issues are relevant for the vast corpus of~~

Whiteman is the modern Pacific ethnographer perhaps most concerned with the authenticity of Christian conversion, but the issue recurs in much recent academic work. Thus, for example, Burrige (1991) is concerned with the *metanoia* of authentic conversion. I would further suggest that, in celebrating syncretism as manifesting cultural survival under a veneer of conversion (Barker, 1992: 148-149), anthropologists also reveal presuppositions about what constitutes "authentic" Christianity. Anthropologists, in other words, have concurred with missionaries' adjudications or worries about the insincerity of indigenous conversions. It is not only in regard to Christianity that authenticity becomes an issue—anthropologists are renowned for fetishizing cultural authenticity (Abu-Lughod, 1993: 9-12; Carrier, 1992b: 12-13; Clifford, 1988: 4-9, *passim*; Jolly, 1992c; N. Thomas, 1992b). Apart from the way in which such interpretations are predicated on views of ahistorical precontact societies, the fact is that, at least in the Pacific, Christianity does constitute both cultural practice (Barker, 1992; 1990a; 1990b; 1990c) and identity (Flinn, 1990; Jolly, 1992c: 53; White, 1991). It also provides a framework for viewing and expressing the world. I attempt to wend my way between celebratory and denigratory treatments of indigenous Christianities in considering not only its development on Simbo, but its place in contemporary indigenous society. Here I must indulge in a little more reflexive writing in order to locate myself *vis-à-vis* Simbo Christian conversion and practice. ~~is the residue of a community in which being~~

Reading anthropological accounts of Christianity, in particular, one is often left to wonder about the stance of the ethnographer. If their own (ir)religious dispositions must, inevitably, pervade their presentations it is nonetheless a rather fraught exercise for the reader to attempt to divine these and to assess the ways in which they inflect the text. In some cases the anthropologist's critical perspective is quite obvious (e.g. Keesing, 1989b; 1992a). Other authors, such as Whiteman (1983: xv), are quite open about their missionary affiliations. The pretended objectivity of apologists like Steley (1983) and Tippet (1967) is clearly farcical. I



find myself wondering, however, about the perspectives of others who deal with the cultural significance of Christian practice. Is Barker (1990b; 1990c), for example, predisposed to find the positive place which he imputes to Maisin Christianity or was this a realization forced upon him in the course of his research? Does Harwood's (1971) treatment of Silas Eto, Holy Mama, the founder of the schismatic New Georgian Christian Fellowship Church (CFC) derive in any way from her own ideas about Christian authenticity or authority? Similar questions may be asked about Burrige's (1978; 1991) and Langmore's (1974; 1989a) analyses of missionary careers and characteristics and Bennett's (1987: 113-114) bland assessment of rationales for conversion. The same issues are relevant for the vast corpus of commentators who present Christianity as a foreign intrusion or imposition. My point is not that works are rendered invalid by holding one or other of many possible views on Christianity but that openness on the matter clarifies interpretations and authorial intentions.

My own perspectives have shifted quite markedly in the course of researching and writing this thesis. The product of what can only be described as a fundamentalist Roman Catholic upbringing in small-town Australia I had aspirations to a career as a missionary (much more adventurous than the nuns, which the other "good" girls at St Joseph's wanted to be). I was later a devout teenager who almost converted to the Seventh Day Adventist religion, but I had quite consciously moved away from all Christian practice by the time of my fieldwork. I had the common anthropological view of colonially established Christianity as a destructive act of cultural arrogance with a clear political rationale. Put simply, I believed that missionaries facilitated imperialist exploitative objectives and destroyed the cultures of people who would be better off without them. That view sat awkwardly with the recognition that colonized peoples have been far from passive victims. The model of syncretic veneer partially resolved this inconsistency. My initial recognition that the missionaries had been key actors in Simbo social transformations was underlined by my sense that they were responsible for a great wrong.

I found it difficult to sustain such views in the midst of a community in which being Christian obviously meant something positive and my growing understanding of the rigours of pre-pacification society convinced me that life had never been idyllic. Some local accounts of events were clearly incorrect—such as the widespread attribution of missionary-induced peace—but that is hardly sufficient to invalidate contemporary belief and practice. When four year-olds speak spontaneously of Zisu (Jesus), adolescents wander around singing hymns as a leisure activity, adults dream of seeing Zisu and people conduct casual discussions comparing biblical verses and openly search for solutions to problems which are predicated on

assumptions of Christian practicality, Simbo Christianity had to be accepted as social fact. I rapidly shed my views about the inherent foreignness of Christian practice. From the beginning, I had resolved to attend services as a routine part of participant observation and, indeed, I came to find services personally rewarding as an expression of social cohesion. Having resolved that this was all "genuine anthropological stuff", I was rather amazed to find myself then run up against my own attitudes about the constitution of Christianity. This didn't so much centre on issues of doctrine as on ways of expressing belief.

Two practices seemed emblematic, to me, of insincerity in Simbo practice—hymn singing and the maintenance of what might be called religious paraphernalia. I found myself appalled at the fact that people enjoyed singing hymns. Where was the deep significance to be attached to it all?—this was just local entertainment! It is with some shame that I find comments in my early fieldnotes and correspondence suggesting that that was their primary reason for attending services. I was even more appalled when I saw toddlers being allowed to chew on bibles and when I regarded the state of local churches. Missionary accounts of signals of devotion in the Pacific often note the beautiful churches built by converts—Luxton (1955), for example, includes photographs of churches which are supposed to reflect the positive transformations effected by the Methodist Mission. This was not Simbo! The main church at Lengana was built of woven bamboo slats with a corrugated iron roof. The past tense is appropriate. The roof leaks in rainstorms, the pews (made of wooden slabs placed on small posts) are sagging or breaking, there are gaping holes in the church walls and the few altar cloths are fading, limp and stained. I was utterly, and inexcusably, outraged. I found myself comparing this state of affairs with church maintenance in my childhood parish. I contrasted the decrepit building and the few half-hearted gestures at improvement with the polished brass and lovingly maintained stained glass at home. I remembered watching with reverence as the nuns handled (unsanctified) communion wafers with delicacy or as parish "ladies" brought in clusters of flowers for the altar and statues, or volunteered to polish the pews. It wasn't the material quality, I told myself, so much as the commitment. When a friend lolled on her verandah describing a vision of Zisu, I muttered quietly, "Well why don't you go and fix up his bloody house, then?" If the decrepit ancestral shrines had suggested abandonment, the church and its accoutrements had similar implications. And if I had had similar reactions to the insensitive yacht crew, I was now privately holding opinions which wouldn't have been out of place in Methodist Mission correspondence of the early twentieth century.



Retrospectively I can argue that it was the dissonance created by the dissimilar similarity of local Christianity that elicited my response. It was more, however—it was a lingering exasperation that exotic people were not exotic in the ways that I expected them to be, my working out of the anthropological dilemma of acknowledging sameness and difference simultaneously; it was pure, narrow-minded ethnocentrism and it was the first step on the way to recognizing the cultural reality of *indigenous* Christianity on Simbo.

I have therefore attempted to treat Christian spirituality as I would any other kind of religion. There is thus a clear dichotomy of stance regarding its instigation—which is to be judged according to anthropological criteria for the treatment of European cultural and political imperialism—and its practice. The latter I assess in terms of local sociality. That is not to say that the following is a purely “objective” account—it is perhaps a defensible flaw of anthropology that that is impossible (Abu-Lughod, 1993: 17). It might be argued, for instance, that my own agnosticism is reflected in a work that sees Christianity ambivalently, as a case of “mixed blessings”. This, it hardly needs saying, is quite distinct from the views propounded by Tinoni Simbo. White (1991) treats indigenous discourse about Christian conversion on Santa Isabel. Although a direct comparative work would be fascinating, that is not my concern here, except insofar as people deploy contrasting Christian resources in their everyday strategies.

### **Change**

My assessment of the effects of conversion also arises from the fact that Christianity in the South Pacific invariably implies social change,<sup>16</sup> an issue that frequently entails comparative adjudications of relative well-being in colonial and precolonial times. It is important to be careful here. It is all too easy, in talking about the transformations wrought by colonial encounters, to imply some kind of prior timeless indigenous society. History, in effect, arrives with European contact and change is then depicted as “a unilinear, unidimensional, postcontact phenomenon of replacement or addition resulting from islanders’ ‘response’ or ‘reaction’ to European ‘impact’, ‘influence’ or ‘imposition’” (Douglas, 1992: 89). Such models are implicated, not only in functionalist anthropology but in evolutionist assumptions concerning the relative positions of the European core and the non-European periphery and with political rationalizations for domination (Fabian, 1983; Wolf, 1982: 5-6). I deal with the issue of Simbo’s pre-contact history in Chapter One. Despite the undoubted fact of pre-contact dynamism, however, European expansion seems to have frequently had a catalytic effect on change, as foreigners and indigenes interacted with and reacted to each other.

This contact was in the context of an expanding global capitalism. There is a vast literature on the effects of socio-economic transformations wrought by the world capitalist system upon indigenous societies—peasants have been transformed into proletariats, independent horticulturalists and agriculturalists into peasants, new exploitative elites or compradore classes have emerged at the interface of core and periphery, and independent productive systems have been subordinated to the interests of international capital (e.g. randomly, Frank, 1969; Hoogvelt, 1978; J. Kahn, 1984; Markovitz, 1975; D. B. Miller, 1978; Rodney, 1982). More recent work recognizes the dynamism and variability of indigenous responses to capitalist colonialism. Practices rise and lapse and are reconfigured, as they presumably always have. Historical analysis helps to capture this fluidity. Looking at the western Solomons, it is interesting to compare the work of White and McKinnon who worked on Santa Isabel and Vella Lavella respectively. White's recent (1991) interest in local conceptions of both timeless *kastom* and definitive breaks with the past (in opposition to historical process and underlying cultural continuity), contrasts markedly with McKinnon's (1972: 92) argument that social change constituted "a general process of cultural senescence".

In looking at the particular social effects of capitalist imperialism, a major theme has been that of its effects on female status, power and autonomy (Moore, 1988: 33). Most of this literature has stressed the negative impact of colonization on women's lives. Indeed, Etienne and Leacock (1980: 20; see also Boserup, 1970; Leacock, 1981) argue that female subordination is an inevitable long term concomitant of colonialism. Moore (1988: 75-79) is critical of this corpus. She points out that, whereas it is important to measure empirical social and cultural changes, many approaches replicate European views of women as passive recipients of change who lack agency. They further depend on depicting women as inherently conservative, associated with a timeless traditional sphere in opposition to male innovative activity in the new urban, technological and development spheres. Thus, for example, Poewe (1981: 80-84 cf. Jolly, 1992a: 41-42, 51, 57) explicitly equates women with a beleaguered collective traditional realm and men with an individualist capitalist ethic propped up by fundamentalist Christian ideologies.

Christianity is, indeed, often associated with the negative effects of colonialism. Typical here is Etienne and Leacock's (1980: 18; see also Leacock, 1981: 44) argument that the ideological (Christian) face of colonization was entirely about compliance. For Etienne and Leacock, this was ultimately achieved by church and state in collusion, effecting structural transformation of local economies. This does not merely elide the variable ways in which indigenous and exotic forces interacted in different times and places: such

interpretations also fail to acknowledge the negative situations of women in many precolonial societies and the ways in which contact may have alleviated such situations (di Leonardo, 1991: 15). In the case of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate (BSIP), there was undoubtedly conscious political deliberation in establishing local missions, as in the first Resident Commissioner Woodford's decision to encourage the Methodist Mission to work in New Georgia. However, the relationship between the mission and administration was to be in frequent conflict, most spectacularly over the issue of the exploitation of indigenous resources. While the Mission was to be instrumental in the development of a labour force adequate to the needs of the local European economy, this was hardly the intention of those who perceived themselves as attempting to shield their converts from exposure to secular influences in the Protectorate (Chapter Nine). Neither converts nor missionaries were fully conscious, or fully in control, of the political and economic consequences of their engagement (Barker, 1990a: 146-148; Smith, 1990: 150). Solomon Islanders acted within the context of such mission and administration contests but could hardly be seen as either passive recipients, or as simply reactive to either or both.

It is necessary to move beyond teleologies of improvement or deterioration in depicting changes in people's lives in the wake of colonization. A less prominent approach to social change depicts the variability of the effects of colonization and imperialism, including those of Christianity. Mann (1985), in particular, argues that Christianity was a vital resource for the negotiation of colonial relationships for some segments of the Nigerian population at various times during colonial history. The central issue of Mann's analysis is the ways in which women and men deployed Christianity as a strategic resource *vis-a-vis* each other. I have also argued elsewhere (Dureau, n.d.a.) that changes induced by colonization and Christianity cannot be simplistically adjudicated. That theme is elaborated in Chapters Six and Seven. Gender relations on Simbo provide a fruitful field for considering the effects of Christianity, the most direct of the local colonial forces for several decades.

## Gender

(1990; Yanagisako and Collier, 1987). Consider, for instance, the centrality of I consider this issue by attempting to historicize female lifecycles in Chapters Six-Ten. I embed changes internal to lifecycles within socio-cultural history. This method provides appropriate means, first, for considering the Christian face of colonial incorporation. Simultaneously, however, a temporal perspective demonstrates the accumulative character of social changes and how such changes have different significance through time. I also use "lifecycles" in an attempt to exemplify the ways in which hegemonic or ideological ideas can

be deployed creatively by those who are ostensibly suppressed or disabled. Simultaneously, this implicitly questions the essentializing assumption that women are not only substantially concerned with nurturance and domesticity, but that such domesticity has the same significance in all places and times (Moore, 1988: 25-30; Yanagisako, 1987). Lifecycles have been used many times to indicate the ways in which women become progressively empowered with increasing age and seniority (e.g. Dubish, *et al.*, 1986; Kerns, 1983; Rogers, 1975). However, an emphasis on progression does not necessarily indicate historical process. It is far more likely to be predicated on recurrent structure—this is particularly apparent in Kerns' monograph, in which social practices clearly embedded in postcolonial history are nonetheless invested with a timeless, inevitable, character. I consider this problem at some length, along with the associated risk of homogenizing women (and men) through eliding the diversity of lives, in Chapter Five.

For some time there has been debate within feminist academic circles about the degree to which a specific concentration on feminist topics can lead to a ghettoization of women's studies (Moore, 1988: 5-6). Howell and Melhuus (1993) have recently argued that this is precisely what has happened. They point to the limited degree to which feminist anthropological insights and epistemological advances have been incorporated into general anthropological studies. Indeed, they hold that much postmodernist theorizing has depended upon just such insights—about the partiality of perspective, for example—appropriated without acknowledgment from feminist discourse. di Leonardo (1991: 23-24; see also Morgen, 1989; but *cf.* Biersack, 1991: 9) makes a similar point, particularly in regard to Clifford and Marcus, *et al.* (1986). Indeed, she argues that the volume's plethora of hostile attacks on Shostak's *Nisa* as reflective of "questions deriving from contemporary American feminism" indicates a fundamental inability of postmodernism to deal with gender issues. This is clearly an exaggeration—after all she later chides the feminist anthropologists, Yanagisako and Collier, for extreme postmodernism. It is still rather startling, particularly given the degree to which many anthropological subjects are inherently gendered (Howell & Melhuus, 1990; Yanagisako and Collier, 1987). Consider, for instance, the centrality of marriage in kinship studies, alliance theory and political anthropology, or the place of the division of labour by sex in economic studies. I do not intend to enter debates about how to write feminist ethnography. There is a place for works on women *qua* women but, increasingly, a feminist orientation does not demand a primary focus on women. The confrontation with academic androcentrism is well advanced—women are visible social

agents for all but the wilfully blind. Androcentrism in contemporary work can only be described as sexism. ~~by own feelings of identification with women. Equally it was because of~~ Moore (1988: 5) expresses reservations about the assumption that women studying women is a means of restoring authenticity to accounts of women's lives. Strathern (1981: 682-684) points to the ways in which this can result in the essentialization of Woman by women with particular Eurocentric agendas. I agree. Feminist theoretical concerns are thus not an overt theme here. Nonetheless, I do identify myself as a feminist, an identification which (I hope) necessarily inflects my writing. I see this work, then, as incorporating feminist insights into the analysis of political and social processes. I call upon and engage with the feminist corpus where possible and necessary, but that is my secondary intention. What I am primarily concerned with is answering my early shocked question about Simbo social and cultural transformations over the last nine decades: I try to show "what happened" and to give some notion of the contemporary Simbo ethos. I thus rely as much on historical as on ~~it was in~~ ethnographic analysis. Women's lives provide a particularly appropriate lens for viewing colonization and its sequelae for a number of reasons. First, women are, clearly, as much social actors as are men. Their perspectives and motivations may differ but this makes their experiences and practices no less crucial. Secondly, this recognition is congruent with the fact that gender is a, if not the, major basis for differentiation and organization in Simbo society and beyond (Kerns, 1983; Levi-Strauss, 1969; Ortner, 1974; Schoeffel, 1977, 1978; Strathern, 1988; Weiner, 1976; *ad infinitum*). Thirdly, on Simbo and elsewhere in the Pacific, Christianity was the predominant face of colonialism (Jolly and Macintyre, 1989; Latukefu, 1974). Although it is difficult to sustain arguments that colonialism particularly afflicted women (Moore, 1988), the Christian missions were overwhelmingly concerned with the reform of gender relations, including sexuality, reproduction, conjugality, domesticity and parenting (Miller, 1985; Jolly and Macintyre, 1989: 6). Mann (1985) notes that Christian missionaries in Nigeria were concerned with instilling Victorian mores more than Christian consciousness. Accordingly, other than sacrifice and slavery, polygyny was the source of their greatest revulsion. A parallel concern was evident in New Georgia where, other than the headhunting-"slavery" complex and pagan spirituality, it was sexuality and domesticity which dominated their agenda. As in Nigeria, conformity to Victorian and Edwardian ideals was seen as reflective of the sincerity of conversion. ~~and took on the behavioural attributes of local~~ Finally, my own predispositions and my identity as female and mother propelled me into greater intimacy with Simbo women. Many men shared confidences with me and were diligent in "straightening" my understandings about traditional and modern sociality.

However these confidences did not have the immediacy of women's accounts. In part, this was due to my own feelings of identification with women. Equally, it was because of Simbo women's assumptions that female lives had some commonality in all places. When a woman talked about her forced marriage or her relationship with her husband she *expected* that, all of our differences notwithstanding, we were conversing on the basis of some kind of shared understanding. When a man talked about the same events, he *wanted* me to understand. Saying that I received most of my comprehension through interaction with women is not to suggest some kind of universal shared sisterhood undivided by differences of interest or understanding: issues of wealth differentials and race hierarchy, in particular, were omnipresent. I refer simply to the mutual recognition of similarity on which we all based our common identity as women. Men's more formal or structured explanations have been of great value and I cannot gainsay the candour of those, with whom I did establish close relations, who strove to explain their personal perspectives on events and Simbo sociality. But it was in the more casual, trusting relationships with women that I gained my greatest understanding. Questions I would never have thought to ask were answered, invisible issues were manifest. Explanation followed revelation: with men the sequence was, with a few significant exceptions, reversed.

A major factor in our common identity here was my status as a mother who had travelled to Simbo without her husband. Motherhood is a prominent feature of Simbo women's talk: it is their joy and their despair (Dureau, 1993). I arrived with a 2½ year-old daughter (Astrid), a rarity for a Simbo woman of a similar age. It was not only my general status as a mother that was relevant here—my relative childlessness also spoke to their widely expressed interest in fertility control. It was assumed that I shared their disquiet about high birth rates—the difference being that European women had greater powers of control over fertility, either through better contraceptives or greater conjugal autonomy. My freedom to travel without my husband also facilitated their discussion, with me, of marital relationships. It is as well that they did, for the public face of most marriages is quite harmonious. My first interpretation of men walking around with their wives was of companionship, rather than the sexual jealousy I was constantly assured it indicated. Above all else, my daughter was a vital player, simply by her presence. She spoke no English within a very short time—a great impetus to my own learning of local language—and took on the behavioural attributes of local children. The personal frustration these two processes induced notwithstanding, they were valuable sources of insight on child socialization and personhood. Astrid also unknowingly seduced people into wanting to talk to me, thus precipitating a number of good relationships

which eased my entry into Simbo sociality. Above all, however, it was the fact that I had brought her at all that was central. Tinoni Simbo consider themselves inferior *vis-a-vis* Europeans (Chapter Two). It is known that the *Missus* [Pidgin: "European woman"] may take "black girls" into their houses to care for children but that they supervise them closely and that European children usually mix with European children. On a number of occasions, to my deep embarrassment, I was praised for allowing Astrid to become a Simbo child. Thus:

Christina, you're a very good woman. We can see you're not like other Europeans. You come and join with us. You join like a Simbo person. But I tell you what tells us you are a truly good person—because you led Asi here. I think your mother and your husband's mother, perhaps also your husband, I think they wanted to prevent you bringing Asi to live with black people. I think they worried about us, but you aren't like other Europeans. You feel for us and you trust us so you led Asi here. Thus I know your true nature. In all my life I never saw a European child become accustomed to the black people's ways.<sup>17</sup> Now we truly love Asi and we're happy when you stay with us . . .

*[These transcriptions which were made during, or immediately after, conversations]*

My intention here is convey the ways in which my taking Astrid with me had an immeasurable effect on my relationships with Tinoni Simbo and thus, inevitably, on the production of this work. Astrid appears on many occasions in the following pages, not without some disquiet on my part. It certainly would have been a considerable elision to edit out her role as catalyst. I hope this does not constitute exploitation of someone not in a position to consent or object.

There is little difference between the dilemmas about representing one's child and those concerning representation of other people. Try as one may, it is, I think, well nigh impossible to convey to the subjects of our studies just how we will use what we take from them. This product certainly is not what was envisaged by Tinoni Simbo. Nor does it contain much of the information I was given with the mission of "writing it down".<sup>18</sup> On the other hand it contains much knowledge gleaned through social intercourse when, despite my omnipresent paper, pen and camera, I was obviously being related to as a person or confidante rather than a "professional stranger". My friends may have told me their dreams about seeing Zisu in order to convince me of the sincerity of their beliefs: they certainly did *not* do so in order to see it in print. Ditto when women told me details of their sex lives or births. Indeed "professional voyeur" is perhaps a better description of an ethnographer. I remain uncertain about the degree to which this is a defensible practice. On the one hand, as with Astrid, it would be serious distortion of the truth to obliterate personal relationship. And it would be to privilege a minority perspective to write the official ethnography which I continually resisted having thrust upon me. On the other hand, the exercise also smacks of the increasingly tawdry cry of "the public's right to know" in defence of sensationalist journalism in the West. (Faithorn [1990] resisted writing her doctoral thesis for several years because of similar scruples.)

Accordingly, there are a number of occasions when I have deliberately omitted material germane to this work, either because it was explicitly or implicitly given in strict confidence or because it would identify the persons involved, in ways that would be potentially embarrassing or troublesome to them. Much of the cited or quoted material is also not preserved in tape recordings of conversations because of people's sensitivity about that procedure (Chapter Five). Most people were strongly opposed to the recording of their part accounts, at least in part because they did not want to be seen as impinging on the claims of powerful individuals who often claimed to have knowledge in their keeping. Indeed, one person who was perceived as having undue influence over me was manipulated into leaving Simbo by a man who had claimed the responsibility of "keeping me".<sup>19</sup> Many quoted passages are thus transcriptions which were made during, or immediately after, conversations (cf. Shieffelin, 1991: 10). I also use pseudonyms for the names of all but those whom it would be futile to try and disguise and historical Simbo personages—that is, people appearing in European accounts or public Simbo oral accounts. They are relatively few: Kave Peso, the *banara* credited with establishing Simbo Christianity, Zonaton (Jonathon), the founder of the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) denomination on Simbo, and Suzana Lodu Qoele, the last survivor of the missionaries' arrival on Simbo in 1903. (Lodu died in 1991.) I think I best represent her in concordance with all Simbo sentiment about her; as a good, strong person of the "time before" (*taem bifo*, Pidgin) or "time one day" (*totoso kame rane*) who converted to Christianity and succeeded, like few before or after, in living her life according to the highest ideals of both eras. Finally, I do not disguise Bishop Leslie Boseto and Maramar Hazel Boseto, the former heads of the Solomon Islands Diocese and Women's Fellowship of the United Church of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. I use local discourse about them on a number of occasions but make no direct assessments of them. For what it's worth, it seems that the high esteem with which they are regarded is well deserved. I make no academic apologies about omitting material or suppressing identities. I do, however, apologize to Tinoni Simbo for the imperfection and partiality of my representations of them and for any reservations this work may elicit. On Simbo, intention is no excuse for action or outcome, but my intentions are, I think, positive and the result is the best I could manage.

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## NOTES

- 1: A number of islands belong to the New Georgia Group (Map II): Gizo, Kolombangara, New Georgia Island, Ranongga, Rendova, Simbo and Vella Lavella. New Georgia Island contains a number of well known areas, among them Roviana Lagoon and Marovo Lagoon. In order to avoid confusion, reference to "New Georgia" will be to the Group as a whole. When designating the island of New Georgia, I will refer to "New Georgia Island". Choiseul, declared a separate province in 1992, and the Shortland Islands are the major western islands not part of the New Georgia Group.
- 2: And later the heroization of George Bush and vilification of Saddam Hussain.
- 3: Masonite houses with corrugated iron roofs.
- 4: I use the term "European" to designate cultural values and models, deriving from Europe, and all Caucasians, whether from America (as many of the early whalers were) Australia or Europe. This both avoids confusion of meaning and is in accordance with local notions that all white people are "Europeans". The term "West" I reserve for describing the Western area of the Solomon Islands. Caucasians are also known as *Tinoni vaka* ("people of the ships"). There were also significant numbers of Chinese crew from time to time and presumably Afro-Americans. The former are known locally as *vaku*, the latter are described by reference to their origin (e.g. *Tinoni kuduru Amerika*: "black person/s from America").
- 5: Literally, "Person/s [of] Simbo", which I use in preference to the common academic term, "Simboans". "Tinoni Simbo" reflects the indigenous notion of people who belong on Simbo, as opposed to those who live there. Under the system of cognatic descent, people frequently have rights, and thus belong, on a number of islands within New Georgia, irrespective of whether they exercise those rights. Although traditional Simbo usage is *Tinoni Madegusu* ("Person/s [of] Mandegusu", the indigenous word for Simbo), contemporary people refer to the island as Simbo and I feel that "Tinoni Simbo" both respects indigenous usage and maintains a semantic link with academic, governmental and popular writing about Simbo. The colonial terms, "Eddystone Island" and "Eddystonians", have been out of use for some time and were never adopted by Tinoni Simbo.
- 6: The comment about spoiling culture with money was a frequent complaint among the yachts' crews and backpackers who, with divers, form the most frequent tourists in Western Province. The Western Solomons was either lauded for the friendly people or negatively contrasted to "traditional" Malaita by many visitors.
- 7: Comaroff and Comaroff's second volume is as yet unavailable. In it they promise (1991: 314) to continue analysis of the revolutionary potential of Tswana Christianity.
- 8: This is an oversimplification of the argument. Comaroff and Comaroff give a detailed exposition of the relationships between power, hegemony, ideology and culture.
- 9: Indeed, a history of Simbo anthropology would provide ample illustration of the theory that anthropologists follow in the colonial train.
- 10: This is presumably the point of Carrier and Carrier's (1991) determination not only to eschew an ethnographic present but to write even their most recent data in the past tense. The impressionistic result of this, however, is to root Ponam so firmly in the past that it seems to have neither present nor future.
- 11: I mentioned earlier that before embarking on fieldwork I had anticipated doing a critical feminist revision of Hocart, along the lines of Annette Weiner's treatment of Malinowski's Trobriand ethnography. With the hindsight bestowed by fieldwork and my realization of the limits of my own ability to grasp the "nature" of another culture, however, I feel much more ambivalent about such enterprises. Hocart was androcentric, Eurocentric and patronizing—all those things emerge in his ethnography. They undoubtedly arose from his authoritative position in 1908 as a member of an imperialist power at its zenith, a political situation which I do not, of course, defend. Like Tinoni Simbo, myself and any other ethnographer, however, he was also a product of his time and class and there were limits to the degree to which he could avoid seeing the exotic world as he did. There are indications that he tried to overcome his own biases. Thus, representing Simbo logics he asserts that outsiders "have no right to impute to them muddle-headedness until we have made every effort to find out what the underlying theory of action is. This is not easy, for they are mostly inarticulate" (1937: 40). There are numerous similar remarks scattered throughout his works. It is unjust of later observers to, for example, alight

critically upon the second sentence without allowing for the evident intention to accept and seek understanding, reflected in the first. It is altogether too easy, with the heritage of decades of hindsight and discourse on ethnocentrism, to be self-righteous or moralistic in our attacks on our intellectual forebears. We are after all, still far from achieving an appropriate style of representation of others. For a man of his time, Hocart was perhaps more self-challenging than a contemporary anthropologist who expresses less overtly biased viewpoints.

12: Interestingly, headhunting and the taking of captives are not. For all the missionaries are credited with bringing peace and for all the talk Tinoni Simbo endured about savagery, headhunting has evaded negative local categorization.

13: Semi-hereditary leaders. See Chapter Two.

14: Battaglia (1990), Corris (1973) and Keesing (1992a; 1992b) serve as useful reminders that this generalization is not valid in all locations.

15: In the western Solomons. In Malaita District, colonial force was far more explicit over a long period, as Keesing's writings attest.

16: This despite the fact that some areas have been Christian for more than 150 years. Clearly the idea that there were societies without history before the advent of European contact is persistent (Wolf, 1982: 71). I discuss this in Chapter One. ~~Four districts~~

17: In fact, the child of a European couple in Gizo usually spent weekends with her carer in the Simbo village there.

18: Some of this material is to be made available in publications for local consumption.

19: She was a schoolteacher and he, on the local school board, appealed to the local education authorities to have her transferred.

hey got big. True wars were ago

The district

in the peace

Home Barotia