

CHAPTER TWO

TOTOSO RODOMO

TIME OF DARKNESS

To call this the Worship of Ancestors is hardly correct. People who carry no memory of their predecessors beyond their grandfathers can hardly be said to worship ancestors; indeed, it may be doubted whether any dead person is appealed to by one who has not known him alive.

Codrington, 1881: 285

Religion among such people is not a matter for one day in the week, but influences every act of their daily lives.

Rivers, 1927: 49

The previous chapter dealt with early relationships between indigenes and Europeans. Here I deal with internal Simbo affairs immediately before pacification, in particular with the local worldview and the structures of kinship and social organization. This contextualizes the continuities and ruptures between pagan and contemporary social practice which I map in later chapters. What I present here, then, is a partial picture of a moment in time. This was categorically the time of *kame rane* for Tinoni Simbo, the apogee of local power and achievement. This was also the moment which Hocart and Rivers sought to capture during their ethnographic research in 1908.<sup>1</sup> I do not deal with the obvious point that modern evocations of the past are generated in the contexts of contemporary politico-cultural issues. Rather, although it is a hazardous undertaking, I seek to wend my way between fantastic local accounts of “the greatest headhunters in the West” and people who were “much bigger [physically] than people today” (see also Keesing, 1989b: 200), between Hocart’s and Rivers’ unspoken assumptions and unaddressed questions, and between spectacular European accounts of New Georgians, to generate some “feel” for the kinds of values, perceptions and social relations pertaining around 1898-1901.

Simbo at this time was a society seemingly shaped by headhunting. During the nineteenth century, villages had been located in the bush, away from possible surveillance by sea-borne enemies. Daily activities, demography, political relations and kinship were all

affected by the circumstances of endemic warfare. A class of warriors had emerged whose occupation was military training, protection, aggressive raiding and hire for assassination on other islands. People were afraid of these men who, having “drunk blood”, were violently unreliable. Fertility rates were ideally restricted to about two dependent children per woman partly in order to maximize survival in the face of raiding parties (see Chapter Five). Semi-hereditary leaders (*banara*) gained power and prestige through the sponsorship of local feasting (Hocart, n.d.a.: 13) which was often associated with warfare. A mystical linkage between a sister’s corporeality and her brothers’ potency in warfare was elaborated in extensive formalized avoidance, respect and power relationships (*luluna*). Given the evident dominance of headhunting, I begin with an exploration of its local significance before undertaking an examination of broader social processes and relationships.

### ***Vinaria*<sup>2</sup>—Headhunting**

There has been considerable contention about indigenous motivations in pursuing headhunting. McKinnon (1972: 46-69; 1975: 300-301) and Zelenietz (1979: 94, 97-99) both argue that the nineteenth century expansion of headhunting was a response to economic opportunities provided by European-Islander trade, an analysis supported by Bennett (1987: 35, 418n.53). They cite evidence that headhunting expeditions frequently included trade with allies who extended hospitality en route to the target area, that raids involved plundering of the victimized area and Hocart’s (1931: 303) observation that raids were sometimes carried out under pretext of turtling expeditions.

Jackson (1978: 34, 61-69) counters that non-economic motivations informed headhunting. He argues that New Georgians quite rationally, in cultural terms, applied the fruits of their exchanges with Europeans to the fulfilment of spiritual values—that is, the acquisition of *mana* from the heads of one’s enemies. While accumulation of *mana* is inconsistent with local views on the nature of enemy skulls (see below), this does not invalidate Jackson’s more general argument that it was not purely economic motivations which stimulated and sustained nineteenth century headhunting. Headhunting existed prior to European contact<sup>3</sup> and, as he argues, the wealth derived from European trade was unambiguously applied to extant practices, although this does not preclude those practices having been reconfigured during the nineteenth century. Although Jackson opposes McKinnon’s and Zelenietz’s economic analyses, he also depends on the concept of maximization—in this case the symbolic capital of the supernatural wealth of *mana* residing

in the head (a common assumption in analyses of New Georgian headhunting—see e.g. Bennett, 1987: 35; McKinnon, 1972: 59-60; WPHC, 1931).

Clearly there were economic benefits connected to headhunting. In the previous chapter I noted the significance of looting. The taking of captives also contributed to the captors' economic viability.<sup>4</sup> Such benefits, however, were equivocal. For a central place such as Simbo, reliant upon indigenous as well as European markets and supplies, expanded headhunting may well have been counter-productive in strictly economic terms. Raiding and looting bestow short-term advantages, but simultaneously attenuate possibilities for integrated long-term relationships. As McKinnon (1972: 46-53) demonstrates, the manipulation of credulous Europeans' beliefs about the duplicity of other New Georgian groups was sufficient to suppress direct European-Islander trade in all but a few *entrepot*. If, as he further argues, New Georgians sought to kill off their competitors through headhunting, they were simultaneously eliminating both the producers of much of the wealth they exchanged with Europeans and their own "customers".

Despite such uncertain gains, raiding continued to escalate during this period because, as Jackson recognizes, enemy heads were necessary for particular local purposes which were not directly related to European trade. The significance of heads relative to material gains is clear in the complaints of traders at Roviana Lagoon in the 1890s that it was hurting their trade because people preferred it to copra-making (Jackson, 1972: 37). In a claim which contradicts his later argument about copra production and headhunting being incompatible, McKinnon (1972: 100) also argues that Vella Lavellan chiefs, who could establish monopolies over sales of copra, used the profits to finance raids. Here, he more closely approaches Jackson's argument that trade was subordinated to indigenous goals. Jackson's (1975: 72) account of people soliciting skulls in exchange for withdrawing sieges on Santa Isabel, and of seeking to purchase them, also strongly suggests that the taking of heads was the main objective of raids.

Enemy heads were necessary to inaugurate skull houses (*tabuna*), communal houses (*paile*, *zelepade*) or war canoes (*qeto*), on the death of *banara* and to release the widows of *banara* from confinement (Hocart, 1931: 303). Certainly, most of these inter-related practices were connected to the economic processes necessary for political attainment. Although Hocart establishes that accession to the *banara*-ship entailed some degree of inheritance, it was simultaneously dependent upon both visible success in worldly affairs—thus demonstrating ancestral blessing—and upon accumulation of sufficient wealth to maintain the

level of feasting and gift-giving necessary to maintain followers (n.d.a.: 11,13; n.d.g.: 17; Codrington, 1881: 308-309) in a political system more appropriately compared to patron-clientage than to the classical Melanesian big manship or the Polynesian chieftainship. Although plunder may have provided some of this wealth, there is little to indicate that the costs of raiding—building, inaugurating and crewing a war canoe—were sufficient to make such undertakings economically viable. *Banara* had bigger gardens than others, they took payment from the hire of ritual “prostitutes” (*tugele*), from exchange with Europeans and from cordial trading expeditions. These sources were also vital in financing *banara*’s power. Indeed some *banara*—at the very least the female *banara* (*banara maqota*)—possibly acquired adequate prestige without recourse to warfare.<sup>5</sup> While there seems little doubt that the more powerful *banara* did engage in raiding, through sponsorship even if not participation, the heads obtained were far more important in political legitimation, as visible signs of prowess, than as forms of wealth.

Successful raiding did enrich the victors through the taking of captives. Captives fell into two categories. *Nabulu* were those, not adopted into kin networks, who remained as retainers of the *banara* or lineage—*banara*’s lieutenants (*bagu*), priests (*iama*) in the service of the lineage or female servants of the *banara* (*ukuka banara*). (There are possibly other classes of which I am unaware.) Subservient to the *banara*, *nabulu* were nonetheless able to marry and earn or inherit land and wealth and there is no suggestion that they were subordinate to commoners. As well as capturing or purchasing adults, according to oral accounts, Tinoni Simbo habitually refrained from killing children who had not yet reached adolescence. Rather they brought them home where they were adopted (v. *pausia*; n. *pinausu*) or, more rarely, killed in the *veala* sacrifice which preceded headhunting expeditions.<sup>6</sup>

Despite present-day convictions of the efficacy and accessibility of indigenous contraceptives and abortifacients in the past, the epidemiological conditions of the nineteenth century probably made the attainment of marital fertility problematic (Chapter Seven). One way of addressing such problems is by enhancing local population through recruitment, a process which demonstrably occurred in some measure on Simbo. The demographic significance of this practice can be considerable. Mabbett (1983: 57), for example, suggests that captive slaves in Angkor may have exceeded a quarter of the population. On Simbo, one of the five major lineages is held to be descended from Santa Isabel captives.

Other papers in the same volume (Reid, *et al.* 1983) consistently raise the question of whether we can accurately render those captured or incorporated into other societies as

“slaves”, the term usually used to translate the Simbo words *pinausu* (also used to describe adoptees) and *nabulu*. Certainly two of the features commonly ascribed to slaves also applied to Simbo captives: they were purchasable and they could be used in the service of those who acquired them. On the other hand, those characteristics did not only apply to captives. Although captives were put to the service of their superiors, most people had superiors for whom they laboured—commoners, in other words, worked for *banara* (Hocart, n.d.a.: 23), much as captives worked for their seniors. Rather than dealing with a contrast between slave and free, we are looking at a continuum along which the categories, “captive” and “client” are different in degree rather than categorically distinct. As Finley (1963-64: 248) points out, there are contexts in which “freedom is not a useful category and therefore it is pointless to ask where one draws the line between the free and the unfree”.

The same kind of continuum arguably applies to the purchasability of captives. Certainly, the outright purchase of other humans pertained almost entirely to outsiders. There was no enslavement of Tinoni Simbo, and once captives were transported to Simbo, they were virtually never re-sold. Their commercial acquisition severed their connexion with their home community—in this sense their situation was equivalent to those forcibly removed from their homes. Thereafter, although they might move between households, and such movements could involve exchanges of food or wealth, similar exchanges attended the formal movement of Tinoni Simbo from one household to another. Their initial purchase, too, was somewhat similar to the transfer of rights in persons, entailed formally in marriage exchanges and informally in adoption or in the flow of goods in the patron-client relationship between *banara* and follower.

Other qualities of captives also differ from the European notion of slavery (which as Finley, 1963-64: 236, points out, arises from classical Greek cultural constructions of “freedom”). Captives married locally, acquired wealth and property, including land, and had children who were regarded as legitimate Tinoni Simbo. The common concept “slave”, then, does not fit either those acquired as children and adopted as offspring, or those (*nabulu*) more formally differentiated as captives but nonetheless living largely as Tinoni Simbo. These people were ultimately to be assimilated to local society. Indeed, on Vella Lavella, captives often became “chiefs”, an event which arguably was “the orthodox mode of succession” (Rivers, 1914a: 100-101). Watson has recently argued that in Kainantu Subdistrict in PNG, a kind of Lamarckian theory of cultural identity, whereby acquired traits are transmitted, predominates over ideas of genetic, or “blood”, inheritance:

The indigenous inheritance is partly a question of parentage but is not fundamentally genetic. It is partly a question of tutelage but is not limited to verbal instruction. The ancestors' legacy is transmitted through growing up in a particular community where, thanks to the peculiar power of its members, a unique competence is instilled in the young, infusing them and forming them after the community's own local character. (Watson, 1990: 34; see also Linnekin & Poyer, 1990: 9)

Watson is concerned with a situation in which local identities are maintained despite the consistent population shifts entailed in the resettlement, in existing communities, of refugees generated by endemic warfare. On Simbo, by contrast, the situation was one of the active solicitation of others. In both cases, however, the issue arises of how "a common and ostensibly continuous local identity immerses both indigenous elements and recent arrivals" (Watson, 1990: 17). Watson argues that it is both the learning of local ways—the ways of the particular ancestors—and the ingestion of local foods that create Kainantu identity. On Simbo, too, these elements were essential, although it was apparently not so much a matter of food derived from local soil imparting belonging-ness as one of the reciprocal sociality involved in nurturance that marked one as belonging. Thus, Leoke, an old man who was born around the time of pacification and is one of the few living people to have pounded puddings at ancestral shrines, tried to explain headhunting practices to me:

Dureau: Alright, so what about the *iama* [speaking of captive-priests]? Where did you put their skulls? In the bush or sea or where?

Leoke: In the skull houses because they were people who helped us greatly. Therefore we cared for them, loved them, and adopted them. Thus they were the same as people here—truly, people of this place.

Dureau: The same skull house for captives and for Tinoni Simbo?

Leoke: Yes.

Dureau: What about captives—because their place was a place of enemies. You weren't worried about their skulls? The captives weren't enemies of yours.

Leoke: No. Not our enemies. [They were] people who became tame<sup>7</sup> here. We cared for them, we fed them. We adopted them.

In this passage, Leoke repeatedly uses terms which evoke ideas of the caring and nurturance entailed in domestic social relations—*pausia* ("adopt"), *kopunia* ("keep", "care for", "sustain"), *manavasa* ("tame", "familiarize") and *taru* ("love", "empathize")—to speak of those taken captive to Simbo. Such people, engaged in reciprocal, sustaining activities were thus, as he says, "truly people" of Simbo. The descendants of captives acquired in raids are now among the premier landholders on Simbo, land having been obtained through inheritance, given out of gratitude for good offices or obtained in payment for services. The acquisition of land dotted with ancestral shrines and lineage landmarks served to further amalgamate aliens and Tinoni Simbo.

If raiding enriched Simbo both materially and demographically, it simultaneously disabled their enemies. Clearly it resulted in some degree of impoverishment and depopulation, an effect magnified with the increased yields facilitated by iron and firearm technologies in the nineteenth century. For small populations, a raid which netted one or two heads is a considerably different matter to a raid which may have resulted in the taking of twenty or more. However, such "head counts" included only the dead. The taking of captives amplified this loss. It is impossible, of course, to know how many heads may have been lost from a particular locale in any given raid. Records which note large quantities, such as those of Cheyne in 1843 (Shineberg, 1971b) and Woodford (1890), are accounts of the numbers brought back to a particular place, but give little indication of the number of villages or districts which may have been attacked. White (1991: 89) records one such event in Santa Isabel in which the carnage was such that there were too few survivors to dispose of the corpses. However, villages on other islands were little more than dispersed hamlets and even those single attacks which successfully wiped out entire villages would ordinarily not have realized Cheyne's ninety-odd heads. Something between ten and twenty seems a more realistic maximum consequence of a single attack on a village in the West.

Such numbers were, themselves, substantial. Population figures for the group are sparse, but in 1908 Hocart reckoned the population of Simbo at about four hundred. Allowing for Rivers' (1922: 101, *passim*) argument that population was then declining because of pacification,<sup>8</sup> this nonetheless suggests a maximum of about one hundred persons for any of the five lineages on the island. If we assume a similar lineage size throughout New Georgia, the loss of twenty people meant the elimination of at least 20% of a lineage. Given that populations were also susceptible to epidemics of introduced diseases and to endemic local diseases, such a loss in the course of a night would have been devastating.

Warfare, then, facilitated Simbo social goals and disabled their enemies, but how does this explain headhunting *per se*? McKinnon's and Zelenietz's analyses share a common problem arising from the conflation of warfare and headhunting. The issue of the causes of local enmities is quite distinct from the causation of headhunting. Material factors may explain warfare and they may even explain decapitation as a highly efficient warrior technique, but, as McKinley (1976: 124) points out, they do not explain the taking of heads. That, he argues, is a metaphysical issue. But if, as Jackson (1978) and Codrington (1881: 310) also hold, it was indigenous spiritual ideas that sustained headhunting it was not

necessarily, as they further maintain, the acquisition of *mana* that informed those ideals. This is revealed in local attitudes towards enemy skulls, expressed by Leoke.

Dureau: What about enemy skulls? Did you also put them in *tabuna* [shrines] and burn offerings to them [like ancestral skulls]?

Leoke: No! The *tabuna* belonged to all our fathers and mothers. We didn't love our enemies. We killed them. We didn't worship them!

Dureau: So you put enemy skulls in skull houses?

Leoke: No. We left them in the communal houses. I saw many skulls in the communal houses of our *banara*. Because we [of] Simbo, we [of] Mandegusu, were strong!

Dureau: You never kept enemy skulls in skull houses?

Leoke: Truly, never!

Dureau: So, what about the times when communal houses fell apart? Where did you put the skulls?

Leoke: [We] left them . . . in the bush or the sea. We didn't care for enemies.

Dureau: But how is this—weren't you fearful of the *mana* of all your enemies or didn't you want to take their *mana*?

Leoke: No. There was none. We weren't fearful of *mana*. There was none here. They couldn't be strong here, this is not their place.

Dureau: Really, there was no *mana* in enemy skulls?

Leoke: Yes. None.

Dureau: When you beheaded them, you didn't take the *mana* of your enemies?

Leoke: Yes.

Dureau: So you left their *mana* in their place?

Leoke: No. The skull is *mana* but it can't live or be strong here. It's an evil spirit [*tomate kike rena*] so we didn't care for them. We didn't live with them?—[that would be] no good. It was weak here, so we weren't worried. The spirit remained back in its own place—a rotten spirit. It afflicted its own place, our enemies. It couldn't be *mana*.

Dureau: Oh, oh, oh—like the *tomate maza* [spirits of beheaded persons which roamed the forest] here?

Leoke: That's it!

Whatever the reasons for headhunting, then, it was emphatically not the capture of *mana*.

Leoke's concluding point about *tomate maza* confirms that headhunting was motivated by a concern, not to acquire *mana*, but to create malign forces within enemies' communities. If a successful raid served to debilitate one's enemies through loss of population and wealth, a successful headhunting raid also had supernatural consequences in the creation of voracious endo-cannibalistic spirits. The *tomate maza* (literally, "beheaded spirit") was one of an array of spirits, considered below, who had died untoward deaths. Marked by the style of death, they were left to haunt their own lands, inflicting anyone unfortunate enough to happen upon them, rather than becoming beneficent ancestors.

This suggests that the taking of heads was an extremely efficacious means of disabling foes (see also Downs, 1956, quoted by Needham, 1976: 74). Not only did it deplete

population and resources and generate malicious spirits, it simultaneously prevented enemies' from transforming the living into viable ancestors, thus resulting in a breakdown of the relationship between living and supernatural beings and bringing about declining efficacy in the activities of the living. In this sense, the taking of heads was a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. Bloch (1982:229; Bloch & Parry, 1982: 8) interprets this kind of capture of the supernaturally potent part of enemy bodies in terms of "negative [as opposed to positive] predation". Indeed, while Bloch's analysis depends on the kind of concretization of supernatural potency criticized by Keesing (see below) and overly economic interpretations of indigenous cosmologies (Dureau, 1991: 26-27), it is nonetheless possible to read some kind of negative predation into the generation of *tomate maza* among enemies.

However, it was the luckless death of decapitation rather than the loss of a head *per se* which caused this kind of supernatural havoc among victims. Clearly headhunting was more than simply what one did to one's enemies (Bennett 1987: 37). Bennett sees it as "ritualistic killing" and counterposes it to warfare, a distinction which overstates the separation of religious activity from everyday life (see below). We are still left, then, with the issue of why people went in search of skulls to bring home for ostentatious display in their communities. To explain this, we need to consider the significance of those heads to Tinoni Simbo. McKinley (1976: 113-121) argues that the ritual treatment of captured enemy heads, which graphically represented their personhood, was a means of transforming enemies into ritual friends. However, his generalization is clearly not relevant to this case, given the clear conceptual and spatial separation of ancestral and enemy skulls (see also Macintyre, 1987: 161) and the disdain with which these latter were eventually cast aside. Nonetheless, the practice of taking enemy heads, in an environment in which ancestral heads were venerated, strongly suggests the attachment of a common symbolic or cosmological value inherent in both kinds of skull.

### **Mana**

As in his Simbo, Romano (1984) notes that *mana* is a substance which is associated with focal users. This is not a substance which can be captured. Although *mana* could not be captured with enemy skulls, this does not mean that *mana* was irrelevant to headhunting.<sup>10</sup> The idea that headhunting is motivated by a desire to acquire some kind of substance which maximizes fertility or potency has been compellingly challenged by Needham (1976) and Keesing (1984). Needham rebuts the idea that skulls entail fertility.

[T]here need be no intermediary factor between taking heads and acquiring prosperity. The nexus has been misinterpreted by anthropological commentators, who have interpolated a fictitious entity between the cause and the effects. (1976: 71)

He attributes this to the unquestioning application of European ideas of causality to headhunting (1976: 82-84). Keesing (1984) does likewise. *Mana* appears to be simply the Oceanic manifestation of the anthropological belief in soul substance. There are thus remarkable parallels between Needham's (1976: 72-74) and Keesing's (1984) expositions of the academic history of "soul substance" in Indonesia and *mana* in Oceania.

Needham's own research in Upper Sarawak demonstrated a definite link between headhunting and prosperity, but he was quite unable to elicit any suggestion as to "just how the cause produced the effect".

In particular, there was no notion that the heads were repositories or bearers of anything resembling 'soul-substance' or life energy . . . ; nor was there ever the slightest indication that the Kenyah thought of the skulls as emitting any kind of force over the people and things in their environment. (1976:78)

Keesing argues cogently that *mana* has been falsely concretized as a substance in repeated analyses which fail to recognize a worldview in which the living are concerned with acting in the world, rather than with abstract theologies (1984: 148-149; 1985a: 202; see also J. Comaroff, 1985: 30). *Mana*, he argues, is linguistically not a noun because it is conceptually not a thing. It is, rather, a stative verb relating to efficacy:

Things that are *mana* are efficacious, potent, successful, true, fulfilled, realized: they "work". *Mana*-ness is a state of efficacy, success, truth, potency, blessing, luck, realization—an abstract state or quality, not an invisible spirit or medium. (Keesing, 1984: 138)

Rivers (1920: 64) made exactly the same disclaimer, on the basis of comparative ethnography, many years ago, but was apparently ignored:

Sympathetic magic, spitting as a medical remedy, cannibalism, head-hunting and other customs which are explained in Indonesia by the presence of soul-substance are widely prevalent in Melanesia, but nowhere have we any hint that these customs rest on a belief in an essence permeating every part of man, animal or thing, by means of which its properties can be imparted to another being or object.<sup>11</sup>

Hocart, like Keesing, repeatedly glossed the invocation, "*mana tu*", as "be efficacious" or "be propitious" in his Simbo and Roviana manuscripts (see, particularly n.d.e.), a translation in accordance with local usage. Thus, clarifying the difference between *tomate* (spirits) and *tamasa* (gods), I was told that:

The *mana* comes on the side of fortune (*pera*), living well. The skull in the shrine, it *mana*-izes you [*mamanigo*] because you burn sacrifices properly at the shrines. You love your father so he makes you *mana*-ized (*vamamanigo*)—you cannot be ill, all of your works thrive, you are strong, your garden thrives. Like that.

In passages such as this, *mana* indicates a state of blessing or enablement bestowed by ancestors on filial descendants.

Ancestral *mana* arose from the nature of relationships between the living and the dead. The reciprocal relationship of ancestral maintenance balanced by supernatural benevolence or sanctions was the core of local religion (Mantovani, 1990: 21; Keesing, 1992a: 25). While Keesing (1984: 148) sees this as a mode of explanation appropriate to the vagaries of human existence in the early Pacific, *mana* (and ancestral potency) were part of a system of action in which both parties were dependent upon the other, an expression or extension of the reciprocity of "love" which was the norm of social life. *Mana* mediated the exchange relationship between ancestors and descendants. If humans needed the empowerment of ancestors, ancestors were likewise dependent upon the living, first for their ultimate transition into ancestorhood, which will be considered shortly, and secondly for their maintenance through nurturance at shrines (see also Keesing, 1989b: 199; Valeri, 1985: 104).

### Ancestor Veneration

Ancestors were sustained, by the living, through the building and maintenance of their shrines and through propitiatory offerings. Crops could not be expected to thrive without offerings of food—in the form of pounded puddings—at ancestral shrines. This is not to argue that all offerings of food to ancestors were specifically directed at eliciting bountiful crops.

Nurturance was an ongoing obligation without which the angered ancestors might afflict the living with epidemics, the deaths of children, economic failures and so on. However, there were also occasions of food giving with specific ends in mind. While all new gardens required offerings to ancestors (Hocart, n.d.k.: 3), for example, feastgivers planting new gardens might make additional sacrifices to ancestors. So might those soliciting fortune in trading enterprises.

Those offerings habitually involved some transmogrification of the good things sought in return from the ancestors. It was the smoke of burning food that fed them, for example (cf. Barker 1985: 267). The words accompanying offerings after killing pigs echo those made following a successful headhunt (below): "The hair of the pig, the *kuruku* [part of the jaw], *mbatuna* [head] and the *masa* [flesh] are burnt . . . with the prayer: 'Here is the pig for you the mad spirits . . .'" (Hocart, n.d.m.: 4). Hocart also notes a crude form of shell money reserved for intercourse with the spirits and that "pigs, dogs, birds, trees, broken *poata* [clamshell money], tomahawks, and rings go to Sonto" (n.d.h.: 3; n.d.o.: 4). My first reaction on seeing *tabuna* on Simbo was that they were full of absolute junk. Even allowing for accretions of debris over ninety years, it was clear that much of the pre-Christian residua were also the

detritus of daily life—"all sorts of useless and broken articles—pipes, tomahawks, knives and rings" (Somerville, 1897: 386, apropos New Georgia Island), half completed carvings, stones piled higgledy piggledy and so on. Such casual disregard for the calibre of religious objects, contra my initial reaction (Introduction), are in perfect accord with Simbo devotional practice. A broken or imperfect shell ring is as cognate of the *bakia* sought in exchange as smoke is of the food being burned in offering. White's (1991: 37-38) list of offerings to ancestors on Santa Isabel has similar implications—offerings of garden produce to solicit success in gardening, for instance. So, too, skulls approximate the personhood of dead enemies,<sup>12</sup> and here McKinley and I are in accord, in the context of sacrificial offerings to ancestors.

The heads required for inauguration of canoes and communal houses were also fundamental to the enablement or activation of the latent capacities of the new object. Thus:

If the *qeto* [war canoe] wasn't inaugurated<sup>13</sup> it was totally incapable! It couldn't pull *bonito*, it couldn't fight properly, it couldn't go quickly on the sea. The *paile* [communal house] was the same.

You look. We now have no war canoes. We own no communal houses at this time because we can't inaugurate the war canoes and communal houses. One day [they were] common. The war canoe was commonplace. Warfare and *bonito* fishing were strong here. Presently, there is nothing.

If, as I have argued, the efficacy of powerful leaders and the paraphernalia of warfare depended upon enemy skulls, we return to the issues of *mana* and ancestral enablement. But the permutations of skulls, *mana* and ancestors can be significantly revised: ancestors *mana*-ized people, facilitated their activities—whether gardening, raiding, engaging in social intercourse or anything else. The living-ancestral relationship, however, was intrinsically reciprocal. Ancestral maintenance of the living was dependent upon the livings' maintenance of the ancestors. The living fed and housed the dead, gave them offerings of shell rings and shell valuables. It was in this context, I would maintain, that Tinoni Simbo sought enemy skulls—as propitiatory offerings to their antecedents. The value of skulls, *per se*, lies in their being a particular manifestation of this practice of ancestral offerings. It is notable that the only Simbo shrines containing enemy skulls were those used to solicit ancestral blessing for raids or to give thanks for success. This also situates the human sacrifice (*veala*), sometimes performed before an expedition, in which a captive was sacrificed by the assembled warriors before being beheaded, their blood drunk from their skull and small portions of their bodies cooked and eaten.<sup>14</sup>

Just as a feastgiver fed the ancestors well in seeking a successful crop, so, too, the ancestral forces could not be expected to facilitate success in warfare without a return or an inaugural gift of some kind. Thus, the communal house, the hub of public life, could not be

efficacious in generating successful expeditions until inauguration unleashed the potency held in abeyance by the ancestors. So, too with canoes. Enemy skulls were reserved for the place of warfare precisely because it was warfare they facilitated. To the living, then, success in warfare was significant. The fact that this took the form of headhunting had more to do with the need for ancestral blessing in that, as in all undertakings. Here we see the significance of ostentatious displays of skulls in communal houses. The worldly success they reflected was clear evidence of the ancestors' blessings of *banāra*'s enterprises (see also Elshout, 1926, cited in Needham, 1976: 75; Macintyre, 1987: 161). For every skull displayed in a communal house or on an altar, a portion had been burned and given to the ancestors. Hocart, recording the inaugurations (*vapeza*) carried out for skullhouses, describes an informant burning human hair at a skullhouse and offering it to the spirits with the words, "This is your share/portion of the killed, *tomate*. Be efficacious" (1931: 314, my translation). Similar offerings of enemies' ears (*sulu boso*) were made three days after returning from a successful raid (1931: 314-315). Heads, as such, were relatively insignificant to the living, as Leoke argued, but were vitally important to the dead (*cf.* Rivers, 1914b: 259).

It is hardly original to point out how dubious positivist biases founded on European mundane/supernatural distinctions constrain anthropological analyses. In recent years, Keesing (1982; 1992a), Weiner (1977) and others have built powerful analyses around the omnipresence and immediacy of the non-living in everyday affairs in Pacific Island societies. In subsequent chapters, I argue that the validity of just such a universe has come to be highly contested on Simbo. Here, however, I suggest that this kind of cosmos informed Simbo sociality prior to Christian conversion, that, given the ubiquity of ancestral involvement and interaction with the living, there was no separable religious sphere (Keesing, 1982; 1992a: 22-26).

Headhunting, to Europeans, is exotic, whether depicted as a manifestation of the brutality or of the spirituality of Others (Torgovnick, 1990: 8-9, *passim*). Europeans, with recent histories of "headhunting" for "scientific" research (Pannell, 1992: 167-171; Thomas, 1991: 179) and political purposes (Battaglia, 1990: 20; Mayo, 1973: 95; Neumann, 1992: 20-22), postmortem castration of enemies, violation of burial grounds (Keesing and Corris, 1980) and other "civilized" practices impinging on the bodies of defeated enemies, have long focused on headhunting as an almost definitive feature of certain groups, including New Georgians. Arens' (1979) and Obeyesekere's (1992) treatments of cannibalism are pertinent here. While Arens' specific claim that cannibalism has never occurred is unsustainable, his

broader point that it is typically a characteristic attributed to enemies or—more broadly yet—“others”, is not. Obeyesekere’s development of Arens provides a convincing account of Europeans doing exactly that in their constructions of Pacific Islander cannibalism (see also Douglas, 1992: 91). Indeed, cannibalism seems to be obsessively linked with headhunting in many accounts of the time. The Census Report of 1930 contains a speculative history of raiding, cannibalism and wife capture, for example, and the Rev. J. Goldie blatantly lies in his claims of New Georgian “cannibal feasts” and gruesomely embroiders his account of headhunting (WPHC, 1931: 3; Goldie, 1909: 26-27; see also Danks, 1901: 4, 8, *passim*). That headhunting was practised in New Georgia and that it expanded throughout the nineteenth century, are irrefutable facts. That people “lived for” it (Hocart, n.d.a.: 14-15), that it encapsulated their spirituality (Jackson, 1978: 31-37), that their psychological welfare was dependent upon it (Rivers, 1922: 101-102), that it was an expression of their economic rationality (McKinnon, 1975: 299-304) or that it was the focus of social life are not. These distortions and attributions, exoticizations of foreign cultural practices (Keesing, 1992a: 19), have seen New Georgians defined as headhunters in academic, popular and colonial discourses.<sup>15</sup> Such identifications tend to obscure other social practices which have not been as intriguing or seen as politically relevant to outsiders.

Headhunting was not the determining factor in Simbo sociality, but was secondary to the principle of ancestor veneration in a cosmos in which natural and supernatural, living and dead, did not so much articulate as interpenetrate, mutually informing, constraining and sustaining each other. White (1979: 109, 113; 1991: 58-59) argues that, on Santa Isabel, religious practices were in large part directed at the successful conduct of warfare which, demonstrating *mana*, provided the foundation for political power. Although success in headhunting was seen on Simbo as indicative of ancestral (religious) validation of political power, religion here was not merely concerned with warfare and politics. It pervaded social life: birth and death, success in trade, the leaving of descendants, illness and health and basic subsistence or survival (Whiteman, 1983: 64). In what follows, then, I am concerned with the religious universe as a way of seeing and acting in the world.

If headhunting did not dictate cultural logics, if we cannot speak of a headhunting culture but rather of a particular political manifestation of ancestor veneration, nonetheless it was undeniably a prominent social fact. I shall shortly attempt to demarcate the extent to which it affected internal social relations. First, however, I attempt to give a fuller account of the dominant *Weltanschauung* at that time, a cognitive reality both generated by and

contributing to the consecutive social experiences of Tinoni Simbo during the nineteenth century.

The point has often been made that in Islander cosmologies, distinctions between the various spiritual components of the universe are partial, inconsistent, contradictory or vaguely articulated (for recent examples, see Burt, 1994: 51-53; Clark, 1989: 190; Keesing, 1992a: 26). As Keesing (1982: 39-49; 1984: 148-149) points out, such variability is typical of epistemologies concerned with the efficacy of religious practice, rather than with abstract theological explanations of the universe. It also speaks to the heterogeneity of local perspectives. In later chapters, I make reference to both the variability of Simbo opinions and perspectives and the unstated understandings of the nature of the world upon which adjudications, interpretations and actions are based. Here, the sense of amorphousness or contradiction generated by that variability remains unexamined. Although it is often assumed that pre-contact or pre-pacification societies were essentially homogeneous in worldview, that it is acculturation or "Westernization" that precipitates dissonance and inconsistency, I do not intend to imply such a contrast. Rather, I assume that the present plurality is no greater than in the past in the absence of evidence to the contrary (Keesing, 1989a: 21; see Chapter Five for further discussion of this point.) The apparently unitary model proposed in this chapter is an artifact of my *post facto* reconstructions, rather than reflective of consensus on Simbo a century ago.

### ***Na Kasiagusu Kame Rane—The Pre-Christian Universe***

The Simbo cosmos was animated by living (*tinoni*) and dead (*tomate*) humans and gods (*tamasa*). *Tamasa* had, long before, been largely responsible for shaping the material world whose landscape was a visible mnemonic of their actions (see also Battaglia, 1990: 6-8). The dramatically shattered summit of Kolombangara island, which dominates the skyline of New Georgia, for example, was thought to have been caused by the furious response of the Tamasa Matedini (a hill on Simbo) to the Tamasa Nduke's (Kolombangara) jealous destruction of the glorious peak that had been Matedini. The actions of *tamasa* were generated largely by their human-like foibles and reactions such as desire, anger and jealousy. Having done their part in generating the world, they ideally withdrew from direct involvement in it (see Whiteman, 1983: 72), although they might still afflict humans who seem to have been primarily concerned to get rid of them. *Votu tamasa*, for example, was a ceremony performed in times of drought or crop failure in which "all the people" (of lineage, district or all districts?) burned

the undernourished or blighted produce of their gardens at a special altar in order to end the *tamasa*'s visitation.<sup>16</sup>

The distinction between *tinoni* and *tamasa* was not rigid, however. Humans, for example, might also be responsible for the kinds of generative actions credited to *tamasa*. These actions also arose out of the kinds of moral frailties exhibited by the *tamasa*—a baby transformed into a bird in response to its mother's failure to swiftly provide breastmilk, a lake formed subsequent to lazy parents' refusal to give their child water at night, a cloudy reef resulting from the adultery of a *banara*. In lineage origin stories, too, humans emerge fully grown from holes in the earth or are born to eagles or fruited by bamboo.<sup>17</sup>

It was *tomate* which dominated human relations with the metaphysical (see also Codrington, 1881: 311). *Tomate*, linguistically a compound of *toa* ("living") and *mate* ("dead"), and obviously referring to human continuity after death, engaged in different kinds of activities. It was they who oversaw the moral order, punishing infractions and rewarding good living (see also Burt, 1982: 379; 1994: 54-59; Keesing, 1982: 40-49, 1992a: 26; Trompf, 1991: 67-68). Punishment did not necessarily fall on the transgressor but upon some member/s of their social group. Thus, unconfessed adultery might lead to the death of the *banara* or failure to sustain ancestors could lead to the chronic illness or death of one's children or other kin. Of course, the death or affliction of offenders' close kin was also an affliction of themselves. If punishment fell indiscriminately on kin, good living resulted in blessings to the paragon. However, righteousness was insufficient either to protect against ancestral wrath or to elicit blessing. The person who was successful in all endeavours, who remained strong and healthy—foremost among whom were *banara*—was demonstrably not only a "good person" (*tinoni zona*), but was also actively engaged in mutually sustaining relationships with ancestral *tomate*, as Leoke's remarks on *mana* indicate.

### *Tomate—Ancestral Spirits*

I have, up to this point, spoken of *tomate* as a uniform group of adjudicative ancestors, but within this category also fall the malicious spirits of the forests. The connexion between these two classes is made clearer by looking at the genesis of *tomate*. The human person was, and is sometimes still said to be, made up of a body (*tinina*), shadow (*malaunu*); soul (*malaunu*)<sup>18</sup> and spirit (*tomate*), the latter only with the death of the person, when the corpse was also known as *tomate*. Despite the homonymy of shadow and soul (see also Keesing, 1992a: 15, n.1; Rivers, 1920: 59), I was consistently told that they are different entities, seemingly linked

by their both taking the partial form of the person. This is made clearer by *tekua siboro* ("taken [when] startled"), a condition in which the *malaunu* (soul) leaves a living body and becomes lost unless re-captured and swallowed by the now zombie-like person. The lost *malaunu* is clearly visible to others in the bodily form and clothing of its material self. They recognize it as the *malaunu* only by its inappropriate behaviour, in particular its not exhibiting social recognition of other kin.

The *malaunu* is the part of the person which ultimately went to the home of the dead at Sondo [Hocart—Sonto] in the Shortland Islands, aided by the keeping of the Days of the Dead (*lotu*) by the living (Rivers [1912: 395-396] account differs in some particulars). In the classic pattern described by Hertz (1960), the fate of the soul clearly paralleled the state of the body and of the mourners. As it finally decomposed on Simbo, the *malaunu*-body arrived on Sondo. Its invisible material continuity is stressed in accounts of the soul's journey. It left its mark in the form of "writing" in a cave close to home; its footprints (and those of spirit animals) were seen on the beach at Choiseul *en route* to Sondo. Finally, the living at Sondo heard the laughter and ruction and smelled the smoke of the fires of the dead there. The dead were entirely dependent upon the living for their transmission to Sondo. On the appropriate days, paralleling particular stages of the journey of the dead, the living conducted days of remembrance (*vina roroqu*), involving the pounding of puddings, the cooking of which conveyed to the *malaunu* or *tomate* the sustenance and the thoughts of the living. Simultaneously, the designated mourners were successively relieved of their mourning obligations. Having sent the dead to Sondo—the stories also stress their reluctance to go—the living had no further concern with their activities. No living person had been there and returned, so how could they know of their lives there? The ancestral souls must remain in Sondo, it was their associated spirits that were of interest to the living.

The successful completion of the Days of the Dead finally transformed the dead person into a potentially beneficent ancestor whose spirit (*tomate*) resided in the ancestral shrine containing its skull. Failure to adequately complete the time of remembrance meant the *malaunu*'s failure to reach Sondo, the non-genesis of the ancestral spirit and the propagation of those terrifying embodied spirits of the forest. The closer to death the failure occurred, the closer to home the spirit came to reside. Those for whom there were no days of remembrance thus came to haunt their own lands. Similarly, failure to adequately conduct the vital initial fourth and tenth days saw the spirit hovering around household and family, whence it must be driven into the forest.

Here we come to the various permutations of *tomate*. A *tomate* is, first, a corpse before the soul has abandoned its body. It was, second, the animating spirit at the lineage shrines at which people made offerings of supplication and sustenance. Finally, a *tomate* is and was a malicious spirit of the forests.<sup>19</sup> Contemporary Tinoni Simbo distinguish between shrine and forest *tomate* in Pidgin terms, respectively, as “ancestor” and “devil”, although both are referred to in the vernacular as “*tomate*”. There is apparently no indigenous term for “ancestor”, enquiries about which eventually elicited the descriptive phrase *podelai na pinodo* (“begin the descendant/s”), a phrase not used in everyday speech and which was apparently generated in response to my questions. Apparently, despite current discrimination between the categories of *tomate*, in the past they were regarded as alternate forms of the same entity. If ancestral *tomate* were a kind of disembodied spirit animating the shrines, forest *tomate* were also a kind of aberrant embodied ancestor.

The form and titles of malicious *tomate* reflected the reasons for their souls not being counted to Sondo. The *tomate maza* (“spirit behead/ed”) was a decapitated spectre covered with blood. The *tomate uka* (“spirit fall/fell”) was that of a man who had fallen from a tree,<sup>20</sup> usually while collecting the canarium almonds which were an important part of the ritual calendar (Burman, 1981: 257, *passim*). The *tomate kikerena* (“spirit rotten”)<sup>21</sup> was the bloated, writhing, screaming wraith of a woman dead in childbirth, the very worst of all *tomate*. These, reflecting the hazards of the most significant adult roles, were among the most dangerous of spirits, but there was a panoply of entities, both named—e.g. *tomate popoqu* (“spirit leprosy”), *tomate lopu rua* (“spirit neck rope”, i.e. spirit of a suicide by hanging)—and unnamed, incessantly roving the bush in anger and despair, killing, maiming or possessing anyone happening upon them. Although there were areas known to be infested, and thus easily avoided, the forest was a place of constant danger. Avoiding gullies (the roads of spirits) and not going outdoors in sunshowers, at sundown or in the last hours before dawn, helped to evade the *tomate*, but one could never be certain of eluding them. They were omnipresent, unpredictable and malevolent, the antithesis of the ideal, *mana*-izing ancestors.

These *tomate* may be seen as a persisting punishment of the group for the wrongdoing of individuals. Thus, the spirit of a man beheaded in warfare was caused by one of his sisters’ corporeal indiscretions (below), but nonetheless visited its fury on all the living. While it was on the one hand a direct response to the community’s failure to perform the appropriate rites of counting the Days of the Dead, that failure in turn arose from the human frailty that had

Booker: Yes, if they didn't want an ancestor, they weren't many. It's appropriate.

initially brought the spirit into existence. This is consistent with the principles of punishment meted out by ancestors properly resident in the lineage shrines.

If the malicious *tomate* were feared and avoided, ancestral *tomate* were to be loved and respected; the more powerful the ancestors, the more they should be venerated. One loved them for the place they had held in one's life—for the life and sociality they had previously facilitated through sustenance, support and help. But they were also respected both because of the respect one gave to those older than oneself and because of the fear of the powers encompassed by the shrines. People showed their love and respect in the same way—through feeding them and giving them gifts at the shrines and through observance of proper ritual treatment and maintenance of them.

The person who managed a shrine [*tabuna*], who led offerings and invocations, was a senior lineage member of the group attached to a particular shrine. This was a dangerous duty which nevertheless helped validate their authority in lineage matters. While senior people were responsible for ensuring the adequate observance of ancestral care and for seeking their blessing, direct involvement at shrines was preferably directed onto others. The potent ancestral forces were as potentially fickle as those of the forest *tomate* and the "priests" (*iama*), those who were responsible for the care, building and supervision of *tabuna* and the preparation of skulls, were not those who sought political status but those who were obliged to take on the role. Such men<sup>22</sup> ultimately became wealthy through the payments they extracted for their duties, but this wealth was reluctantly sought:

Dureau: What about the *iama*? Why didn't you [of] Simbo do the work of *tabuna* and skulls by yourselves? Couldn't you independently do the pounding and burning [of food], couldn't you touch the things on the shrines?

Leoke: No. Yes! If there was no *iama* [we] could pound and burn at our own *tabuna*. But we couldn't readily touch the *tabuna* or the skull(s). The *mana* would "cross over".<sup>23</sup> So we were afraid. The core of the *tabuna* is potent. We were afraid.

Dureau: What could afflict people?

Leoke: The leprosy or the like, which were characteristic [of the shrines].

Dureau: What about the *iama*? Didn't it afflict him?

Leoke: It afflicted [him]!

Dureau: So why did people want to assume the tasks of *iama*?

Leoke: No. We didn't want it. We were afraid. The *banara* chose the *iama*.

Dureau: Really? Is that why all the *iama* were captives?

Leoke: Yes. We didn't want that task. We were afraid of leprosy and similar things [of the shrine].

Dureau: But the *iama* took big payments! Didn't you want those payments?

Leoke: Yes. They didn't want [it]. [They were] afraid. Some wanted it so they took it but they weren't many. It's appropriate to the captive.

Dureau: But what if the captive didn't want to?

Leoke: But he was a captive! He couldn't [refuse].<sup>24</sup>

### **Kezo—Property Taboos**

If people were reluctant to engage with the direct ancestral forces of the *tabuna*, they were more willing to attempt control over the malignant *tomate* of the forests. It was in this sense that control of metaphysical forces was associated with worldly power. Various forest *tomate* could be harnessed for protection of property, healing practices, love magic and so on. Hocart (1925) differentiates these practices from ancestral veneration by labelling them “magic”. They were activated through the chanting of invocations and the following of ritualized movements, diets and behavioural restrictions. Spells could be bought, sold and given and were often imported from elsewhere. Hocart (n.d.e.: 4,6, *passim*) also reports a number of instances of Isabel captives selling spells to local people. However, the distinction between magic and ancestral veneration is forced. “Magic” suggests a contrast between spirituality and instrumentality which, as I have suggested, was not characteristic of Simbo conceptual models. There were obviously clear differences, but there were also considerable similarities. Thus, both were characterized by formulaic “prayers” or “invocations” (*varavara*) in which *tomate* were urged to comply with the wishes of the living. Hocart’s (n.d.e.: 6, *passim*) paper on property taboos in Roviana also reveals the chanting of individual *tomate*’s names which was a feature of ancestral invocations.

One c. It was the control of such potent spells that was associated with political ascendancy. The *kezo* (Hocart—*kenjo*), or property taboos, simultaneously demonstrated a person’s supernatural prowess and control over people and facilitated accumulation of the necessary wealth for both political success and ancestral maintenance (see also Burt, 1988: 79). Further consideration of *kezo* illustrates this point. *Kezo* usually consisted of an upright stick, cleft at the top, into which a designated kind of leaf, stone or other token appropriate to the specific *kezo*, was inserted with formulaic injunctions and the spitting of ginger or betelnut (Rivers, 1927: 32-35). If a person wanted to reserve, say, a particular grove of betelnut for entertaining expected guests or for distribution at a feast attached to marriage, *bonito* fishing, mortuary rites or headhunting, the correct establishment of a *kezo* established a supernatural cordon. Violation resulted in specified afflictions to the perpetrator which could be cured only by the owner after the culprit’s confession and payment of compensation to them. Even the owner of the *kezo* could be afflicted if they harvested the protected resource before first removing the

*kezo*. Alternatively *kezo* controllers were paid by others to protect their property (Rivers, 1924: 113). *Kezo* violations were vitally important to the explanation and treatment of illness (see Chapter Six), as well as the accumulation of wealth (Rivers, 1927: 32-35) and the island was well known in New Georgia for its *kezo* (Hocart, n.d.e.: 1)

Erection of a *kezo* was an open assertion of control over potent metaphysical forces; and it was the obedience of others to *kezo*, and the owner's ability to cure offenders, which validated these claims. The *kezo* claimed by a person who was not widely recognised as possessing enough wealth to buy them, or adequate metaphysical power, would hardly be respected. Conversely, the manifest general observance of an individual's *kezo* would indicate a general acceptance that they did, indeed, harness the threatened *tomate*. Further, the tacit acknowledgement of that power validated an individual's political claims, claims further vindicated by their ultimate ability to bestow the protected betelnut upon others. The success of these enterprises also furthered relationships with ancestors by enabling strong persons to adequately house and sustain ancestral remains, thus leading to their further enhancement through ancestral blessing. Thus Hocart (n.d.a.: 1) holds that Nimu was powerful because of the strength of his corpus of *tomate*. Although he also mentions the alternative power bases of other *banara*—Kave, for example, based his power on his wealth—the vital point is that while individuals may have specialized in particular kinds of power, all of these powers were interdependent: the more wealth one possessed, the more one could sustain the ancestors who responded with wealth and protection and the more wealth one could amass, the more *kezo* one could buy and so on.

lineage, individuals with no brothers or sisters, and those with only one brother or sister.

### **Sinuveri—Sociality**

The nexus of worldly and metaphysical powers informed all social practices. Fundamental to the successful conduct of human affairs were the veneration of enabling ancestral forces, the control or evasion of destructive ancestral forces and the observance of the basic norms and values of sociality, in particular, the correct conduct of kinship affairs through generosity and reciprocity and through respect between both the sexes and the generations. It is to this latter that I now turn. Previously, I argued that headhunting was only one, albeit prominent, manifestation of ancestor veneration. Here, I continue that line of argument.

Oral accounts indicate that not all men went on headhunting expeditions.<sup>25</sup> Particular boys were selected in youth to be warriors, although all were drilled by experienced warriors. Those who fought abroad were “the strong man, the man who was always prepared, he who

could not be afraid, the man who 'excelled' at (*balau vatale*<sup>26</sup>) warfare". Warriors (*varane*) were set apart from other men by their blood lust. While they were respected, they were also feared for their unpredictable willingness to resort to violence. They were "courageous" (*varane*) but also, having ritually drunken blood, "insane" (*tuturu*). While they were not precluded from becoming *banara*, the particular characteristics of warriors often made them inappropriate for rule. White makes a similar point. He argues that the elaboration of ritual surrounding preparations for raids enabled "compartmentalization of [the] aggression" characteristic of warriors on Santa Isabel (1991: 115, 64) and that with increasing maturity, warriors may have shifted from aggression to the benevolence characteristic of successful big men (1978: 80-85).

In contrast to men of fighting (*tinoni varipera*), *banara* were to be men or women of achievement, peace, adjudication and generosity. *Banara* is not easily translated within the confines of the older big man-chief vocabulary of Pacific ethnography. Glossed "chief" in Pijin, the role does not readily translate as either "big man" or "chief". *Banara* emerged, by formal selection or informal achievement, from the community of male and female adults. They might also be nominated by their predecessor, but acceptance of this depended upon their conformity to the community expectations of them. Incompetent, poor or stingy *banara* soon found themselves without followers. Rivers (1914a: 100) claims "definite hereditary chieftainship" with patrilineal succession but acknowledges the frequency of ZS succession. This is an overstatement. There was a tendency for *banara* to be the ZS or ZD of the previous *banara*, but this was not essential and, indeed, if no suitable person could be found within a lineage, individuals with no kin relationship could be "bought" from other lineages. The office was semi-hereditary<sup>27</sup> and dependent upon competence, achievement and force of personality. Although there were elements of big man achievement to the position, the more formal instatement and giving of ritual obeisance make it quite different to the classical Melanesian big man model, as does the lifelong status attached to the office (cf. White, 1991: 52,56-8, 250, n.1). I would see it as more appropriately translated as "leader", a term which allows for the disparate political clout of individuals and for the variable salience of inheritance and achievement. Some *banara* could best be described as influential, others were extremely powerful. The greatest *banara* established patron-client relationships with lineally related kin. The latter respected *banara*, worked in their gardens (Hocart, n.d.a.: 2) and followed their wishes. *Banara*, in return, sustained them with constant rounds of spectacular feasting. Their strength, generosity and benevolence towards their followers

personified community morality (White, 1991: 10). While they had powers of enforcement, decisions were ideally just and in accordance with community values. An ineffectual or unjust *banara* could be deposed by a meeting of the lineage or, as Hocart (n.d.a.: 11-13) suggests, simply disregarded. Warriors had ritual sources for their potency and so, too, did *banara*. Warriors burned food to the ancestors and ritually tasted the blood of a sacrificed enemy (*veala*) on an altar set apart from the community and, later, that of enemies in the heat of battle. *Banara*, on the other hand, were empowered by sitting upon the large clamshell money of the lineage and feasting with the community within the village. *Banara* were also people of wealth who could support their captives and dependents and who might sponsor bonito fishing or trading or headhunting expeditions. That wealth was at least partially dependent on their control of the forces associated with *kezo* (above). While warriors often combined trading and pillaging expeditions, the captives—and skulls—taken on a journey always belonged to the *banara* who had sponsored it, as did some of the spoils and profits (although the relevant warrior was credited with, and ceremonially rewarded for, the capture [Hocart, 1931: 316-317]).

But the *banara* and the warrior, like the *iama*, are specialist groups, distinguished from the majority of people, *tinoni hoboro*, glossed “commoner” by Hocart (n.d.a.: 15). The missionary Waterhouse’s Roviana dictionary (1949:38) translates *hoboro* as “common, mere, useless, idle” and *tie hoboro* (equivalent to Simbo *tinoni hoboro*) as “a nobody”. While these glosses function well for Waterhouse’s purposes they do not evoke the sentiments usually associated with *hoboro*. As suggested by Waterhouse’s translation, *hoboro* has primarily negative connotations. These range from mild to vehement adjudications about the character of others. Thus, *soana hoboro* (“walk aimlessly”) may be light-heartedly directed at the unmarried young men who idle away their time wandering between villages in search of company, entertainment, sport or intrigues. On the other hand, whispered or hissed about a married woman or shouted at her by her husband, it implies stern assessment of her imputed or known infidelity because of an observed action of being away from her own place without apparent reason. In both cases, the meaning of *soana hoboro* is identical—the difference lies rather in the assessments of the validity of walking around without obvious or particular purpose. This suggests the significance of the appellation *tinoni hoboro*: “commoners” were precisely those people without special purpose, people defined in contradistinction to those relatively few renowned ritual, political or military specialists.<sup>28</sup>

This was clearly not an egalitarian society. Although most people lived at a similar material level, thanks to the redistribution of wealth through feasting, power discrepancies dominated social life (see also Hau'ofa, 1981: 289-291). The implicit violence of warriors could erupt at any time. Further, despite the *banāra*'s reputation as persons of peace and generosity, status distinctions were marked. Their benevolence elicited admiration, but so, too, did their physical and metaphysical power: admiration was always tainted by fear.<sup>29</sup> (Macintyre, 1987: 214, reports the same sentiments about witches and sorcerers on Tubetube.) Overt postural respect and verbal restraint were expected of followers. Obedience was demanded. *Banāra* kept a variety of captives as lieutenants and servants; wherever they went they were accompanied by a retinue of followers. Hocart (n.d.a.: 18) comments that they were easily distinguished by their demeanour, an interesting contrast to the laments of older people today who deride contemporary *banāra* as indistinguishable from others.

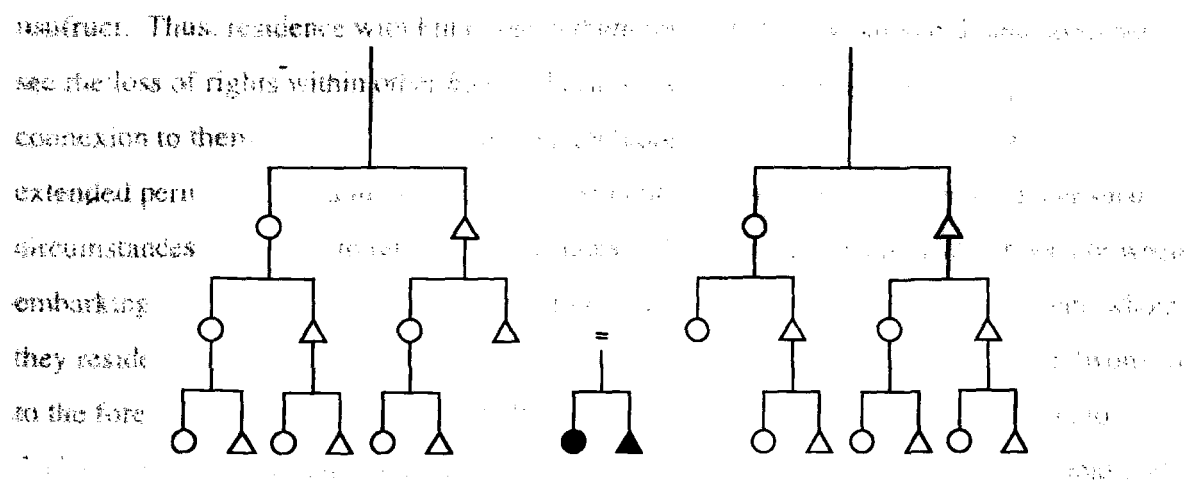
If *tinoni hoboro* was a rather contemptuous term, it referred to the majority of people whose lives, not recorded in dramatic written or oral accounts, nonetheless increasingly dominate this work. Most people did the mundane things of making gardens, satisfying material needs, sustaining families, observing required ritual events attached to birth, enterprise and death, and participating in the settlement of minimal lineage affairs.

### ***Kinship and gender***

In later chapters I argue that gender relations have come to be dominated by marriage and the nuclear family and increasingly occur outside the realm of cognatic kinship. The primal kinship bond at present is that between mother and child. The primary gender relationship, on the other hand, is the conjugal relationship which ideologically, but not actually, encompasses maternal-child relationships. At the turn of the century, however, gender and kinship were both contained within siblingship. Although inter-generational relationships were important, the primary relationship was that between siblings (*tasina*) who were tied by mystical forces (*tasina luluna*), by love (*tasina zuzubatu*), and by the pragmatics of a cognatic descent and inheritance system. Individuals belonged to both a *bubutu* and a *tavitina*. *Bubutu* ("people", "lineage"; Pidgin: "tribe", "line") refers to unilineal descent groups and is, today, applied to any span from four generations upwards. Individuals belonged<sup>30</sup> to a number of *bubutu* through bilateral links through both parents. These were and are the landholding, ideally corporate, groups. They were essentially hierarchical, dominated by considerations of power calculated (thus, theoretically, the *tasina* group could not be having kinship relations with another

and seniority and it was within them that *banara* sought their followers and exercised their authority.

If *bubutu* were determined vertically, by depth of descent from apical ancestors, they were cross-cut by the latitudinally calculated *tavitina*. This was a non-corporate (*pace* Rivers, 1924: 104) ego-centred group of bilateral kin with whom one ideally maintained mutually sustaining relationships. Rivers (1924: 13, 42) maintains that it was recognized to four generations and that exogamy was enforced.<sup>31</sup> It consisted of all those to whom one could trace kin connexion through any *bubutu* (see Fig. 2.1).



**Fig. 2.1: Tavitina**

(All persons on the bottom line constitute the *tamatasi* (sibling group).

In contrast to the hierarchically conceived *bubutu*, it was ideally egalitarian, sustained by the love and nurturance of mutual help and generalized reciprocity. There have been various attempts to analyze this category (especially Scheffler, 1962), but the *tavitina* is best described as a "kindred" (Goodenough, 1955: 71-72), that is, as a non-corporate, ego-centred, group of kin who may be expected to engage in mutually sustaining social interaction (*pace* Scheffler, 1962: 137). Although it may abstractly be claimed to include all cognatically related persons to whom Ego can trace connexion, in practice it is determined by those with whom one feels sufficiently close to confidently request assistance and towards whom one feels the affection, responsibility and obligation to provide support in turn.

While *tavitina* served to constrain the coercive possibilities of *bubutu* and *banara* by allowing individuals ample choice about residence, and hence about primary political affiliation, it also provided the basis for commonplace social intercourse. Although its breadth is theoretically limited only by the extent to which ancestral generations could be calculated (thus, theoretically, the *tavitina* consisted of all living kin from all cognatically

calculated *bubutu*), as Scheffler (1962: 147-150; see also Rodman, 1984: 64,72) has argued of *bubutu*, kin ties not activated by co-residence and co-operation tended to atrophy. Although he implies that this results in activation only of unilineal *bubutu* linkages, the contraction is less immediate. Clearly, proximity facilitated relationships and residential and lineal proximity were mutually reinforcing to the degree that close kin tended to live together. However, close blood relationship also overcame the constraints caused by close kin living apart. This was a common occurrence given the variability of postmarital residence, the small size of hamlets and the range of areas in which individuals held rights of settlement and usufruct. Thus, residence with kin of one *bubutu* for a single generation did (and does) not see the loss of rights within other *bubutu*, because *tavitina* sociality sustained Ego's connexion to them. Rather, non-residence, non-cooperation and non-reciprocity over extended periods resulted in the eventual erosion of rights within other *bubutu*: under such circumstances it is "hard to return". Individuals called upon *tavitina* in times of need or when embarking on enterprises requiring larger groups than provided by the core of kin with whom they resided—to raise resources for mortuary or wedding feasts, to accompany them (women) to the forest for birth, when gardens failed or when tensions within one area led them to decide to relocate. The intimacy of *tavitina* both facilitated social goals and interactions and protected against malevolent local forces. The *bubutu* Ove story, *Ari Karu Nonoza* ("The selfish couple") thus tells of the consequences to a married couple who habitually violated norms of generosity: when the woman gave birth, her female *tavitina* deserted her in her isolated hut, leaving her prey to a cannibalistic *tomate* which consumed both her and her child.

The *tavitina* was modelled upon the ideal sibling group's (*tamatasi*) co-operative relations, within which the social balance between love and authority prevailed. While all siblings "loved" each other, age differences meant that "love" varied. Older siblings were to be the epitome of the benevolent authority expected of *banara*; the younger were to incarnate the respectful obedience enjoined upon *tinoni hoboro*. But if relationships between *banara* and *tinoni hoboro* were characterized by the shame attendant upon respect (*pamana*: "shame", "respect"), relationships particularly within the *tamatasi* and generally within the *tavitina* were mediated by the love that came of being "born of one mother" (*podo pana kame tinana*; see also Macintyre, 1987: 211) or "lying on one mat" (*pepu pana kame lovū. lovū*: "mat", "womb"). The homonymy of mat and womb evokes powerful images of intimacy and equivalence. While the representation of unity through origin in a common womb nonetheless

implies an order of precedence, that of lying on a single mat, as children did collectively at night, entails no such differentiation: this was unity writ perfect.

Only full siblings shared identical *tavitina* which may be conceptualized as a system of relationships between sibling groups. In a cognatic classificatory system, all offspring of a group of siblings are equal from Ego's perspective (see Fig 2.1). This was reflected in the classificatory terminology whereby *tamatasi* is extended to all cousins, although with declining intensity with increasing genealogical distance. Likewise, *tina* ("mother") and *tama* ("father") refer to all *tamatasi* of one's parents. The *tavitina* is, and was, a trans-generational extension of the category *tamatasi*; the cluster of living sibling groups descended from those sibling groups lineally antecedent to Ego.

It is standard anthropological practice to distinguish between natal and classificatory kin by enclosing kinship terms for classificatory kin within inverted commas. Thus, mother refers to one's biological mother, "mother" to someone known as mother within the society, but who is not the biological mother. This practice may be defensible in situations in which there are demonstrable differences in regard to affections for, or interaction with, natal and classificatory kin. However, its standardization bespeaks a presupposition that these distinctions are real and must also influence the kinship behaviour, as opposed to ideology, of any particular society. The assumption is that a MZ is called "mother" because she is "like" a "real" mother in some respects, but that there is an affective distinction, if nothing else, between the two. Such, of course, is the prevailing European system of kinship. Such naturalism, reflecting the premises of "Western analysts whose belief in the primacy of genetic bonds goes unquestioned (Ralston, 1988: 76; Yanagisako & Collier, 1987: 30-31), is hardly defensible. On Simbo, biological relationship was neither a sufficient nor a necessary basis for relationship in the past. (At present it remains sufficient but unnecessary). I return to this issue in Chapters Six-Ten, when I argue that the Christian nuclear family challenges the assumptions of broad-based nurturance and sociality that prevailed in the past. At the moment I am concerned to point out that the demographic features of Simbo c.1900 (detailed in Chapter Five) were such as to make it unlikely that biological relationship could have provided a model for "real" kinship. High mortality and infertility rates (including high maternal morbidity) were associated with widespread adoption. I would speculate that surveys at the time would have revealed a high proportion of children sustained by people other than their biological parents. Repeated divorce would certainly have seen many people raised in the households of at least one non-biological parent. Keoto's remarks that captives,

through nurturance and reciprocal relationship, become “truly people” of Simbo who were ultimately maintained in ancestral shrines, should be taken at face value (*contra* Goldie, 1909: 29). To use inverted commas to describe non-natal relationship in this society would be to privilege European notions of what “real” kinship is about. References to kinship relationships are therefore not enclosed in inverted commas throughout this work and should be read as being of equal relevance to both natal and classificatory kin. Where it is necessary to make distinctions, I use the words “natal” or “classificatory” or specify the precise relationship using standard anthropological abbreviations, such as HM.

In this context, it is notable that contemporary Tinoni Simbo almost inevitably seek to trace descent from a sibling group rather than from a single apical ancestor. Thus, if they are asked why two people co-operate in a particular venture, or to demonstrate the genealogical linkage between them, they count back the relevant number of generations before announcing that X and Y were *tamatasi* from whom they have ultimately descended.<sup>32</sup> Thus, too, the *bubutu* Vunagugusu origin story commences with the emergence of a group of siblings from a hole in the ground. Although this hole is clearly a metaphorical woman—who is indeed categorized as a mother later in the account—the sibling group were the first persons and the unnamed “mother” is no more than the parental principle which unites siblings.

The ideal harmony of sibling relationships was sundered by gender. While siblings were equivalent in terms of inheritance and relationships with outsiders, attachment of opposite-sex siblings was intrinsically hierarchical and provided the primary gendered relationship in pre-pacification Simbo.

There are a number of terms designating sibling relationships:

1. The generic *tasi*, has already been mentioned.
2. *Poretasina* designates a particularly significant sibling of either sex, although greatest significance is always attached to opposite-sex siblings. Usually used non-reciprocally by the sibling of lowest standing, it is a contextual term, used to indicate relative importance. For a woman a male *poretasina* is a closely related older “brother”. For a man, a female *poretasina* is a considerably older sister.
3. By way of contrast, *zuzubatu* (literally, “push head/s”) is used of a natal sibling group. The term evokes the familiarity and equivalence of those born of one mother in a society in which touching the head of another is symbolically equivalent to decapitation. It is thus expressly forbidden except in relations of great intimacy, in which case it is mutually

impinged on avoidance requirements.

permissible, or in hierarchical relationships, in which case only the superior may touch the head of another.

4. Finally, *luluna* is a term referring reciprocally to opposite-sex siblings and denoting a relationship of implicit male violence and explicit female restraint. *Luluna* and *zuzubatu* relationships mutually modify each other: while the fact of being natal siblings ideally qualified the stringency of respect and avoidance behaviours, the companionship of sibling relationships is also tempered by the principles of *luluna* restraint.<sup>33</sup> Male and female siblings thus engaged in two opposed kinds of relations simultaneously: sibling (brother-sister) and gender (*luluna*) relations. These evoked, respectively, sameness, love, nurturance and mutuality and opposition, "respect/shame", fear and hierarchy. Respect requirements categorically demonstrated female subservience to *luluna*. Women were forbidden to step over the legs, or walk directly in front of, their *luluna*. They must remain to the rear, or, if obliged to pass in front, stoop or crawl. While avoidance behaviour dictated that male and female siblings not touch any object simultaneously, status differences were manifested in the requirement that women pass it to a third person to pass in turn to their *luluna* whereas men threw objects on the ground for their *luluna* to retrieve. Respect was also expressed in requirements of female *luluna* verbal restraint. Euphemisms, for example, were required if women enunciated any part of their *luluna*'s head—"stones" for teeth, for example. They also used the respect term for eating (*teteku*) when speaking to and about their *luluna*. *Teteku* is a compound of *teku* ("take", "accept") and thus elides any implication of consumption. Its common equivalent, *gagani* is a compound of *gani* which implies not only consumption, but uncontrolled bodily urges. Thus, *nagani* is sexual lust of a kind less acceptable than the more discerning "desire" (*hiniva*) appropriate to legitimate adult sexual relations and *liligani* (Hocart—*Iliganigani*) were mythical people-eating giants (Hocart n.d.c.). The grossness of *gani* is also reflected in the appended texts to Hocart's (1931: 321-324) paper on warfare, in which it is used rhetorically as a metaphor of consumption or cannibalism for the intended destruction of enemies and their sisters. The interdiction on suggesting that male *luluna* eat food is compounded by semantic associations of the mouth with the shame/respect complex. *Pamana* ("shame/respect") literally means "in/via [the] mouth" and is clearly connected to the idea that one who is *pamana* is not only verbally restrained out of respect, but rendered mute in proportion to the degree of shame they feel.<sup>34</sup>

Verbal restraint did not derive exclusively from formal respect obligations—it also impinged on avoidance requirements. Men should have no awareness of their *luluna* as

corporeal beings beyond the minimum necessary to acknowledge their existence. While the strongest prohibition was on knowledge of sexuality, it affected most areas of female bodily existence. Thus, the euphemism for diarrhoea (*uru*) is *vitigi tia* ("abdominal pain"), but even this description was unacceptable in the hearing of *luluna* of a woman suffering from the condition. Likewise, one should not refer to the actual or potential pregnancy of a woman (married or unmarried) in the presence of her *luluna*. Female marriage also required payment of "compensation" (*ira*) to *luluna* for the implicit public announcement of the entailed sexual relations.

If there was an element of illicitness to sexuality even within marriage, this was far more pronounced outside it. It is clear from Hocart's accounts and from current oral accounts that premarital sexuality was the norm (n.d.f.: 1-3). Thus, he reports (n.d.f.: 1) that in Roviana, unmarried women who had had sexual intercourse were called *maqota* [Hocart—*manggota*]. Two snippets from his papers imply that something similar occurred on Simbo. Firstly, in describing the transition to *maqota*, he reports that a girl's suitors "paid" shell rings to her father in exchange for sexual access. Elsewhere (1931: 306), he remarks that Simbo men treated their daughters as "prostitutes", which strongly suggests an analogous practice there. This description of parental pimping seems inconsistent with the requirements of scrupulous female discretion in such matters, of which Hocart seems unaware. He is, for example, rather bemused at the outrage caused by his casual hypothetical enquiry as to whether named *luluna* might marry (n.d.h.: 10), an outrage presumably caused not only by this being an incestuous coupling, but by his implied demand that his male informants think about their *luluna*'s corporeality.

The term *maqota* refers, on Simbo, to an admired married women and it previously designated female *banara* (*banara maqota*).<sup>35</sup> This suggests that interpretations of *maqota* in terms of prostitution have been flawed. This apparent inconsistency between parental commerce in offspring, the girl's endowment with a title blatantly proclaiming her sexuality, and the possibility of sororicide when her *luluna* became aware of it, may be resolved by considering the nature of the payments accepted by the girl's parents. Hocart does not describe the distribution of the wealth accepted from a girl's suitor by her parents. However, a woman's progression through a number of marital stages (Chapter Eight) has always involved payments to her descent groups, including payments designated "compensation" to her *luluna*. In the earlier stages, the wealth distributed consisted primarily of "compensation", whereas in later stages it was largely composed of wealth for her parents. I would suggest that

the payments described by Hocart were analogous to those marriage payments and were distributed to her *luluna* as “compensation” for the public change of status which so clearly entailed sexual activity.

This re-analysis also resolves an apparent inconsistency in the claims made to me by contemporary Tinoni Simbo about prior sexual practice. Despite clear evidence to the contrary, I was consistently assured that the premarital sexuality of the present time did not occur in the past, a fact assured by the threat of *luluna* homicide. Older people are presently overtly concerned with what they see as the untrammelled sexual indulgence and foolishness of girls and they cast this in opposition to the situation described above. However, if it is allowed that the majority of assignations occurred with the knowledge and consent of a girl’s parents, who accepted the responsibility for neutralizing her *luluna*, the discrepancy is eliminated. At the same time, parents’ potential to refuse the payments meant that they maintained considerable control over the girl’s activities. Most sexual activity, including that of those not formally co-habiting had, then, been legitimated in terms interpreted by missionaries, anthropologists and others as prostitution.

Corporeality was not only tied in with constraint between siblings and the social regulation of sexuality. In a manner by no means clear, female *luluna* restraint was connected to male *luluna* well-being. Opposite-sex siblings were, in a sense, supernaturally complementary. Thus, a woman who committed sexual infractions was endangering her *luluna* when they went on headhunting expeditions (or presumably when raiders attacked Simbo). Only through confession of her wrongdoing and payment of “compensation” could the danger of their decapitation be averted. Hocart (n.d.a.) also says that the brothers of an adult woman might be decapitated by jealous affines, a more material linkage between female behaviour and male mortality. This also created a *tomate maza*.

It is difficult to know how to interpret this web of action and counter-action, admission and secrecy, cause and effect. The punishment of illicit female sexuality through the death of male relatives, unless offset by compensation or execution of the offender, is reminiscent of the consequences for violations of sacred states in Malaitan societies described by both Keesing (1982) and Burt (1994: 60), whereby the consequences of wrongdoing fall upon those afflicted by the ensuing pollution. Certainly the need to pay “compensation” or to kill the girl, in order to restore both male *luluna*’s equanimity and to avert the catastrophes that might befall them, accords with Burt’s (1994: 47) claim that the sacred state could only be restored by expiatory sacrifice.

It is not clear, however, what kind of sacred state we might be dealing with here. Neither my own nor Hocart's materials contain any suggestion of a world ordered by (Malaitan) *abu* ("taboo") in the manner described by Burt (1994: 33-37, *passim*; 1988) and Keesing (1982). While Simbo men were, indeed, set apart when preparing for *bonito* and headhunting expeditions, these states were both temporary and applicable only to those involved. On Simbo, further, we are dealing not only with improper sexuality, but with a normative situation which nonetheless aroused the blood rage of male *luluna*. There are, in other words, two separate rather than interdependent strands to this complex—that of the supernatural consequences of female *luluna*'s illicit bodily acts, expressed exclusively in sexual activity, and that of male *luluna*'s responses to knowledge of female bodies in either licit or illicit states.

In regard to the latter, the situation is suggestive of the famed opposite-sex relationships of Polynesia (Gailey, 1980; Schoeffel, 1977; 1978; Shore, 1981). Schoeffel and Shore, in particular, address the issue of male concern with their sister's sexuality in Samoa. Women are only legitimately sexually active within marriage, and men respond violently to news of their sister's extramarital sexuality. Schoeffel interprets this in terms of maintaining the honour of the descent group. In a universe in which sisters have moral authority (backed by supernatural sanctions) and rank higher than brothers, while brothers have secular authority (constrained by their sisters' supernatural powers), women are responsible for the "face" of the descent group, a reputation especially significant in a system of ranked descent groups. Sexual intercourse is locally depicted in terms of male conquest. The lovers of women found to be illegitimately sexually active are rhetorically said to have subdued the women's descent groups, thus bringing shame upon brothers, in particular. Brothers then act to curtail or punish such shame by their assault on their sisters.

Underlying this pattern of female action and male sibling reaction (balanced by male action and female supernatural reaction in other contexts) is an understanding that the sibling set constitutes a primary organizational principle, a principle which Schoeffel (1977: 11, Western Samoa), Gailey (1980: 229, Tonga) and Linnekin (1990, Hawaii) all hold to have been obscured and undermined by an emphasis on agnatic descent or the conjugal tie by successive Eurocentric commentators. Their own contrasting acknowledgement of bilineal principles and the unity of sibling groups echo kinship structures on Simbo. If the Simbo *tamatasi* was the core social unit, as I have argued, then siblings were presumably also supernaturally equivalent in some way. The metaphysical outcome, for one gender, of the

material activities of the other is, in a general way, no different to the situation described by Schoeffel, although the active force in this case is the ancestral *tomate* rather than the volition of living females. We might, then, talk of women as having had a kind of supernatural counter to their *luluna*'s earthly power, the "sacred power" which Shore (1981: 200) counterposes to Samoan brothers' "instrumental power". However, there are also considerable differences between the two cases. Firstly, on Simbo, female sexuality had implications directly for *luluna*, rather than for the descent group. Further, these consequences were metaphysically threatening rather than shameful to men, and it was *women* who suffered shame as an integral part of *luluna*-ship. Secondly, in the Samoan case, it was quite acceptable to allude to the sexuality of married women, whereas on Simbo any male awareness of any sexual activities by *luluna* had violent consequences.

This violence is logically commensurate with the strong incest taboo between siblings. To copulate with or marry a sibling, natal or otherwise, is categorically to couple with one defined as equivalent to oneself. This could be resolved only by the death of one party, or by a ceremony designed to sever all genealogical linkages between the two.<sup>36</sup> This entails the formal severance of all *tamatasi* linkages between all those others belonging to the shared *bubutu*. It might be argued, then, that violent male responses to awareness of their *luluna*'s corporeality arise from the implication of possible incest violation, and its possible consequences, which is contained in such awareness. Ross (1986: 843, 849-851; see also Harris, 1993) argues that societies characterized by high levels of external warfare are correlated with low female status and autonomy. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that women had no parallel rights over their *luluna* and, correlatively, no barrier against knowledge of their bodily existence. It seems that the elevated position of men *vis-a-vis* their *luluna* enabled them to displace responsibility for images of incest onto women.

If women had no physical rights over their *luluna*, male coercive power was monopolized by *luluna*. The obverse of sibling unity was that women always retained rights to the resources of the *tamatasi* and to the protection of their *luluna* in the face, not only of enemies, but also of affines. Marriages were apparently egalitarian and short term, a pattern at least partly determined by the obligation of men to respond to their *luluna*'s expressions of need or hardship. Chapter Eight examines early marital relationships in detail, including ceremonies with strong symbolic assertions of equality. At this point I am concerned only with establishing a contrast between conjugal and sibling relationships and obligations. Co-operative enterprises and assistance flowed within sibling groups (*tamatasi*) and the extended

form, the *tavitina*, more than with and between affinal households. Between same-sex siblings, there was nothing to disrupt relationships unless the wishes and advice of older siblings was not heeded. For opposite-sex siblings, although co-operative social relations remained vital, strong tensions were associated with the explicitly hierarchical gender relationship that obligated men to protect and sustain their *luluna* and women to defer to both their *luluna*'s status and coercive powers. Gender and kinship coalesced around the principle of descent from common sibling groups rather than dividing around the independent principles of nuclear family primacy and cognatic descent, as developed over subsequent generations.

4 All of this occurred in a universe overseen by strong, but not absolute, *banara* and by ancestral spirits who enforced such norms of sociality and good behaviour as were imperfectly safeguarded by senior kin. In the last century, there has been a transformation from a kinship world of material and immaterial action and reaction, in which sibling relationships dominated both kinship and gender, to a Christian God-dominated universe in which conjugal and parental relationships are presented as pre-eminent. *Banara*, previously sustained by the endorsement of living and dead kin, have increasingly been marginalized by ministers and pastors who derive their authority from a distant, unrelated God (see also Burt, 1994: 239-247). With the dissipation of siblingship as a governing principle of social action, gender relations have come to be increasingly dominated by ideas of a husband's authority and rights. These ideas co-exist with the continuing, although steadily declining, imperative of women's subservience to their *luluna* but without the ideas of men's obligation to their *luluna*. The subsequent chapters address this transformation from a world of spirits, *banara* and siblings to one of God, church officials and spouses. I begin in the next chapter by looking at the establishment of Christianity.

## NOTES

1: Neither contemporary Tinoni Simbo, nor Hocart and Rivers, see this as a transitory moment. For Hocart and Rivers, the time prior to pacification was the unsullied past. Hence Rivers' (1922) depiction of Tinoni Simbo as cultural conservatives unable to cope with the loss of headhunting and his prescription of a therapeutic substitution of pig hunting. Hocart's manuscripts (e.g. n.d.a.: 16; n.d.i.: 5) also refer to the then present as a "decadent" time. For Tinoni Simbo, too, relying on reminiscences of now-dead parents and grandparents—and subjected to decades of missionary definitions of their ancestors—this is a timeless past interrupted by Christian conversion.

2: *Vina*—"number of"; *Aria*—"let's go!", i.e., "collective expedition".

3: As far as is known. In an earlier work, Jackson (1972: 23) argued that there is no support for the assumption that headhunting pre-dated European contact. At that point he argued that it would have been incompatible with population viability, even before the introduction of metal technology. However, his attempt to envisage the circumstances in which the practice might have arisen is even more speculative than the assumption that an existing practice was elaborated during the nineteenth century. Jackson seems to have reached similar conclusions, for by 1978 (p.72) he clearly holds that headhunting *did* precede intercourse with Europeans.

4: Bennett (1987: 84-85) for example, argues that they were necessary to the successful expansion of the Rovianese "mint". Hocart also notes instances in which important captives were held to ransom.

5: Both Hocart and Scheffler are rather disparaging about *banara maqota*. Scheffler (1962: 144-145) argues that they were simply nominal title holders in the absence of appropriate male kin. Hocart (n.d.a.: 19-20) observes that "[t]hey have authority over men as well as women: 'If she speaks first, both the men and women work,' says Njiruviri . . . It is said that they can order a communal house or a skullhouse". Nonetheless, he dismisses them as having been little more than supervisors of the cooking attached to feasting. He cites their non-participation in raiding as logical evidence of their insignificance. However, while he emphasizes headhunting as a route to chiefly power, Rivers states that *banara* "had the chief voice in deciding when a headhunting expedition should be organized, but they were not the leaders of the expedition when it set out. Even if a *banara* accompanied an expedition, he was not expected to be its leader" (1924:161, emphasis added). The question of whether women may have sponsored raids remains open, then. Even if they did not do so, Hocart and Rivers are both adamant that it was feasting that was vital to the validation of leadership. My own limited data on *banara maqota* implies that their achievement of *banara* status resulted from their greater competence, an implication, too, of Hocart's (n.d.g.) puzzled report of a Rovianese *banara maqota* who had five commoner adult brothers. Perhaps Hocart and Scheffler were not disposed to find female leaders. Accounts, such as Weiner's (1977) & Macintyre's (1987: 222-223), of women transacting in ceremonial exchanges on behalf of their female and male kin, indicate that it is not extraordinary.

6: This is at odds with Cheyne's (Shineberg, 1971b) report of finding the skulls of children on Simbo in 1843. Against this must be set the contemporary visible evidence of people descended from Santa Isabel and Choiseul captives on Simbo and Roviana. There are a number of possible explanations for this dissonance. There may, firstly, simply have been a considerable degree of variation in practice. Alternatively, Cheyne may have been allowing himself some rhetorical licence, like so many European commentators on New Georgian headhunters. Finally, it is not unlikely that there were significant changes in orientations towards enemies between Cheyne's time and the end of the nineteenth century, changes commensurate with the population shifts caused by both the scale of raiding and the epidemics which swept the area during the last decades of the century.

7: *Manavasa*—"tame", "acculturate", in Pidgin, "get used". The term is used to describe the domestication of animals or the familiarization of adoptees.

8: A problematic contention. Rivers discounts accounts which evidence the effects of introduced diseases, for example. His argument that population was in decline as a result of *pacification* is certainly not generalizable throughout the Group in which several islands saw their populations decimated by Bilua, Roviana and Simbo

warriors (Bennett, 1987: 36, 113). Although Solomon Islander warfare was not a motivation for pacification, it might nonetheless retrospectively be argued that pacification did essentially arrest one factor contributing to the depopulation of those other areas. Early reports suggest that Simbo was heavily populated around the beginning of the nineteenth century. Stannard (1989: 32-58) demonstrates that the generous population capacities of pre-contact Pacific Islands have been obscured by the horrendous rates of post-contact depopulation. This is discussed further in Chapter Five.

9: *Suveri taveti* (lit., "remain work/do"), the term evokes staying with, in the sense of engaging in the co-operative relationships of those who live together.

10: In what follows I am heavily indebted to Roger Keesing's "Rethinking Mana" (1984).

11: He goes on to say that the idea of an essence may apply to the Banks and Torres Islands (1920: 65), whence Codrington derived his analysis of *mana*. As Keesing (1984: 137) points out, it is Codrington's understanding which has come to dominate views of *mana*.

12: Possibly also of captives. Hocart (1931: 306, 316-317) notes that captors were accorded the same credit as head-takers following successful expeditions.

13: *Peza*, the word used to describe the wind which dominated headhunting months. Burman (1981: 255-257) and Hocart (1931: 302-303) analyze this concept further.

14: There is some contention about the extent of this practice on Simbo. Most people deny that their lineage ever performed it, ascribing the custom to other districts. When one party to a recent land dispute asserted that their opposition had been cannibals, the latter were outraged and have threatened legal proceedings for compensation. There is little doubt that it occurred, given the extent of its documentation (e.g. WPHC, 1930; Hocart, 1931: 315; Gina, 1930, the latter a rather spectacular account). It was this consumption of blood at the altar—in a sense a true communion with the ancestors in that warriors effectively consumed products offered to them—that rendered warriors *tuturu* (insane) and enabled them to achieve their reputed superhuman feats of invisibility, sustained rapid rowing and vigorous battle.

15: As Obeyesekere (1992: 630-631) notes, "statements about cannibalism reveal more about the relations between Europeans and Savages during early and late contact than, as ethnographic statements about the nature of Savage anthropophagy". It is interesting, then, that BSIP documents, (e.g. WPHC, 1931) frequently reference the headhunting history of the Group in juxtaposition to the contemporary state of polity. Popular understandings similarly privilege headhunting (or cannibalism, almost a synonym in such works despite the relative rarity of the practice in this area). Titles of popular publications of the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century reflect this obsession: *A naturalist among the headhunters* (Woodford, 1890), *Life and laughter 'midst the cannibals* (Collinson, 1926), *The savage Solomons . . . a record of a headhunting people...* (Knibbs, 1929), *Headhunting in the Solomon Islands* (Mytinger, 1943). That the superficial similarity of these various representations by missionaries, scholars, adventurers and administrators obscures discontinuous and sometimes contradictory perspectives and motivations (N. Thomas, 1992a, considers some of these) is not the issue here: whether as savage half-children to be raised into the light, foil to the adventurers' courage and proof of their evolutionary superiority, noble savages, ignoble barbarians or psychological incompetents, New Georgians have nonetheless been defined as headhunters first and foremost, a representation also reproduced in popular indigenous constructions of the past.

16: This is Hocart's account. My own sources have it that the smoke carried news of their plight to the *tamasa* who, pitying the people, would avert their catastrophe. This seems to be a modern re-interpretation of traditional *tamasa* in terms of the love ascribed to Tamasa, the Christian god. All other evidence ascribes indifference—or occasional malice—to the *tamasa*. Linguistically, Hocart's interpretation seems more credible, *votu* ("get out") having strong connotations of eviction or injunction.

17: These origin stories are today subject to much contention, largely because of endemic disputes over land ownership. On my arrival, I blundered into an acrimonious dispute over a piece of prime land. My inadvertent initial association with one of the major parties of the dispute, like my only partially successful subsequent efforts at disentanglement, had clear implications for those accounts I collected. At the present time, the "politics of

tradition" on Simbo are concerned more with such internal issues than with the conscious responses to colonialism, Westernization and national and regional politics mapped by others (e.g. Burt, 1982; Keesing, 1992a). Given the number of researchers to have worked on Simbo and the almost universal literacy on the island, it is hardly surprising that written accounts of Simbo culture figure in these issues. The origin story given in Scheffler (1962: 137-138), for example, is one version of the Vunagugusu origin and is claimed by one party as authentication of their own land claims. The stories I mention here will be recognizable to many Tinoni Simbo, but this should in no way be construed as my endorsing one account. I am entirely concerned with the structural similarities in the accounts. (This disclaimer is made in accordance with undertakings given to a number of individuals and the Simbo Ward Committee.)

18: Rivers (1920: 59-60) uses *ghalaghala* for soul, shadow, reflection. He also claims that it was the *tomate* which went to Sondo, while the *ghalaghala* remained in the shrine. I am unable to account for these discrepancies.

19: The tense changes here are deliberate.

20: This fate may appear trivial relative to warfare and childbirth. However, Hogbin (1969: 19) observed that at least one male death annually was related to falls from Canarium trees in northern Malaita in the 1930s.

21: *Kikerena* is, literally, "rotten". It refers both to rotten food and to evil or reprehensible human acts or characteristics. It is the strongest epithet that can be applied to anyone or anything.

22: There were male and female *tabuna*; women made offerings at female shrines, men at male shrines. However, *iamas* were always male.

23: *Karovo*—"cross over" (literally and figuratively), moving from one side to another, the term used for inversions, betrayals, changes of allegiance.

24: This is rather unusual in an area where the ritual management of metaphysical phenomena is generally recognized as demonstrating capacity for leadership. White's (1991: 58-59, 115) demonstration of the linkages between ritual mastery and leadership seems a far more usual pattern. Modjeska (personal communication) points out that the situation I describe is somewhat reminiscent of Duna (PNG) practices. The Duna previously prevailed upon the neighbouring Huli people to perform their dangerous rituals. Intriguingly, however, the Huli had been politically dominant over the Duna. His material thus represents an inversion of the power situation on Simbo.

25: This is an aspect not generally reported by contemporary Tinoni Simbo, who maintain that all men were warriors. I was told this during my second period of fieldwork by an old man who denied that his father had been on any expeditions and subsequently explained why. Checking with other people revealed divergent opinions. Women and men old enough to have parents who engaged in battle agreed with the above. Younger men disagreed, claiming that Simbo men had all been warriors. Most younger women disclaimed any specific knowledge of the facts. A well-known *kastom* story about a woman who had defeated a Ranonggan expedition in the absence of any men appears to support the modern contention. However, Hocart's (1931: 302,303) two variable accounts of Lipuriki both portray her as fighting next to Simbo men. This variation, and her non-appearance in any of my genealogies, suggests that she is a legendary figure, the details of whose exploits may vary over time. Although people today assume that the norm was for men to wish to be headhunters, it is not reciprocally assumed that those who did *not* want to participate were cowards, a concept for which I could elicit no Simbo word. Tinoni Simbo acknowledge that people may be fearful (*matatu*) or may flee (*uku*) but the latter is a rational response to the former. Headhunters were not only brave (*varane*—also the title of the expedition leader) but they were also (usually temporarily) crazy or insane (*tuturu*) following participation in pre-expedition rituals. Hocart (1931:306) describes as *lomos* a man who had lost his desire to take heads. *Lomos* ("pleasant tasting", "cool") is an ambiguous word connoting, variously, passivity, sweetness and lack of enthusiasm.

26: *Balau vatale*: "know thoroughly", "be expert or good at", "have a good understanding of".

27: This is not as unusual as the terms of the big man-chief: Melanesia-Polynesia dichotomy would seem to suggest. Apart from White's work on chieftainship in Santa Isabel and the well-known hereditary chieftainship

of the Trobriands, Hau'ofa (1981: 289-292) cites at least 24 Melanesian seaboard societies "with more or less developed hereditary authority structures".

28: This is distinct from the Pidgin "rubbish man". On Simbo, the Pidgin term "rubbish man" is a strongly moral description. A "rubbish man" is a person who violates the basic norms of sociality through greediness, crass manipulation of others, dishonesty or selfishness.

29: Hocart (n.d.a.: 18) gives an instance of a man who hanged himself in despair at having angered a *banara*.

30: The past tense here does not necessarily indicate that these structures have disappeared. Both *tavitina* and *bubutu* remain important, although their significance has altered. *Bubutu* have become consequential as corporate groups as land ownership has been codified in the wake of land sales and acquisitions in the colonial era, and post-colonial legislation to return alienated land. At the same time, although *banara* have become less formidable in terms of direct power over individuals, they have become more consequential as keepers of genealogies. Individual *banara*'s legitimacy has also been increasingly contested as such positions of lineage seniority have come to be seen as having greater credibility in local land courts. At the same time, *tavitina* ties have contracted under pressures towards nuclear family primacy and greater concentration of wealth within families. I deal with this latter trend in later chapters.

31: Rivers is somewhat inconsistent about descent, arguing variously that it was "bilateral" (1924: 13) and "patrilineal" (1909: 167; 1914a: 87).

32: In fact, the apical ancestor may be even more remote than the parents of that *tamatasi*. Classificatory terminology allows this statement about persons who shared no parents, a feature that initially played havoc with my genealogical records.

33: Although see my comments in Chapter Five on the contemporary dissonance between ideals and behaviours of natal siblings. Although *luluna* relations are based on siblingship, it is important to distinguish between the two. It is inappropriate to gloss *luluna* simply as brother and sister for the two encompass sometimes radically opposed principles. Siblingship entails love, mutual help and compassion. *Luluna*-ship entails hierarchy, power and violence. Women and men may be simultaneously siblings and *luluna*, but they enact each relation in radically different contexts. Thus, when Tuke's sister Eda suffered a miscarriage following a fall, Tuke accompanied her to Gizo hospital for surgery. His love for his sister easily prevailed over the *luluna* restriction against knowledge of her corporeality. Some months later, someone made casual reference to the miscarriage in the presence of both parties. Tuke jumped down from the verandah where he was lounging and lunged at Eda, who was cooking. Eda, hearing, immediately fled and several other people moved simultaneously with Tuke to restrain him and press compensation upon him. Despite the textual awkwardness, I therefore retain the term *luluna* throughout, distinguishing male and female where necessary. Where I refer to brother or sister, I refer specifically to the supportive, loving aspect of sibling relations.

34: There is clearly a connexion to the skull-taking complex, but I would suggest that it is further complicated by the local values placed on talking, in particular the notion that words not definitively true are necessarily false, which imply that only the statements of authorized persons are legitimate and that others should keep silent.

35: Waterhouse (1949) translates *maqota* as "prostitute". Although it is difficult to comment on homonyms across languages, it seems unlikely that two such diametrically opposed meanings could be applied in societies with languages so closely akin—I certainly have no other instances of this happening—and in which close raiding, trading and affinal relationships prevailed. It seems more likely to be a case of a moralistic re-interpretation of a local custom, an interpretation which *ipso facto* required the suppression, by missionaries such as himself, of the practice.

36: I am not entirely sure that this ceremony did not originate with pacification and the subsequent outlawing of execution within indigenous societies. Oral histories concur with Rivers (1924: 167-168) in claiming that incest was inevitably penalized by death.

## PART TWO

## EDDYSTONE ISLAND

Everything in the lives of these very people seems to be governed in some way by the spirit, hence the importance of the spirit in their lives, and make a profitable study of the history of the people of the dawning for the people of the Western world. The people of the dawning heading [sic] and [sic] hanging [sic] of the [sic] of the [sic] of the people agricultural pursuit and [sic] of the [sic] of the [sic] of the people for themselves and thus being [sic] of the [sic] of the [sic] of the [sic] of the people.

## August 6, 1788

[T]hey made sail again . . . and at eight discerned a rock which had exactly the appearance of a ship under sail . . . So strongly were the Alexander's people prepossessed with this imagination, that the private signal was made, under the supposition that it must be either the Boussole or the Astrolabe . . . Nor was the mistake detected till they approached it within three or four miles . . .

. . . At noon . . . the rock which had been mistaken for a ship was called the Eddystone, and bore north by west, distant four leagues. The Eddystone bears from Cape Satisfaction south-south west, distant two leagues.

drawn materials are found of [sic] [sic]

(see Appendix I)

## Tulavini Rule—4 Pacification

In many Melanesian societies, contact with Europeans led to a rapid and complete transformation, contact with Christian missionaries led to a rapid and complete transformation. (Macintyre, 1900: 82; Smith, 1900: 105). Indeed, the rapid transformation of the Christian impacts from those of various other religions was not only because of their mutual, albeit often conflicting, goals, but also because of the concurrence of the two events. The Simbali people, who had apparently remained autonomous in the face of prolonged proximity with Europeans, but whose politics, entangled with ancestor veneration, had themselves been almost immediately to Christian missionaries. (Macintyre, 1900: 105). The rapid transformation of local political relations with Europeans, while true, the missionaries' impact, and the cultural interpretation of those relations, is what is important. It was neither a "pragmatic" response to mission health and education, nor was it a "pragmatic" response to colonial power (e.g. Harwood, 1971, 11; Hildred, 1979: 100-101).

fellowship or coercive actions of Church. See Island case studies (e.g. Laukufu, 1978: 101-103; Macintyre, 1989: 162-163).

### CHAPTER THREE

missionaries (e.g. Bennett, 1987: 11).

been proposed to explain such change. **TINAVITI BULE** ultimately responsible for Simbo conversions subsequent social history and pacification

### PACIFICATION

On Simbo, while the characteristics and actions of the natives were undoubtedly

Everything in the lives of these very superstitious people is connected in some way and controlled in some way by the spirits, hence the old sorcerers and witch doctors are people of great importance, and make a profitable thing out of the fears of the people. However, better days are dawning for the people of the Western Solomons. The power of the sorcerer is waning, and heading [sic] and witch hanging in ending, and, with a wise paternal government teaching the people agricultural pursuits and giving them something to employ their time, teaching them to work for themselves and thus better their condition, they would be a happy and contented people.

western Solomons cultural practices, then underlying the conversion. Goldie, 1909: 30

conversion. [Archdeacon:] "I must warn you. Fortune, you are not likely to make many converts in as w. Fanua".

interaction. "What, are they cannibals?"

part. "No, no! But they are like children, always singing and dancing, and of course immoral. But all the natives are like that . . ."

sign. "I am afraid that none of the children of God weigh altogether true", said Mr Fortune. "For that matter, I have heard that many cannibals are fond of dancing"

histories of conversion on Santa Isabel and Bougainville. Warner, 1927, *Mr Fortune's Maggott*.

highlighting the salience of particular historical circumstances and cultural processes in

**Tataviti Bule—Pacification** nity that is the subject of subsequent chapters.

In Chapter One, I argued that intense island-wide conversion were inevitable. In many Melanesian societies, contact with European culture was almost coterminous with contact with Christian missionaries, and some form of religious conversion (e.g. Clark, 1989: 170; Macintyre, 1990: 82; Smith, 1990: 155). Indeed, it is often difficult to distinguish Christian impacts from those of various other colonial forces, such as government and traders, not only because of their mutual, albeit often conflictual, place in colonial enterprises, but because of the concurrence of the two events. On Simbo this was not the case: Simbo had apparently remained autonomous in the face of prolonged interaction with Europeans. Local politics, entangled with ancestor veneration, had flourished. Why then, did they submit almost immediately to Christian missionary<sup>1</sup> suasions? To answer this, I consider the nature of local political relations with Europeans, at the time the missionaries arrived, and the cultural interpretation of those relations. I maintain that it was neither so-called "Melanesian pragmatism" in response to mission health and education resources and overwhelming colonial power (e.g. Harwood, 1971: 31; Hilliard, 1978: 165-166, 275-277); nor the cultural

fellowship or coercive actions of South Sea Island missionaries (e.g. Latukefu, 1978: 101-103; Macintyre, 1989: 162-163), nor the reputedly protective face of paternalistic white missionaries (e.g. Bennett, 1987: 116, *passim*; Harwood, 1971: 32-37)—all of which have been proposed to explain such changes. Rather, I argue that Christian missionaries were not ultimately responsible for Simbo conversions, although they had a phenomenal impact upon subsequent social history and practices on the island.

On Simbo, while the characteristics and actions of missionaries were undoubtedly relevant, the initial acceptance of Christianity had far more to do with the prior decades of indigenous-European interaction which had culminated in a devastating “pacification” two years before the arrival of Methodist missionaries in 1903. It was local cultural interpretations of the significance of that event, and their partial co-incidence with foreign cultural views of western Solomons cultural practices, that underlay the transformations which followed conversion to Christianity. I am concerned, then, not so much with the effects of Christianity, as with Christianity as an effect of pacification. In the final section, I move on to Christian interaction and the development of local practice over subsequent decades, focusing particularly on dialogue between missionaries and people who had been militarily and, more significantly, culturally defeated. Throughout, I maintain a running comparison with the histories of conversion on Santa Isabel and Kwara’ae, Malaita, with the intention of highlighting the salience of particular historical circumstances and cultural responses in generating the kind of Christianity that is the subject of subsequent chapters.

In Chapter One, I argued that international economic connections were responsible for the early integration of Tinoni Simbo in the world economy, despite their apparent pre-eminence in trade with foreigners. Here I am concerned with Tinoni Simbo’s perceptions of their relationships with Europeans. In the absence of foreign coercive powers permanently stationed in the area, Tinoni Simbo had remained economically and politically autonomous. Even after New Georgians were obliged to adapt to copra production from the mid-nineteenth century, Europeans remained much constrained by New Georgians: local copra production continued to be determined by indigenous incentives, and the numerically inferior and isolated Europeans remained vulnerable to the power and mobility of armed New Georgians. Any economic incorporation was far from apparent to New Georgians.

Right up to the time of pacification, the relationship remained apparently mutual and New Georgians continued to pursue their own evolving political and social goals, including the acquisition of heads, black and white. Bilua, Roviana and Simbo warriors, sustained by European technologies, continued ranging relatively unchecked,<sup>2</sup> despite growing European

anxieties and rhetorical pronouncements. It was their willingness to include European skulls and those of European-employed labourers, an issue of growing significance with intensification of settlement, that prompted increasing calls for effective British intervention.<sup>3</sup> For some time, the British RN, based at the Western Pacific High Commission in Fiji, had routinely investigated and sought to punish "outrages" perpetrated against Europeans in the Solomons. In the western Solomons, this was generally ineffectual—consisting of the indiscriminate shelling of villages, coconut groves and gardens, the residents having dispersed into the bush at the first sight of the gunboat, and of frustrating searches for the individuals held responsible. Such actions had little effect: by the time the gunboat arrived within shelling distance, the inhabitants were long gone. The RN crews were incapable of mounting effective excursions on land without grave risks to their safety and the damage done by a gunboat raid was considerably less than that inflicted by a successful headhunting raid by, or upon, enemies (Jackson, 1978). But with increasing settlement of the area and greater financial investment by Europeans, the clamour for effective intervention increased.<sup>4</sup> When it finally occurred, this was designed entirely to protect white interests, (Bennett, 1987: 103-112; Jackson, 1978: 109-117).

When the BSIP was proclaimed in 1896, the foremost concern of the first Resident Commissioner, Charles Woodford, was to make the Protectorate economically self-sufficient, a goal that demanded a stable environment for investment and settlement (Bennett, 1987: 105-106). Accordingly, he organized a mobile force on Gizo, under the control of his assistant, Mahaffey, which between 1899-1900 "stopped head-hunting from Roviana, Simbo, and Mbilua and enforced peace among adjacent peoples" (Bennett, 1987: 107). This abrupt pacification was achieved by immediate and destructive responses to any news of actual or intended headhunting raids. The force of armed Santa Isabel men (Bennett, 1987: 107), long-term victims of New Georgian headhunters, would immediately proceed to the raiders' area and destroy, not only the local villages, but all war canoes and communal houses (where enemy skulls were kept), utterly immobilizing, and thus incapacitating, warriors. Within two years, the autonomy maintained for more than a century of contact had been destroyed and the apparent dominance of New Georgians had been graphically reversed.

There has been considerable debate about the causes of this astonishing capitulation. Both McKinnon (1975: 304-305) and Zelenietz (1979: 104-107) hold that economic interests underlay both the practice of headhunting and the apparent local acquiescence in BSIP efforts at suppression. As I argued in the last chapter, however, both analyses fail to appreciate the cultural significance of headhunting. At the time of pacification, headhunting was of great

social importance (albeit not as central as foreigners thought): the funding of headhunting expeditions was a major route to political power and validation of *banara*-ship; gender relations were, to a considerable degree, conceptualized in terms of women's mystical impact on their *luluna*'s safety in warfare; ancestral skull houses, communal houses, trading and war canoes and the death ceremonies of chiefs all required inauguration with enemy skulls (Hocart, 1931: 303). Captives, who performed important ritual, labour and kinship roles were also obtained through raiding. Marriage and local trade were intertwined with warfare, as were fertility and residential practices and patterns. Although captured enemy skulls were conceptually differentiated from ancestral skulls, they were visible proof of the potency of Simbo ancestors. If success in taking heads and captives was evidence of ancestral empowerment, so were the tangible benefits obtained from European exchange and the traders' submission to local demands.

In indigenous terms, Tinoni Simbo were conspicuously superior to both indigenous victims of their raiding and to Europeans. In local cultural models, power over others is, and apparently was, seen as demonstrating social worth or superiority. While power-wielders are expected to exercise benign authority over others, benignity is dependent upon submission to that power. Open or covert non-compliance justifies the outrage of the power holder. In the past this power was indicative of ancestral approval: leaders attracted followers because common ancestors had validated them through visible success in accumulating wealth and in fishing, raiding and trading expeditions. Leader and follower were bound by sentiments labelled *pamana* ("shame", "respect" [Harwood: "honour"]). *Pamana* is a necessarily hierarchical concept, in which the one who gives overt respect to another feels shame in regard to that person (see also R. Rosaldo, 1984: 141-143). It is directly linked to the power (*nineqe*) of the important persons/s and cannot be reciprocated. Having respect for another does not merely entail shame: fear (*matatu*) is frequently paired with *pamana*. One fears the anger of those towards whom one is *pamana*. These linked sentiments do not only describe relationships with *banara*: people describe their reaction to all those seen to dominate them in these terms—a woman's male siblings, important church leaders, "big" people from outside, Europeans, etc.

Success in raiding also confirmed the weight of ancestral endorsement, as others were consistently defeated by Tinoni Simbo and their allies. Finally, Europeans apparently conceded authority to them—being obliged to provide the items demanded and to consistently revise the terms of trade in favour of islanders. If, as I argued in Chapter Two, economic rationality did not motivate headhunting or its abandonment, then why did Tinoni Simbo so

readily relinquish their autonomy? Jackson argues that the epidemics which had swept the Western Solomons in the late nineteenth century were the pivotal factor. He implies that there were two aspects to the epidemics—a general demoralization and a dearth of warriors capable of resistance. Certainly Hocart (n.d.e.: 1; see also Edge-Partington, 1907: 22) says that much lore could not be obtained from Roviana because of the number of senior men who had perished in epidemics. Jackson, however, ignores the demographic impact of epidemics, which tend to disproportionately kill the very young and the very old, rather than the young and fit, who were warriors.<sup>5</sup> Further, Jackson's argument seems inconsistent with the established fact that warfare continued unabated until pacification which, indeed, took the form of intervention in local warfare. It also disregards the degree to which the so-called "depopulation of Melanesia" consisted of wishful-thinking by Europeans eager to justify their appropriation of land and resources in the Solomons (Bennett, 1987: 131-133).

Looking outside the area, there have been other cases of instant pacification followed by precipitate conversion to Christianity. M. Kahn (1983: 107) and Barker (1985: 270) have suggested that, in certain cases, people are simply eager to abandon violent or onerous practices, a credible enough point. Certainly, the Anglican Melanesian Mission on Santa Isabel was successful because it was involved in protecting local people from rampant New Georgians. However, in direct contrast to the people of Santa Isabel, Tinoni Simbo were victors, not victims. They had no need of protection from the disdained Europeans.

As I have argued, warfare depended upon core values inherent in ancestor veneration. Its elimination therefore reverberated throughout the social practices of Tinoni Simbo and I have problems with the implication that the depth of change experienced on Simbo could have resulted from the kinds of conscious decisions implied by Kahn, McKinnon and Zelenietz. The re-structuring of social practices, values and understandings is not such a simple process.<sup>6</sup> Barker (1990a: 140) also describes the demonstration effect of patrol officers walking into a district and shooting dead a few armed warriors. Here, however, the period of contact was significantly shorter than in the Simbo case and the conceptual impact of guns presumably much greater. And in New Georgia, pacification was achieved with very little physical violence against the population.

I would suggest that Jackson, McKinnon and Zelenietz, all overlook a relatively straightforward explanation for the lack of New Georgian resistance either during or after pacification: Tinoni Simbo, like other nearby groups, were quite simply overwhelmingly defeated militarily (and thus culturally) by Europeans who had long been present, but had always appeared to be either disinterested in local enmities or helpful in their provision of

axes and, later, firearms. A war canoe, of a size and quality to carry forty men plus captives and loot over miles of open sea, was not easily replaced, taking much time and wealth to construct; so too a communal house. As (White, 1991: 87) noted, the canoes were a "highly strategic resource that also acquired considerable symbolic significance" allowing both movement and autonomy outside the local context and, like enemy skulls, acting as a mnemonic of the potency of owners. The strategy of wholesale destruction of these military resources meant the utter obliteration of resistance<sup>7</sup> as well as the elimination of a central cultural practice. Hocart (n.d.h.: 11) is thus unduly bland in his observation, soon after pacification, that "[t]he whale boat will sooner or later oust the native canoe; there were some four or five in the island; while we were there one was purchased for 80,000 copra". The word "pacification" is a deeply ironic description of a process in which the "pacifiers" enacted the same violence they rhetorically opposed, in order to ensure their own dominance (Schieffelin & Crittenden, 1991:22). The fact that this occurred with little bloodshed, in New Georgia, can obscure what was experienced as brutality.

### ***Na Kinamu Lotu—The Arrival of Christianity***

Colonialism was "as much a matter of the politics of perception and experience" as of the politics of the administration of force (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991: 5) but the two can be intimately related. For people holding the views of powers and ancestral efficacy described in Chapter Two, the sudden pacification can only have been devastating. Scant wonder that Hocart and Rivers, working on Simbo a mere seven years later, should both describe Tinoni Simbo as morose and disinterested:

No one could be long in Eddystone without recognizing how great is the people's lack of interest in life and to what an extent the zest has gone out of their lives. (Rivers, 1922: 101)

The calm and undemonstrative native of the New Georgian group formed a contrast with the lively and talkative Eastern native. The Mandegusan however appeared to us to be the most reserved amongst them; they were almost sullen in comparison with the Rovianese and Vella Lavellan . . .

Diffidence seemed commoner than self assertion; there appeared to be no desire to attempt any accomplishment to which man was not born. (Hocart, n.d.d.: 1)

Hocart (n.d.d.: 1) also describes Tinoni Simbo as "anxious to disclaim responsibility for traditions". One manifestation of *pamana* or "shame" is a reluctance to speak to the dominant person, avoidance of their company, refusal to put oneself forward—all of which might appear to visiting Europeans as diffidence, surliness, or any of the other characteristics attributed by Hocart and Rivers to Tinoni Simbo. Rivers (1922: 101-102) himself puts this emotional malaise down to the process of an insensitive foreign pacification. He focused exclusively on the demise of warfare, however, and his suggestion that the administration institute a form of

therapeutic pig-hunting suggests that he saw this almost exclusively in terms of a primitive outlet for aggressive impulses. Far more significant, it seems to me, is his passing mention of the response people gave when he asked them why there were not reproducing at a rate adequate to ensure social survival: they replied, rather surlily, "Why should we bring children into the world only to work for the white man?" (Rivers, 1922: 104). While Rivers sees this remark as indicative simply of a state of depression and "race suicide", it seems, rather, a pithy summation of the consequences, for Tinoni Simbo, of pacification.

Tinoni Simbo had always exchanged, on their own terms, with Europeans and Islanders. They had taken captives to work for *them*. To work for somebody was to be their subordinate and Tinoni Simbo had never worked for anybody, black or white. But in local cultural models, defeat entailed just that—labouring for the victors—as witness the numbers of Choiseul and Santa Isabel captives on Simbo and Roviana. Pacification, then, represented an overwhelming defeat after more than a century of evident indigenous dominance,<sup>8</sup> a defeat that caused immense cultural dislocation: the fundamental principles around which social action and interaction were organized had been invalidated. To what was female sexual morality connected if it no longer affected men's success in headhunting? What were the grounds for acquiring wealth and political power with the elimination of raiding and coincidental suppression of trading? On what new basis were people to interact with the now omnipresent Europeans who were taking over? Finally, what had happened to the ancestors who had validated or enabled the palpable success of the long-term and immediate past? As Burt (1994) argues, political defeat necessarily connoted failure of, or abandonment by, the ancestors. It was at this crucial point that the Methodist Mission arrived on the scene.

There is a recurrent theme, in academic and mission accounts of the western Solomons, of indigenous solicitation of Christian missions. Hilliard (1978: 275-277), for example, argues that much of the success of the Melanesian Mission was due to perceptions that the education offered by missionaries was the route to success in a changing world. Bennett (1987: 114-115) makes similar linkages, and adds that marginal people, such as captives, sought out mission stations as a means of social mobility. Such analyses conflate motivations for, and benefits of, conversion. Thus, if, as Harwood (1971: 31) points out, until WWII the church was perceived as *the* source of social mobility, this hardly establishes a motive for conversion when the mission's qualities were as yet unknown. Mission historians Luxton (1955) and Williams (1972) also make much of local desires and of people flocking to the protection of benign missionaries. Indeed, there are a number of such cases in the area: as I have noted the Melanesian Mission was highly successful on Santa Isabel because of its role

in protection against New Georgian raiders, for example. Nicholson, the Methodist missionary on Vella Lavella precipitated many conversions through his role in restraining the violence of a later *administration* force (Jackson, 1978: 185-195; McKinnon, 1972: 114-123). The Methodist Mission chairman, John Goldie, was also vociferous in his later defence of local causes against government and private land deals (Bennett, 1987: 194-195; Jackson, 1978: 278-302).<sup>9</sup> Certainly today similar claims are made on Simbo. A young chief—Kave Peso—is credited with “bringing *lotu*” to Simbo, and missionaries are said to have been responsible for the bringing of peace, freedom from the dominion of malicious spirits and a *totoso taqalo* or “time of light/cleanliness”.

But I am convinced that it wasn't seen in such terms ninety years ago. Consider, first, Luxton's celebratory account of the Methodist Mission jubilee in the western Solomons. He insists (1955: 14; see also Tuza, 1977: 109) that the mission came only at the instigation of Solomon Islanders who had converted to Methodism while labouring in Fiji and who persisted in pleading despite the Methodists' consistent refusal to violate their territorial agreement with the Melanesian Mission. Finally, however, in the face of the Islanders' persistent requests, the Chairman, George Brown, worked out an agreement with both the Anglicans and the new BSIP Resident Commissioner, Woodford. Woodford was delighted with their proposal—if any area needed a mission, it was New Georgia and “life was now relatively safe there” (Luxton, 1955: 20). The goals of missions, administration and islanders were now apparently compatible. Unfortunately, the happy Solomon Islanders were from Guadalcanal. Within New Georgia, there was no desire for a missionary. (Luxton also omits to mention that the prominent local European traders, Wheatley and Wickham, had sought a local mission [Bennett, 1987: 61-63].<sup>10</sup>)

Luxton's later account of George Brown's attempt to persuade New Georgians to accept a missionary reflects this reluctance. He tried Roviana Lagoon and Marovo Lagoon where the chiefs made clear their opposition. In Brown's words:

For some reason neither [the chief] nor his people want missionaries . . . This is not a notion of recent years, for I remember that they had the same objection when I was here 20 years ago! (Luxton, 1955: 18; see also Danks, 1901: 7-9)

Two years later he was back, this time accompanied by the Rev. J. Goldie and Woodford, in an area where “the villages were destroyed a few years ago . . . and they do not yet seem to have recovered” (Luxton, 1955: 18). Here the possibility of a mission was again opposed by both chiefs and commoners. Nonetheless, with the proffered support of both Commissioner Woodford and traders Wickham and Wheatley:

it was considered inadvisable to ask . . . whether they would like a missionary to reside amongst them for to do so was to court refusal. The people all knew that it was intended to begin a mission,

and there appeared to be no active opposition. Far better to begin without having asked permission than to come in face of a refusal. (Luxton, 1955: 21-22)

One wonders what kind of "active opposition" might have been proffered by the inhabitants of a shattered village in the armed presence of the Resident Commissioner who had been responsible for their defeat. On Simbo, in August 1902, "Belangono, the wily old chief" did not actively resist but "avoided meeting him [Goldie], and no progress was made regarding the placing of a teacher on the island" (Luxton, 1955: 33).<sup>11</sup>

This account of Methodist missionaries coming to an area in the face of "no active opposition" is consistent with the only eyewitness account I have of the mission's arrival on Simbo. Suzana Lodu Qoele (d. 1990) was the only surviving person who could personally recall the arrival of the Methodist Mission at her village at Tapurai. She describes herself as having already developed breasts but not yet being married, which I calculate would have made her about fifteen years old at the time.

**Na** The first time the missionaries came to Tapurai, a ship called the Bodae [Bondi] anchored in order that the passengers could disembark . . . then they all came down, the people of Tapurai, all the men, and they awaited them on the beach carrying their axes, shields, spears and so on, and [the ship's people] prayed to "cool" [calm] them before they disembarked. [Lodu's account is reproduced in full in Appendix III.]

She says that Goldie made the well-being of the missionaries the responsibility of Kave Peso, the young *banara* now credited with sponsoring the mission. The missionaries remained and, after a time, some people began to attend, at which point she describes a shortlived form of overt resistance: whenever services were in progress, older people would make a loud ruckus (*ñañalu*) around the mission building in order to disrupt services; possibly, given Lindstrom's (1990) analysis of "hearing" or "listening" on Tanna, in terms of acceptance or belief, to prevent the possibility of conversion.<sup>12</sup> Harwood (1971: 21) maintains that older people were the major opponents because they "[feared] the loss of their power and influence in the villages". For Danks (1901: 9) it was the chiefs who "have no real power", but intimidated commoners into opposing the mission because of anxiety about challenges to their own interests. Once again we find the implicit thesis that pragmatic self-interest was sufficient to determine shifting allegiances to an alternative system of meaning, a particularly simplistic interpretation of ideology. What might be characterized as fidelity or conviction in situations of challenge to Christian belief, receives no such recognition in the case of people who had lived with the ancestors throughout their lives, who *knew* of their efficacy, loved them as parents and faced the probability of soon joining them. In spite of the efforts of people whom I regard as committed pagans,<sup>13</sup> the missionaries were heard and people soon began attending to their words.

administration on a number of occasions. Like earlier English missionaries

This was not because of any perceived benefit—people demoralized by defeat were hardly planning how to maximize their future potential and, as Rivers' respondent made clear, the new world was perceived as one of servitude rather than opportunity. The missionaries had been publicly sponsored by the Resident Commissioner. It is logical, given local models of submission to the stronger party, to assume that Tinoni Simbo first responded to missionaries because they were recognized as representatives of the new European order. The *banara*'s orders had once been unquestioned because of their dominant position, but they had been effectively deposed. As Hocart (n.d.a.: 12, 20) noted, with some perplexity, in 1908 there was an attitude that chiefs were now finished—they are now just like commoners, he was told. Just as the *banara*, Kave Peso, obeyed Goldie's instructions that he ensure the safety of the South Sea Islands missionaries left on Simbo, so too those missionaries, representatives of Goldie and his mission, must be obeyed.

Like mission discourse elsewhere, the discourse of the missionaries on Simbo was not a simple one. The missionaries were not a monolithic group. This is simply

*Na Nineqi Metodis—Methodist Powers*

Hassall (1989; cf. Otto, 1992: 271) argues that at the local level, the roles of church and state often appeared indistinguishable to local people in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and PNG until after WWII. It is difficult to believe that local people were incapable of discriminating between *gavaman* and *lotu*. But, on Simbo, they were certainly recognized as linked forces. This is not to argue a direct connexion between state power and religious ideology. From time to time, mission and administration did engage in conciliatory discourse. Such discourse centred on areas of mutual concern or occurred at times of crisis for the missions or when missions attempted to suppress spreading secularism (Hassall, 1989). Mission works may also have benefited the government, most notably in spreading literacy which contributed to a skilled workforce although, as he argues, missionaries were not concerned with the issue of whether their work directly benefited the state (cf. Fabian, 1986: 71-81). The serious disagreements between BSIP administration and Methodist Mission are also, however, well documented (especially Jackson, 1978: 278-302). Methodist missionaries were certainly never fully autonomous agents. They were dependent upon pacification and even on local belief in their ability to call upon government forces.<sup>14</sup> They were, however, for many years, instrumental in revolutionary changes—a revolution complete with tracts, leaders, avowed reformation and implicit power (cf. Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991: 8). In New Georgia, rather than mission and administration appearing coterminous, a new theocracy seemingly prevailed. The Chairman of the Methodist Mission, the Rev. J.F. Goldie, visibly opposed and confounded the administration on a number of occasions. Like earlier English missionaries in

Tahiti, who presented themselves as equivalent to King George (Gunson, 1964-65: 298), Goldie was unwilling to disabuse New Georgians of their perceptions that he controlled the government. Laracy and Laracy (1980-81: 133) point out that the administration of the BSIP remained indifferent to indigenous affairs until after WWII. The only exception was in regard to conjugality, which they attempted to regulate, partly in accordance with missionary concerns and partially in an attempt to restrain missionary autonomy. But, a major concern of the Methodist Mission was the reform of indigenous sexuality and family life. The administration's attempt to regulate precisely the same realm, and their consultations with missions, thus reinforced local perceptions of the mission's ascendancy. It is notable that, today, many Tinoni Simbo readily recall the names of the successive Methodist Mission chairmen and of all the missionaries who lived on Simbo, but they do not generally recall the names of Resident Commissioners or District Officers.

Like mission discourse (Luxton, 1955; cf. Thomas, 1992a), contemporary Tinoni Simbo depict Christianity as having brought peace at the instigation of a strong leader. This is simply not a historically tenable thesis. With the exception of Vella Lavella, where the missionary Nicholson was able to negotiate peace between locals and marauding Europeans, the Methodist Mission arrived in an already pacified area. That the idea is probably reinforced by missionary discourses about peace and love, which gave sense to the political suppression of indigenous enmity, is supported by Barker's listing of a number of societies with oral traditions of missionaries resolving indigenous warfare to bring peace (1990a: 89). The historical fact of the missionary association with peace on Santa Isabel and Vella Lavella may reinforce this perception. On Malaita, Kwara'ae rationales for conversion overlap with those of Tinoni Simbo. For both, the failure of ancestors was a central motivation. For Kwara'ae, however, the vital point was that the ancestors had *abandoned* them or would afflict them for the pollution violations enacted by Europeans, rather than being defeated, and people *fled* to take sanctuary from the ancestors in mission villages, a "desperate expedient" (Burt, 1994: 142-144; *passim*). The obvious wealth of the mission further demonstrated the potency of the Christian god, a convincing symbol in a world of discredited ancestors.

Tinoni Simbo had not sought a missionary presence: within two years of pacification the missionaries simply came.<sup>15</sup> They were, however, first tolerated and soon highly successful because, in Simbo perceptions the colonizing power had proven European superiority and ancestor veneration had been invalidated by the consummate defeat of pacification. A kind of cultural dissonance had emerged when Christian missionaries, bearing an alternate worldview and sponsored by the conquering powers, arrived. Early Simbo Christianity is to be seen, not

as a precipitant of cultural change then; rather Christian conversion is to be interpreted as an *effect* of pacification or as the form which the coerced cultural reformulation was to take. It is perhaps instructive at this point to contrast the history of conversion on Simbo with that of their erstwhile victims and enemies, the people of Santa Isabel. Both Jackson (1975: 67-68, 70) and White (1979; 1991) stress the severity of their victimization by headhunters, and the Melanesian Mission's part in protection, as crucial factors in the rapid conversion there. In the face of escalating warfare,

[t]he "new way" was much more than simply a release from the cycle of raiding; it was also regarded as a path to greater knowledge and power that could renew the envelope of protection once provided by ancestor spirits, priests and chiefs. (White, 1991: 92)

This example is significant because it demonstrates the manner in which two closely connected societies in the same area can ostensibly undergo analogous changes at roughly the same time and, in fact, be experiencing events with fundamentally different rationales and significance. What represented the coming of "peace" on Santa Isabel represented the violence of "pacification" on Simbo. There are other differences arising from this distinction. In particular, Isabel chiefs, who remained strong, tended to enforce Christianity—on Simbo the *banara*, defeated, were obligated to permit it. White's point that Christianity provided a route to new spiritual knowledge provides a further contrast: on Simbo, although the European god was recognized as stronger, the necessity was not so much one of accessing a stronger spiritual power as of reconfiguring a shattered spirituality. If the Melanesian Mission stressed alternate possibilities, active participation (allowing indigenous clergy a much greater role) and salvation from decimation, the Methodist Mission's emphasis on obedience and humility left people far more passive in the face of Christian power, which had not "saved them" from anything.

Yet there are similarities, not just in a recognition of ancestral powers which provided the bedrock for local understandings of Christianity, but in the ultimate significance of Christianity. For both, it provided a measure of solace—if Isabel people were exhausted by raiders, Tinoni Simbo were likewise devastated by defeat at the hands of Europeans. Further there was ultimately a similar cost: Simbo Christianity was predicated on the loss of local autonomy and the defeat of *banara*. On Santa Isabel, too, the cost of the "new knowledge" was its being at the discretion, and under the control, of outsiders. Ultimately, too, Christianity undermined the power of Santa Isabel chiefs (White, 1991: 102).

Kebe, 1983; Mana, 1985). On Simbo, however, we are dealing with people who passively accepted, but neither consciously resisted the changes wrought by missionaries.

**Somana lotu—Conversion** on practices and, moreover, who soon accepted the validity of the Christian message. This is not sufficient to prove that indigenous conversion. *Somana lotu* means “participate in *lotu*” and this is precisely what Tinoni Simbo did.

Although I argue later that Christianity today is unchallengeable, that it is *known* as true, I do not suggest that early mission participants were moved by the *metanoia* which Burrige (1991) holds to be central to conversion. Such things, despite fulsome missionary passages attesting to their subjects’ realizations of the Christian god (e.g. cited and quoted in Whiteman, 1983: 131-134, *passim*; Luxton, 1955), are unascertainable at the cultural and ideological distance imposed by missionary interpretations of indigenous emotions and integrity and so long after the event. I would argue, however, that given the evidence of initial intractable reluctance and the coercive aspects of the relationship, which both dictated acceptance and undermined the ancestors, initial Christian practice was impelled by other concerns than personal commitment: by seeking for ways to accommodate the new powers and emergent world; by resignation; by seeking to make sense of what had—and was—happening in a “world turned upside down” (Hill, 1975).

The mission soon came to be recognized as the local authority. Harwood (1971: 33-38), Jackson (1978: 297-301, *passim*) and Bennett (1987: 116, 215) all point to Goldie’s self-appointed role as mediator with the outside world. The combination of coercive powers and paternalistic benevolence, within both the person of the individual missionary and the institution of the mission, replicated the earlier *banara*’s persona of benevolent authoritarianism. The mission also had much to do with providing predictability or hope. Thus District Officer Mahaffey credited the Methodist Mission with transforming New Georgians from “cunning, sullen and cruel looking” to “frank, pleasant and cheerful” (Harwood, 1971: 24, quoting Hilliard), conveniently ignoring his own responsibility for the earlier gloominess. (I also presume that, writing in 1910, he was specifically referring to mission station residents.) This humane face of the mission does not lessen the fact that missionaries were intimately involved in colonial power relationships, especially in the immediate post-pacification period.

It is all very well to argue that conversion occurred as a result of enforced reformation of social practices, but the question of the processes by which this occurred remains. There are, after all, many recorded instances of defeated peoples manipulating imposed ideologies in order to persist in their own ways or to resist domination (Burt, 1983; J. Comaroff, 1985; M. Kahn, 1983; Mann, 1985). On Simbo, however, we are dealing with people who may have resented, but neither consciously resisted the changes wrought by missionaries, nor actively

sought to maintain pre-pacification practices and, moreover, who soon accepted the validity of the Christian message. This is not, of course, to argue that indigenous practices or conceptualizations do not persist, but ideas and practices have been transformed in interaction with mission and, later, church teachings; people now view and describe the world through perspectives coloured by the forms of Christianity they were offered. Christianity has changed from ideology to hegemony. In this section, I want to raise the problem of how this occurred.

Outside of literal acceptance of radical belief changes—which I hold to be still open to demonstration—two common interpretations of conversion involve either conscious adoption of or adaptation to Christian practice, or enforced conformity to mission norms. M. Kahn (1983: 105-107), for example, describes Wamiran people knowingly adopting some Christian practices in order to get on with the real business of being Wamiran. On the other hand, Macintyre (1989: 162-163) depicts the physical and cultural violence of missionaries on Tubetube, destroying ancestral remains, assaulting people, imposing disciplinary regimes and so on. Both of these situations imply some kind of challenge to mission legitimacy, and neither process seems to have occurred on Simbo. There are numerous accounts of shrine destruction by zealous missionaries or converts elsewhere (e.g. Welchman, cited in White, 1991: 103; Whiteman, 1983: 141-142). On Simbo I have no such accounts, other than from the unreliable Williams (1972: 241). The shrines simply appear to have been permitted to decay. This does not merely represent the degree to which ancestral shrines had been eclipsed: it further reflects the fact that the transference of legitimacy from one set of institutions to another, that this destruction entailed elsewhere (e.g. White, 1991: 103-105; Harwood, 1971: *passim*), had already been graphically achieved. *Banara* had become “commoners” and the ancestors nonentities. The emphasis in oral accounts is not of what missionaries *did*, but of what they *told* people to do. In his treatment of Maisin (PNG) Christians’ sorcery beliefs, Barker (1990a: 146-148; see also Douglas, 1989: 14-15; Rennie, 1989) argues that contemporary beliefs and attitudes are an outcome of protracted dialogue between Maisin people and Christian missionaries, each proceeding from superficially similar perspectives and motives which were, in fact, highly dissimilar. This, I would argue, is precisely what happened on Simbo, although not as equitably as the process described by Barker.

I have a number of reservations about Barker’s work. The dialogue, firstly, is not merely two-sided: communication between Maisin and missionaries occurs in a world of newspapers, rural-urban migration, radios, etc., which broadcast not only worldwide trends

and events, but spread awareness of a emerging pan-Melanesian or pan-Pacific worldview. This factor may have been less relevant when missionaries first arrived on Simbo and in Maisin, but even then knowledge of other ways must have travelled along regional and international trade routes. Even more significantly, however, Barker ignores politics. In other publications (1990b: 8-10; 1992: 144-145, *passim*) he calls for a shift in perspective away from studies of missionary impacts towards accounts of Christianity as cultural practice, a move exemplified by his sorcery paper. While I concur with his criticism that studies stressing the effects of missionaries tend to imply indigenous passivity and to obscure the contemporary relevance and sincerity of Christian practice, his own work elides the inequities of power implicit, and sometimes explicit, in colonial Christian practice. His paper on sorcery, for example, camouflages the politics of Christianity: the dialogue implies balanced perspective, equity of speakers. His evocation of pacification through warrior assassination<sup>16</sup> is never developed. Indeed, for what reads like cold-blooded murder, Barker's reference to "shooting" is a remarkably neutral term. Yet, if discourse theory tells us anything it is that dialogue is never disinterested, that not only may it proceed on the basis of misrecognition of difference, but that forms of knowledge are inevitably complicit with power differentials. If Barker addresses the former, he ignores the latter. To his analysis of dialogue, then, I add the crucial dimension of power. I have dealt here with local interpretations of defeat at the hands of Mahaffey and Woodford. In the next chapter, I consider the ways in which those interpretations articulated with missionaries' models of Simbo culture. First, however, I briefly consider the South Sea Island missionaries who were instrumental in effecting Simbo conversion.

### **Misioneri—Missionaries**

I have criticized Barker's failure to admit the crucial dimension of power to his analysis of dialogue between missionaries and converts. This does not invalidate dialogical models of conversion and I would argue that this is precisely what has been occurring on Simbo for ninety years. Dialogue, however, involves at least two participants. As Comaroff and Comaroff have frequently noted, accounts of the development and significance of Christian communities cannot hope to be explanatory without delineation of the backgrounds, assumptions and positions within colonial culture of those who were directly concerned with so many of the changes which were associated with conversion (J. Comaroff, 1985: 129-137; J.L. Comaroff, 1989: 661-663; Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991: 7-9; 49-85). At this point I give some consideration to the missionary side of the conversation.

The functional structure of the mission placed formal authority in the Chairman and formal responsibility in the European missionaries who, in turn, supervised South Sea Island missionaries (Tuza, 1977: 110, 114).

Those European Ministers, who each  
instrumental in its administration.  
as sub-sections and did not have resident  
missionaries who were responsible for  
practices. Simbo was served by

### MISSION (Chairman)

### CIRCUITS (European Missionaries)

Ministers, until about 1960. Tuza (1977: 111-112) is pointing to the centralization of power  
under the mission, suggests that until  
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### SUBSECTIONS (South Sea Islander Missionaries)

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(Simbo was a sub-section of the Roviana Circuit until the 1960s.) As Tuza points out, this structure placed decision-making powers exclusively in the hands of Europeans.

Much has been written about the charismatic founding Chairman of the Methodist Mission in the Solomon Islands, the Reverend John Francis Goldie (e.g. Bennett, 1987; Harwood, 1971; Jackson, 1978; Luxton, 1955; Steley, 1983: 37-38, *passim*; Tippet, 1967; Williams, 1972: 239). All of these analyses point to Goldie's immense significance in transforming regional sociality and laying the foundations for the upheavals which followed his retirement shortly after WWII. Goldie clearly was central to many of the changes that occurred. Tireless in his pursuit of his vision, he was highly effective in influencing administration policies, including the unofficial one of leaving the missions to manage much of the mundane life of their regions of influence. His domineering approach to mission administration and policy-making also meant that he was singularly successful in imposing his personal brand on mission policy, as in the development of the "Industrial Mission" (Chapter Nine), or in successfully suppressing indigenous dance which he regarded as lewd (Tuza: 1977: 111-112). His flaunted paternalism, which so well approximated indigenous styles of leadership, also gave his word an unquestioned authority among New Georgian adherents—indeed, to many he was a deity (Tuza, 1977: 114), an attribution which he admits to manipulating (Goldie, 1909: 26). Thus, his aggressive strategic linkage of local agitation over alienated land to SDA land purchases was to set the tone for relations between the two denominations until the present time (Jackson, 1978: 311-346; Steley, 1983: Chapter Six).

missionaries and modified by their experiences of the colonial policy and society. Then

The Methodist Mission structure (above), however, points to the limits to which New Georgian Christianity can be seen as a product of Goldie's Methodism. Goldie, and to a lesser extent his successors, may have been responsible for setting official mission agendas. Those European Ministers, who each headed a Circuit, also influenced policy and were instrumental in its administration. However, in places like Simbo, which were administered as sub-sections and did not have resident European missionaries, it was South Sea Island missionaries who were responsible for proselytizing, converting and overseeing Christian practices. Simbo was served by a succession of Fijian and Samoan missionaries, and later Ministers, until about 1960.<sup>17</sup> Tuza (1977: 112-114), pointing to the centralization of power under the mission, suggests that unlike the traditional *banara* who acted as "catalysts" in community affairs, South Sea Islanders were restricted to implementing centrally made decisions.

There is absolutely no doubt about their subordination. Denied even the title of "missionary", they were regarded by Europeans as categorically inferior and as requiring constant supervision and guidance. Latukefu (1968, 1978) points to numerous symbolic and material manifestations of this institutionalized inferiority. For example,

[e]ven islanders who were ordained ministers were not permitted to perform certain ministerial functions. As late as 1952, the Solomon Islands Synod was able to pass a resolution saying that Tongan and Fijian ministers, fully ordained, should not be allowed to administer the sacraments except on the instruction of, and under the guidance of, a European superintendent. (1978: 100).

Despite this subordination, however, there is equally no doubt that indigenous missionaries inflected the religion that was proffered to the majority of New Georgian Methodists in unique ways. Nor is there any doubt that it was they who effected the vast majority of conversions in New Georgia. Tuza's observation that South Sea Islander missionaries were left to implement synod resolutions, then, takes on an added significance for it suggests that they had a formative influence on the indigenous Christianity that was to emerge.

These missionaries were staunchly Christian (Latukefu, 1978: 94) but their interpretation of Methodism and indigenous religion differed significantly from that of their European superiors. So, therefore, did their proselytizing methods (Macintyre, 1989: 162). Conversion to Christianity in Fiji commenced around 1830-1854 (Kaplan, 1990: 129), in Tonga around 1823 (Gordon, 1990: 200) and in Samoa between 1828-1830 (Tiffany, 1978: 427).<sup>18</sup> When missionaries from these places arrived in New Georgia, then, they reflected the results of many decades of interaction with European missionaries and other colonial agents. They carried models derived from both their own *Weltanschauung* and those of Methodist missionaries and modified by their experiences of the colonial polity and economy. Their

Christianity, their perceptions of their target populations and their approaches to conversion were all products of indigenous interactions with European Methodists who, themselves, came from particular class and cultural backgrounds. They were, then, “indigenous missionaries” in two senses—as peoples of the Pacific who were embarking on a project of conversion within their own hemisphere and as the advocates of the indigenous Christianities of Fiji, Samoa and Tonga. As Latukefu argues, their cultural similarities and dissimilarities were both significant in determining the nature and outcomes of their interactions with Solomon Islanders.

Their singularity is reflected in the common stereotype of South Sea Islander missionaries as exceptionally authoritarian and violent towards their congregations. This is an image which recurs in missionary and academic accounts. Scholars have often uncritically adopted European missionary adjudications about them. Thus, Harwood (1971: 22-23) unreflectively cites Helena Goldie’s misgivings and Langmore (1989b: 126, *passim*) deflects criticism of European missionaries by arguing that “much of the destructiveness identified with the missions originated in the zeal of Papuan and Polynesian teachers”. While they have been unduly maligned in academic and missionary sources, there seems little doubt that they were as convinced as European missionaries of their own racial and cultural superiority (Douglas, 1989: 12; Latukefu, 1978: 98).<sup>19</sup> Macintyre documents their interpretations of Tubetube cultural practices and subsequent destructiveness and violence. She concludes that the effectiveness of their “interventionist policies . . . cannot be underestimated” (1989: 163). Latukefu also admits their ardour in physically intervening in local practices.

It is important, however, to contextualize these behaviours. Latukefu argues that Islander missionaries’ conviction of their own superiority informed their willingness to abuse converts, but that physical abuse was acceptable because converts “were convinced that the punishment was administered for their own good . . . and corporal punishment was an integral part of the indigenous cultures, hence its unquestioning acceptance” (1978: 98-99; 106). This seems to be, rather, a rationalization based on Tongan notions of the value of physical discipline and punishment which cannot itself be historically disentangled from the attitudes and approaches of early European Christian missionaries in Tonga (Kavapalu, 1993: 316-317). Their own cultural understandings, like their own histories, necessarily inflected their mission and thus, inevitably, the kinds of responses and accommodations that Tinoni Simbo made to the colonial world and Methodism. Perhaps most pertinent were islander missionaries’ interpretations of indigenous metaphysics and their own experiences of conversion. Macintyre points to a crucial difference between European and Islander

understandings. Apropos sorcery, “[w]hereas the Australian missionaries, J. Field and W. Bromilow, were sceptical about sorcery and tended to expose it as chicanery and fraud, Polynesian teachers were convinced of the powers of sorcerers” (1989: 162). In this, they closely shared the attitudes of their converts and earlier European missionaries to Polynesia (see Levy, 1969: 128). The exposure of fraud and the defeat of diabolical forces demand very different strategies, and go some way to explaining the destructiveness attributed to islanders. Langmore contrasts the “God of Love” of Europeans with the vengeful Old Testament Jehovah which she attributes to South Sea Islander missionaries. She does not consider, however, that that contrast reflects the historical development of European missionary approaches from that of staunch disciplinarians in Fiji, Samoa and Tonga to that of an assertive paternalism in the Solomons and PNG. If Europeans, did see brutal “Polynesians” in “Melanesia”, then they were seeing indigenous versions of their own predecessors.

It was these Pacific Islanders, with longer and different histories of colonial domination and Christianity, convinced of the worth of their creed and of their superiority to their flocks, suppressed and denigrated by their European colleagues, who were responsible for Simbo—and much of New Georgian—conversion. They lived in closer proximity to their congregations than did their European counterparts. The proximity was cultural as well as spatial. As Latukefu notes, their own Austronesian languages meant that they achieved greater linguistic fluency. They were also better placed to understand the nuances and spiritual significance of indigenous cultural practices and thus directed their assaults in a different manner. If, as Jolly and Macintyre (1989: 6-7) and Langmore (1989b: 84; see also Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991: 6; Ross, 1978: 165-166) argue, missionaries were the most effective agents of change in the Pacific because of their long residence, mastery of the vernacular and commitment to reformation, South Sea Island missionaries were even more so. They had greater affinity with local people and, more readily grasping the spiritual significance of cultural practices, they were more encyclopaedic in their proscriptions. This is a major contrast to places such as Santa Isabel, where European Anglican missionaries sometimes “recognized and promoted the equivalences between traditional and Christian ritual practices” (White, 1991: 113). Nor were such parallels nurtured by European Methodists, with their stress on behavioural, rather than doctrinal, modification (Harwood, 1971: 221-222).<sup>20</sup>

Nihill (1989: 87) notes that abandoning indigenous symbolic expressions under mission pressure is not in itself significant, because such expressions derive from broader social and cultural values which, so long as they remain relevant, ensure that the meanings and

significance attached to the suppressed expressions remain part of social interaction. This is not dissimilar to R. Rosaldo's (1984) recognition that symbolic elaboration is not necessarily related to cultural significance. The implication of Nihill's point is that the suppression, or diminished relevance, of underlying socio-cultural values also means the loss of meanings and values attached to the suppressed symbols. This, I would argue, is precisely what occurred on Simbo where Christianity now constitutes the fundamental social practice, rather than a syncretic veneer. Apropos Nihill's point, it is interesting to note Fabian's (1986: 3) argument that it is not sufficient to merely consider the overt, brutal, forms of power in relations between colonized and colonizer. The "more subtle use of power through controls on communication" may be even more significant. While Fabian is specifically referring to the development of a colonial *lingua franca*, his general point applies to all forms of communication, including outsider judgements about indigenous thought and practice.

I would see the Methodist Mission, then, riding on the back of overt pacification, as subtly effacing indigenous social practices—and not just symbols—far more effectively than the BSIP forces could ever have done. As an instance, Simbo death rites have been radically changed from the elaborations documented by Hocart (1922), as I show in Chapter Ten.

Nihill would argue that this does not necessarily reflect neoteric socio-cultural values.

Fabian's argument, however, allows for the possibility of such transformations through the strategic manipulation or creation of key meanings as a means to *de facto* reconfiguration.

Missionaries on Simbo did, indeed effect deep transformations through their empowered discourse, although the outcomes, as we shall see, have been significantly different to what was intended.

(1986: 129)

8. Douglas (1992: 140) noted that the missionaries' view of indigenous practices became increasingly negative.

9. Although Goldie himself was a landowner, he was also a missionary, and many of his actions reflected a missionary's perspective on indigenous land rights (Jackson, 1976: 111, 180).

10. Thomas (1992a: 141) noted that the missionaries' view of indigenous practices became increasingly negative.

11. Nor was the decision to suppress indigenous practices encountered in 1902. A general policy of suppression was in place that the already expressed implications of the missionaries' actions, and not in our opinion, mean that any further suppression was not revealed as a previously intended strategy.

12. It is interesting to note that the missionaries' view of indigenous practices became increasingly negative, and that the missionaries' view of indigenous practices became increasingly negative, and that the missionaries' view of indigenous practices became increasingly negative.

## NOTES

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- 1: All those who worked on Simbo were "mission teachers"—the Methodist Mission term for South Sea Islanders. Always under the supervision of European missionaries, they were certainly regarded by them as being of inferior calibre—culturally, racially and educationally. As Latukefu has several times argued (e.g. 1978: 99-101) the distinction often arose more from the biases of European missionaries than from any particular inadequacy. Certainly, in the formal sense of a missionary being one who goes abroad in order to effect conversions of values and beliefs, these South Sea Islanders were as much missionaries (and as effective or ineffective) as any other Methodist Mission personnel in the Solomons.
  - 2: Except to Santa Isabel where the Anglican Melanesian Mission was an active participant in the organization of local defensive strategies (Jackson, 1975: 72-76; White, 1979: 123-131; 1991: 92-97).
  - 3: Bennett (1987: appx. 6) lists 42 Europeans and 37 of their non-European employees killed in the New Georgia area between 1860-96. Given that the entry includes only those involved in some kind of commercial activity, the numbers were undoubtedly higher.
  - 4: Considerations such as Britain's strategic relationships with Germany and the territorial concerns of the Australian colonies were also significant (Bennett, 1987; Hookey, 1969: 229).
  - 5: In early contact, epidemics may sweep all age categories within a population lacking resistance. However, the "levelling-off point", at which depopulation due to epidemics bottoms out, occurs about a century after contact (Stannard, 1989: 49) as populations develop resistance. Thereafter standard epidemiological conditions apply. The death rates associated with post-contact epidemics would, indeed, have wrought the demoralization described by Jackson. However, the decades immediately prior to pacification were already considerably beyond the levelling-off point. It is notable, then, that Hocart and Edge-Partington referred to the epidemics killing *old* people.
  - 6: Kahn is dealing with a case in which people consciously continued to follow indigenous practices. What she describes, then, is a kind of accommodation which allowed for some kinds of ongoing autonomy. Even so, the connotation that people can pick and choose between practices seems an oversimplification which disregards the implicit perceptions and unconscious logics according to which cultured beings operate.
  - 7: It is significant, then, that it was only in those areas, such as Vella Lavella and Marovo Lagoon, where warriors had ranged inland in search of victims, that a few pockets of headhunting persisted after 1901 (Jackson, 1978: 129).
  - 8: Douglas (1992: 90) points out that this pattern of sustained apparent indigenous autonomy before power inequities became obvious was widespread.
  - 9: Although Goldie himself was similarly engaged in rather questionable personal and mission land acquisitions, and many of his causes related at least as much to his opposition to the rival SDA mission as to his concern for local rights (Jackson, 1978: 287-292).
  - 10: Thomas (1992a: 382) points out the symbolic significance, for mission propaganda, of negative portrayals of other agents of westernization in the Western Solomons.
  - 11: Nor was the decision to proceed on the basis of no overt opposition made in response to conditions encountered in 1902. A year earlier, in the *Australasian Methodist Missionary Review*, Danks (1901: 9) argued that the already expressed opposition from New Georgians, who were "kind and hospitable in their way" "does not in our opinion mean that any active opposition will be offered". The "decision" described by Luxton is thus revealed as a previously devised strategy.
  - 12: It is interesting to note that there are a number of practices and beliefs on Simbo connecting hearing with belief and comprehension: *nonoria* ("hear", listen") also implies that one understands (Hocart, n.d.d.: 2), has accepted or been swayed or convinced. The conveying of arcane knowledge is said to have been transmitted through incomprehensible speech directly into the recipient's ear. Finally, deaf people are said to be "stupid" or

"mad" because of their inability to receive knowledge. But cf. Douglas (1989: 24) who holds that such disruptions were designed to prevent ritual communication with the deity.

13: A tacit *leit motiv* in Keesing's work is the commitment of Kwaio pagans despite the many obvious benefits of Christian conversion—access to development projects, health care services, an easier life relieved of the tributes exacted by ancestors and literacy, the vital prerequisite of a modern economic and political career. This is perhaps clearest, although never explicitly developed, in his accounts of the bitter realization by Kwaio that they are "punished" through deprivation of development funds and in Kwaio women's commentaries on Christian life (Keesing, 1992a: 182-184; 1987; 1989b).

14: Local "recognition" of links between government and mission have been recorded elsewhere. On Mota, the Melanesian Mission missionary Dudley realized that people believed that they would be subject to a retaliatory raid if the missionaries disapproved of their behaviour (Hilliard, 1978: 109). On the Isle of Pines in New Caledonia a military intervention in 1856, precipitated by a resident RC missionary, was followed by almost total conversion within a year (Douglas, 1989: 37-39).

15: It is not now possible to know whether Kave had sent word to Roviana or whether he extended them his protection after their arrival. Certainly, there are extensive kinship linkages between Simbo and Roviana which might explain why the missionaries expanded there so soon after establishment. On the other hand, in Lodu's account it is only after the missionaries had been at Tapurai for some time that her father made moves to provide them with accommodation—hardly indicative of sponsorship by the *banara*.

16: "At the beginning of 1901, the newly arrived Resident Magistrate for the district led a team of policemen into the largest Maisin village . . . and effectively imposed colonial rule by shooting dead three warriors. A few months later, Anglican missionaries purchased land in the centre of Uiaku . . ." (Barker, 1990a: 140)

17: Belshazzar Gina, the first ordained Solomon Islander Methodist Minister was posted to Simbo about 1940, but was subsequently replaced by foreign missionaries.

18: With the exception of Samoa, Methodist or Wesleyan churches are both the oldest and the majority denomination.

19: Indeed Islander missionaries were encouraged by Europeans to see New Georgians negatively. Latukefu (1978: 94-95) noted that both missionaries and administrators in Fiji lectured novice missionaries in the late nineteenth century about the ferocity and duplicity of Melanesians, a characterization which Latukefu (p.96) seems to accept. I do not deal with European missionary motivations for reproducing colourful—and sometimes untruthful—descriptions of indigenous brutality (e.g. Danks, 1901: 4). See N. Thomas (1992a) for a recent analysis of Methodist Mission propaganda.

20: The Methodist Mission seems to have differed substantially from the Melanesian Mission in its views of indigenous society. Barker (1985: 271) notes that Anglican missionaries had romantic ideas of village society; Hilliard makes similar observations. This was probably a key difference in the respective styles of interaction with converts.



Plate II (above): Members of the Simbo UCWF marching at the annual Simbo-Ranongga Inter-circuit Rally, Simbo 1990.

Plate III (below): Members of the Nusa Simbo Branch UCWF practising a new hymn for performance during service. (Passers-by listening; school in background).